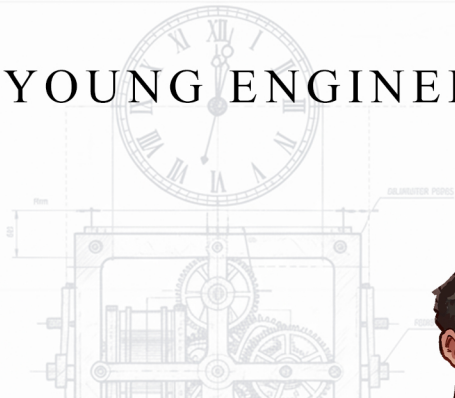


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This edition published 2026
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ISBN: 978-1-76153-517-8 (hardcover)
978-1-76153-532-1 (softcover)

First published in 1925.

This edition is based on the 1925 printing by Little, Brown, and Company.

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CHRISTOPHER AND THE CLOCKMAKERS

by

SARA WARE BASSETT






“THOSE MEN—ONE OF THEM TOOK A RING—I SAW HIM.”

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CHAPTER I

A CLOUD WITH A SILVER LINING

HRISTOPHER MARK ANTONY BURTON was a tremendously imposing name to give a baby. When he lay in his crib, wee and helpless, he looked as if he might never survive the weight of it. Even later, when he began to toddle about on his small, unsteady feet, the sonorous pseudonym trailed in his wake, threatening to drag him down to an early grave.

Nevertheless his father protested against the burden being lightened one iota. Christopher Mark Antony Burton he had been christened and Christopher Mark Antony Burton he must remain. Had it not been his father's, his grandfather's, and his great-grandfather's name before him; and all his life had not Mr. Burton longed for some one to whom to pass on the treasure of which he was so proud? And then on a happy day a son came upon the scene and *presto*, before the boy was an hour old, the ponderous appellation was clapped on his unlucky head.

Mr. Burton, however, did not consider the child unlucky—not he! To bestow this signal honor afforded him infinite satisfaction. No gift he could have granted his heir could, in his opinion, equal—much less surpass—this one.

He had, to be sure, on the day of the baby's birth, deposited in the savings bank five hundred dollars to its credit; but what

was money when weighed against being Christopher Mark Antony Burton, the fourth?

And Christopher had thrived despite the fact that life, no respecter of persons, did not spare him the misfortunes common to the race. He had whooping cough, measles, and mumps like other children, and when at length he reached the ripened age of six he was led to school and it was here, with one swift, leveling blow, that his splendor vanished even as the grass which in the morning groweth up and at night is cut down, and withereth.

He issued forth from his home as Christopher Mark Antony Burton and returned to it shorn of his glories and as plain Chris Burton. Was ever transformation more complete? Certainly not in the estimation of his father and mother. But Chris himself was overjoyed at the emancipation. It seemed as if a ball had been lifted from his foot and left him free as air. And the wonderful part of it was that the operation had been so quickly and painlessly accomplished. It had taken a round-faced, red-haired urchin just about fifteen seconds to sever his bonds.

“Christopher Mark Antony Burton!” jibed he with sardonic glee. “Haw, haw! Can you beat it? Cut it out, Chris.”

Whereupon a group of derisive youngsters had proceeded without further ado to cut it out.

“Chris Burton! Chris Burton!” they piped, capering gleefully about their victim.

Christopher’s consent to this re-christening was not asked. The name would have been cut in the same ruthless fashion whether he willed it or not. Fortunately, however, he welcomed his release, and this cheerful conformity to public sentiment earned for him at the outset of his career vast popularity.

“Chris is all right,” conceded his judges. “Poor kid! Is it his fault if they pasted a mile-long label on him?”

Indeed common opinion generally agreed that the unhappy victim of the Burton honors was far more sinned against than sinning, and his cause was forthwith taken up with zealous sympathy.

