

DAILY SHORT STORY

The Professor's Discovery.

As the old German entered the offices of the great oil company the clerks looked at one another and wagged their heads, grinning. It was funny to these boys to know that the old man would no longer spend his days messing with his bottles and retorts in the laboratory. The word that he was to be discharged had spread all through the building.

The German said nothing, but sat down placidly, his fingers pressing a small, square package in his overcoat pocket. He loved to handle that! That he was to be discharged he knew; and he was hoping against hope that he could conscientiously accept it. He must not say too little or too much.

He had kicked his heels upon the bench for nearly an hour when Mr. Van Bambergh sent for him. He was a sharp, harassed-looking man; and because he felt ashamed of what he was going to do he was the gruffer and less ceremonious.

"Professor, we can't use your services any longer," he began abruptly. "Go to the cashier and get your salary to date."

"May I—might I say a few words?" asked the old man mildly.

The president spread his hands out in depreciation.

"Now it's no use putting up a plea," he said. "I'm sorry for you, but this is a matter of business. We are not in the oil trade for our health. If you want a recommen-

Heaven knows what's wrong with
dation

"I want merely a few words to say," said the professor, his grasp tightening on the small package in the pocket of his overcoat.

He hoped to be refused; but, since the president said nothing, he began to speak.

"You hired me two years ago at a salary of \$12 a week," he began. "You set me a very difficult almost an impossible task. You told me that you wanted me to discover the gasoline atom. You pointed out that when gasoline was distilled from crude oil, nine-tenths of the oil went to waste. If I could split up the oil molecule, and free the gasoline atom, thereby avoiding the process of distillation, it would be worth a fortune to you. And I have worked steadily and hard at it ever since."

"I don't deny that, professor," said the president, more kindly. "But what have you done? You asked for a year's extension and we gave it to you. Meanwhile our rival, the Pittsburgh Refining Co. has had out a standing offer of \$50,000 for the discovery, and they have their experts at work. I can't pension you on your \$12 a week for life, on the chance of your hitting on the discovery. We've got to get an expert on this business, and I've sent to Germany for a trained investigator. That's all I've got to say."

"Himmel! Will you turn me adrift, at my age, to starve, because I haven't done the impossible" cried the old man, furiously. "Listen. Give me one month longer, My wife is sick, and