“They didn’t do a thing to you, you poor trout, when they wished that tag on you, did they?” Billie Earnshaw, the leader of the gang, declared not unkindly. “No matter, old chap! Cheer up! Forget it! We’re going to.”

And they did. As completely as if the awful appellation had never existed it was wiped from the tablets of their memory and Christopher Mark Antony Burton fourth became Chris Burton—nothing more.

Oh, there were days when the original horror bobbed up. It appeared on report cards and in school registers traced in the teacher’s clear, painstaking hand: *Christopher Mark Antony Burton*; nevertheless she never troubled to address him in that fashion. Perhaps she hadn’t the time. Life was a busy enterprise and the days were short. One could not stop to roll out a name like that unless blessed with leisure. Accordingly in the school-room our hero passed as Burton and on the ball-field as Chris, and since his existence alternated ‘twixt these two worlds, he was Christopher Mark Antony Burton only at breakfast and at bed-time—intervals so brief that they were endured with cheerfulness and complacency.

Therefore having rid himself thus early in his career of a stigma that threatened to blast his chance for success, the future stretched before him smooth as a macadam road. Uneventfully he finished the grammar school and went on into the high school as did other boys of his acquaintance. He was not, however, a scholar who leaped avidly toward books. Painfully, reluctantly he trudged his way. Learning came hard—especially Latin,

French, and history. To hold fast a French verb was for him a thousand times harder than to grip in his clutch a writhing eel; and as for algebra—well, the unknown quantity was the only one he was sure of.

Yet notwithstanding his scholastic limitations, he contrived to wriggle along until at the beginning of his junior year he was whisked away to the hospital with scarlet fever, after which, amid sage waggings of their heads, a group of doctors congregated about his bed. He was not to be alarmed, they said. His eyes were not permanently injured. Yet there was no denying his illness had seriously weakened them and they must be given a long vacation. Perhaps six months might do what was necessary—perhaps, on the other hand, it might take a year. Rest was the thing needed—absolute rest and protection from the light. Whereupon, having delivered themselves of this decree, they placed upon his nose a pair of blue goggles, told him to cheer up, and went their way.

At first the tragedy on which they commiserated him did not appear to Christopher very great. He detested books. Now, without effort of his own, he was to be released from them. It was almost too good to be true. Had he begged the boon on bended knees, his parents would have denied it. And now, as if by magic, the favor he sought had been granted without so much as a word from them. The law had been laid down so forcefully that neither they nor he dared disobey it.

In fact it was soon apparent they felt vastly sorry on Christopher's account that the mandate had been pronounced. Everybody did. Ill news travels as if on wings, and before the boy had been home a day the entire community was offering him sympathy for a calamity which did not seem to him any calamity at all.

True, he detested his blue glasses and would gladly have consigned them to the ash barrel. Still no sky is without shadows; one must take the cake as well as the frosting. Certainly he found it no cross to rise in leisurely fashion while the other kids were hiking along to school and sit down to a hot breakfast cooked especially for him; nor, when the bells were just about ringing for recitations, could it be considered a hardship to saunter off for a tramp in the sunshine, with Joffre, his tireless collie, bounding on before him.

No, his lot was far from an unhappy one. For a week or two he was entirely content. Of course there was no denying there were moments that dragged. He couldn't read, and he had always derived keen delight from a good pirate story. However, people read to him, and that was the next best thing. Often his father or his mother would toss aside their books or papers and read aloud to him an entire evening. But the books they selected were never pirate stories. Instead they were almost always things that aimed to improve him, and if there was anything Christopher resented, it was being improved. Therefore while he appreciated the good intentions of his parents in reading and explaining to him Emerson's essays, he would as lief have exchanged all of them for a single chapter of "Treasure Island." But, alas, his father was not of the "Treasure Island" sort, and neither was his mother. Indeed it is doubtful whether they would have recognized Silver had they met him in broad daylight, on the main street. As for himself he missed Silver sadly—Silver, Deerslayer, and all the rest of his cronies, and before long time began to hang heavily on his hands.

Elversham was, it is true, a beautiful suburb in which to live. Still, there wasn't much doing in it. If your day was not filled with school, baseball, football, or building a radio, how was a chap

to fill up his time? He could, of course, go down to the athletic field and watch the games, but as he was accustomed to being in the thick of them, he derived no great pleasure from sitting about on the edges and looking on, while others fumbled the ball or failed to make a touchdown. What a pity it was that when he had dropped out of school he had been obliged to sacrifice his position on the team! Still how could any one be mixed up in a football tackle if he had to wear blue glasses every minute?

No, for the present he must certainly keep out of athletics. He was, in fact, pretty well out of everything. When he joined the fellows, it was only to hear them joshing about some event wholly unintelligible to him. All their jokes and horse play led back to the classroom until at length he felt as if he might as well have listened to a lot of jibbering Chinese as to try to understand their nonsense.

Yes, he was out of it—completely out of it! Gradually the realization dawned on him. He was out of everything, the only idle person in a rushing world. When he took a walk, except for the companionship of Joffre, he went alone. Everybody was too busy to pay any attention to him. He was bored with his own society—horribly bored.

“Isn’t there anything I can do, Dad?” he desperately inquired one evening, after his mother had all but read him to sleep with the life of Benjamin Franklin.

“What do you mean, son?” asked Mr. Burton, dropping his paper and emerging abruptly from Wall Street, his attention arrested more by the lad’s tone than by his words.

“I mean isn’t there anything at all I can do? I’m sick to death of loafing round this house.”

“But I thought you were rather pleased to be out of school,” Mr. Burton asserted with surprise.

"I was at first—pleased as Punch; but I'm not now. I'm bored within an inch of my life. I can't keep tramping round with Joffre from morning to night, nor is there anywhere to go if I could. Besides, I haven't a soul to speak to—everybody is studying or else playing football."

"It is hard, Christopher," agreed his mother with instant sympathy. "You have been very patient."

"So you have, my boy! So you have!" Mr. Burton echoed. "I had no idea, however, that you were unhappy. Well, well! We must see what can be done."

He rose and began to pace the floor thoughtfully.

"Now if I could afford it," he went on, "I should pack you off on a trip round the world. That would not only amuse you royally but afford you a liberal education into the bargain; but I haven't the money to do that just now, I'm afraid. Some more modest entertainment must be found. H-m! I don't suppose as a makeshift you would care to go into the store with me for a week or two until a better plan can be devised."

The lad's face instantly brightened.

"Yes, I would," he cried. "I'd like it very much." Although the scheme was not a brilliant one, it was far better than hanging about Elversham day after day. To go to the city would mean new sights, new sounds, and doubtless luncheon with his father—a treat to which he had always looked forward since a small boy.

"Really now!" commented Mr. Burton, beaming down at him. "Well, I am surprised. I feared you would not even listen to the proposal. So you like it, eh? Oh, not for long, of course—I understand that; but simply as a filler."

Christopher was all cordiality.

"It wouldn't be half bad."

“Don’t imagine I shall set you to work,” continued Mr. Burton hastily.

“I’d rather work if there was anything I could do.”

“I am afraid there wouldn’t be,” was the reply. “Ours is a trade that has, for the most part, to be learned.”

“I suppose so.”

“No, I shall not set you to work—or entertain you, either. You will have to look out for yourself. However, as you say, it may amuse you to go to the store, and perhaps when you get there you can make some sort of a niche for yourself. We’ll see.”

“Certainly there must be errands to run,” Christopher suggested.

Mr. Burton eyed the boy pleasantly, but shook his head.

“Even our errands have to be detailed to skilled men—at least, most of them. Now and then, it is true, there are ordinary messages to be delivered; but in most cases any packages we send out are too valuable to be entrusted to boys your age. They might be held up.”

“Held up!” repeated Christopher incredulously.

“Surely. Such things have happened,” Mr. Burton nodded. “We never feel safe about sending out valuable goods unless they are well guarded.”

“It would be mighty exciting to be held up!” Christopher gasped, his eyes wide with interest.

“Exciting!” mimicked his father sarcastically. “Exciting! Humph! I guess you would find it something more than exciting if a group of yeggs thrust a pistol under your nose. You seem to forget that persons who hold up a messenger do it to get the goods.”

“But they don’t always succeed?” came breathlessly from Christopher.

“Not in moving pictures,” was the grim retort. “In the movies, somebody always happens along at the crucial moment, rescues the hero, captures the villain, and everything is all right. That is the sort of hold-up you are accustomed to, son. But in real life the villain is a desperate character armed with a gun that goes off. You forget that.”

Christopher looked crestfallen and flushed uncomfortably.

“Perhaps I am shaking your courage a little and you won’t be so eager to go to town with me,” jested Mr. Burton.

“On the contrary, the scheme appeals to me more than ever.”

“You actually hanker to meet a bandit or two?”

“It would certainly add a thrill to life to encounter a bandit,” grinned Christopher.

“Add a thrill!” Mr. Burton sniffed. “Add a thrill! Well, I will tell you right now that when you feel a desire for a thrill like that coming on, you can go straight to the movies and indulge it. You shall have no such thrills at *my* expense,” and without more ado Christopher Mark Antony Burton, senior, lighted a fresh cigar, took up his paper, and dismissed the matter.

CHAPTER II

CHRISTOPHER MAKES AN ACQUAINTANCE

THE jewelry house of Burton and Norcross occupied four stories of a corner fronting two busy city streets and before its gem-filled windows a group of passers-by were continually standing.

On cushions of velvet lay an alluring display of rings, broaches, necklaces, and costly frivolities of every description while on other cushions ticked watches varying from toy affairs on ribbons to more serious-intentioned and dignified repeaters.

All day and indeed all night, for that matter, a white light beat down upon this flashing outlay, and before it envious spectators flattened their noses against the massive plate glass and dreamed idle dreams of possession.

“Say, Jim, ain’t that red stone with the diamonds round it a peach? Gee, but I’d like a thing like that on my finger! How much do you s’pose you’d have to pay for it?”

“A cool hundred, likely.”

“Go on!”

“Sure you would. Them red stones are rubies and they cost like the dickens. I ain’t sure you wouldn’t have to pay mor’n a hundred for that ring.”

“Humph! I see myself doin’ it!”

“So do I!”

“Well, you needn’t rub it in. Anyhow, even if I had the price, I’d rather spend it on a Ford.”

“What’s the matter with havin’ ‘em both? You’re full as likely to have one as the other; come on. What’s the good of standin’ here lettin’ your mouth water over things there’s no hope of your gettin’? Let’s call it off an’ go to a picture show.”

A moment later another pair would saunter up and stop.

“Oh, Mame, look at that diamond necklace! Isn’t it wonderful! Do you s’pose it’s real?”

“Real! You bet your life it’s real! You won’t catch Burton and Norcross putting fake diamonds in their window. Come along, for heaven’s sake; I’m starving and want my lunch. It’s no use to hang round here staring in.”

“I can look, can’t I?”

“If you want to, yes. Lookin’s a cheap entertainment. You’re silly to do it though. It’ll only get you out of sorts.”

So babbled the crowd.

A listener might have amused himself the whole day long enjoying the comments of the throng had he nothing better to do than loiter near by. Unfortunately, however, the corner did not foster extended loitering. It was far too busy a spot. About it swirled and surged an eddy of shoppers, all hurrying this way and that and jostling one another so mercilessly that he who did not make one of the current and move with the stream was all but exterminated. Like a tidal wave, the ruthless concourse swept past, bearing with it everything that obstructed its path. You went whether you would or no, and afterward you stepped into a doorway, caught your breath, straightened your hat, and tried to remember what it was you had intended to do.

By contrast the interior of Burton and Norcross was pain-

fully still. The moment a visitor crossed its threshold he realized that. As if he had left behind him a stormy sea and now come into quiet waters, he stood amid its hush, conscious of his every footfall and the very intonations of his voice. Instinctively he immediately pitched his tones lower and drew himself to his full height when he traversed the marble floor that separated the bordering show cases.

Individuals counted for more here than they did outside—far more. A person who came into Burton and Norcross sensed whether his tie was awry or his shoes unshined, and so did everybody else. For if you entered the shop at all, you entered it deliberately. No one ever strolled or sauntered into Burton and Norcross. It wasn't that sort of place. You would no more have ambled aimlessly along its center aisle, frankly proclaiming to all the world your opinion of what it had to sell, than you would casually have invaded the Court of St. James or Windsor Castle. Ambling was not done there. Nobody ambled. Even Mr. Burton himself didn't. Although he was the senior partner and could have claimed the privilege of ambling had he chosen, the shop transformed him just as it did everybody else. Once within its portals he became more erect, more commanding—in fact, a different human being altogether—and proceeded to announce right and left in accents never employed by him anywhere else that it was a beautiful day.

On this particular morning Christopher, who tagged meekly at his heels, fervently subscribed to the sentiment he advanced. It was a beautiful day. Almost any day, so new in the adventure of setting forth for a peep into the business world, would have seemed beautiful. And yet there was really nothing very novel in going to the store, for since a small boy he had been accustomed to being taken there to meet his father.

Sometimes such excursions culminated in new shoes or a new overcoat; sometimes in a pair of skates or in luncheon; and on a very red-letter day, such as a birthday or anniversary of some sort, in a *matinée* or moving-picture show.

Therefore Christopher was no stranger either to the plush-lined cases and their sparkling contents or to the men who presided over them. Everybody knew him by sight—doormen, salesmen, elevator boys, watchmakers, bookkeepers, and messengers. He was the son of the boss, Christopher Mark Antony Burton, fourth.

There were, alas, times when Christopher wished from the bottom of his heart he had been less well known. To be regarded as the future heir to all this splendor kept those he met in the establishment painfully deferential and created an estranging gulf 'twixt him and all that was human and interesting.

If, for example, when he bobbed unexpectedly into the elevator, old Joseph, its colored operator, had only kept right on munching an apple instead of whisking it out of sight into his pocket, how much pleasanter it would have been! Then, too, the men all insisted on calling him *sir*, which embarrassed him and made him feel very young and foolish. He had never desired to be a person of privilege for in spite of his sonorous name, Christopher was very democratic.

Probably if left to himself he would within twenty-four hours have been on the friendliest of terms with everybody in the shop. But in the background loomed his father of whom every employee stood in awe, and whose imposing presence they never forgot for one instant. You did not forget Mr. Christopher Mark Antony Burton, third, senior partner of the firm; he did not let you.

It was for this reason that Christopher the fourth made his

advent into the great shop with less joy and abandon than he would have done had conditions been otherwise. He was politely welcomed but not cordially. That would not have been fitting.

“Now what will you do to amuse yourself, son?” inquired Mr. Burton, after Tim had bowed them in the front door and called the elevator. “You are to please yourself. I shall be too busy to give a thought to you.”

“Oh, I don’t expect to be entertained,” returned Christopher brightly. “Don’t have me on your mind at all. I’ll look after myself.”

“That’s right! That’s right!” exclaimed his father, as if relieved by the intelligence. “You are welcome to go anywhere you like. Everybody knows you by sight and understands you are to be around here for a while. Just don’t get into mischief. And see you are ready promptly at one to go to luncheon with me.”

“You can count on me for that!”

“I’ll wager I can.”

With these words Mr. Burton opened the door of his office and disappeared.

Christopher hung up his hat and coat and hesitated uncertainly for a moment. He did not really know what he wanted to do. A general atmosphere of business of which he became instantly aware made him feel like an intruder. The men greeted him, it is true, but with minds focused far less on the salutation than on the various missions that drove them hither and thither.

There was something almost ludicrous about the seriousness with which they took this matter of rings and necklaces. One would have thought the affairs of a nation occupied them, so anxious and hurried were they.

He sauntered along the balcony in the wake of a red-cheeked young clerk who had bowed to him pleasantly and looked less

as if he were speeding to save a burning ship or warn the king he was about to be blown up than did some of the others; and when this guide turned into a long, brilliantly lighted room, Christopher, having nothing better to do, entered too.

“You haven’t finished that bracket clock yet, have you, McPhearson?” called the salesman, approaching a little old man who with a microscope to one eye was bending over a bench littered with small steel tools.

“Not yet, Bailey,” the clockmaker replied without, however, looking up. “She’s a queer piece, that clock—not one for ordinary treatment.”

“But you can put her in shape, can’t you?” came a bit anxiously from Bailey.

At the words a slow smile puckered the Scotchman’s lips and for the first time he stole a glance at the speaker.

“Don’t fret, Bailey,” he drawled.

“I’m not fretting, Mr. McPhearson. But the woman who owns that clock won’t sleep nights until she gets it home again.”

“I don’t blame her,” was all McPhearson said.

“It’s a good one, eh?”

“It’s a dandy. I’d give my head for one like it. Genuine from start to finish and listed in the book. It was made by Richard Parsons of Number 15 Goswell Street, London, somewhere about 1720—at least he is down as a member of the Clockmakers’ Company right along then. Pity he can’t know his handiwork is still doing duty. He’d be proud of it. Two hundred years or more isn’t a bad record for a clock.”

“Two hundred years!” gasped Christopher involuntarily. McPhearson peeped up over his microscope.

“This is Mr. Burton’s son, McPhearson,” put in Bailey.

“I know, I know. I’ve seen him round here ever since he could

toddle. Good morning, youngster. So you've come to explore the repairing department, have you?"

The informality of the greeting was delightful to Christopher, and immediately his heart went out to the old Scotchman.

"I guess so, yes," smiled he. "I didn't know I was going to though. It just happened."

"It's not a bad happen, perhaps. Make yourself at home, laddie. Here's a stool."

"I'd rather stand and watch you."

"But I sha'n't let you. It makes me nervous to have somebody hanging over my shoulder and maybe jogging my elbow. If you're to stay you must sit," was the brusque but not unkindly answer.

Somewhat crestfallen the boy slipped to the stool and for a few moments remained immovable, watching the workman's busy fingers. How carefully they moved—with what fascinating deftness and rapidity!

"I see you are not one to keep hitching and twiddling around," the clockmaker presently remarked, with a twinkle. "We shall get on famously together. I detest nervous people."

"Are you fixing the clock Mr. Bailey was asking about?" Christopher ventured.

"Not just now, sonny. I am finishing up a simpler job. I shall go back to her in a minute, however. You can't just tinker her at will as you do common clocks. She has to be dreamed over."

"Dreamed over!" repeated Christopher, not a little puzzled.

"Aye, dreamed over! Well-nigh prayed over—if it comes to that," continued the old man gravely. "She isn't the sort that was turned out in a factory, you see, along with hundreds of others of her kind. She's an aristocrat and must be treated accordingly."

"Do you mean it—*she*—was made by hand?"

"Every wheel and rivet of her!"

“But I thought the works of all clocks were alike,” asserted Christopher.

“Bless your heart, no. Nowadays most of them are; and there are advantages in it too, for when a part gives out, you can easily get another to replace it. But years ago in the days of the clockmakers’ guilds, clocks were made by hand and were frequently entirely the work of one man—except perhaps the case, which was sometimes made by a joiner.”

“Oh!”

“This old bracket clock, for instance, that I was speaking of—a fellow named Richard Parsons, who belonged to the London Clockmakers’ Company between 1690 and 1730, made her from start to finish. You will see his name painted on the dial, and engraved on the works is his address. The jealous old clockmakers kept their eye on those who were manufacturing clocks, I can tell you. They weren’t going to have a lot of cheap, poorly made articles shunted off on the public to ruin their trade. No, indeed. A man must serve a long apprenticeship before he could be admitted to the Clockmakers’ Company and once enrolled must put his address in all his clocks so everybody would know he had a right to make and sell them.”

“It wasn’t a bad idea.”

“Not at all bad. Nevertheless, the clockmakers were a stern, tyrannical lot. Nobody within twenty miles of London was allowed to make a clock unless enrolled in their organization. Moreover, they got from the king a right of search which enabled them to go in and seize any goods which they suspected fell below the standard. Not only did they want to be sure no poor clocks were made but they also wished to keep the monopoly of all the timepieces turned out.

“For example, when war in France drove many of the French

artisans to England, up rose the London clockmakers to protest against any of the French makers practicing their craft within their domains. Fortunately the petition was denied and at length these skilled workmen were enrolled in the company and together with their descendants gave to England some of her most beautiful clocks. But the old guild members did not suffer it without a wrench, I can tell you.”

McPhearson took up a small screwdriver and proceeded to fasten the back on to the clock he held in his hand.

“It wasn’t all smooth sailing, being a clockmaker in those days,” he declared. “What wonder the horologers were jealous of their art? Just remember there were no factories to produce for you the screws, rivets, wheels, and parts you needed. You yourself had to make everything with the scant supply of tools at your command, usually a file, drill, and hammer. With these you hammered out your brass wheels to the required thickness, notched the teeth in their edges with the file, and fitted them into place. And when you consider that with this crude equipment you were expected to turn out a mechanism delicate enough to tell time, I am sure you will agree the stern old clockmakers had something on their side.”

“They sure had!” Christopher exclaimed with enthusiasm.

“It is a glory to this Richard Parsons’ skill that two hundred years after he made his clock it is still accurately performing its task. If anything I made was in existence at the end of a like stretch of time and was continuing to be useful, I should feel I had a right to be proud, shouldn’t you?”

“You bet I would. Nothing I make ever stays together more than a week.”

The Scotchman laughed at the boyish confession.

“Now you can understand, I guess, why I sent Bailey away,

telling him I should have to dream over this bracket clock. Two hundred years is a long time and methods have changed greatly since then. Therefore in order to repair such a product, I shall have to think myself back into the year 1700 and work in the fashion Richard Parsons did; otherwise I cannot successfully take up his handiwork. A clockmaker has to have imagination, you see.”

“I never thought of that.”

“It is such puzzles as these that make my trade interesting,” McPhearson observed. “If every clock that came to me was of precisely the same pattern as every other, the work I do would be monotonous enough. But it is because clocks are as different as people that they pique my curiosity. Even those turned out in factories, for example, are never twice alike.”

“I should think those would *have* to be alike,” Christopher responded.

“You’d think so, and so would I if I had not handled so many and learned otherwise. No, every clock has its personality, its little tricks. One doesn’t like a cold room, perhaps, and as a protest will stop or lose time; another shows its disapproval of the heat by being ten minutes fast. Still another balks at an incline in the mantelpiece, so slight that nobody can see it, and will not tick even. So it goes. And it is not always the most expensive clocks and watches, either, that keep the best time, for sometimes a cheap affair will, for reasons not to be fathomed, put to shame your costly one. Not infrequently I take to pieces a fine clock or watch and fail to find anything the matter with it, and yet it will not go as it should. The creatures actually seem to be stubborn and take notions just as people do.”

“I’d no idea clocks were like that,” mused Christopher.

“That’s because you haven’t lived with them more than half