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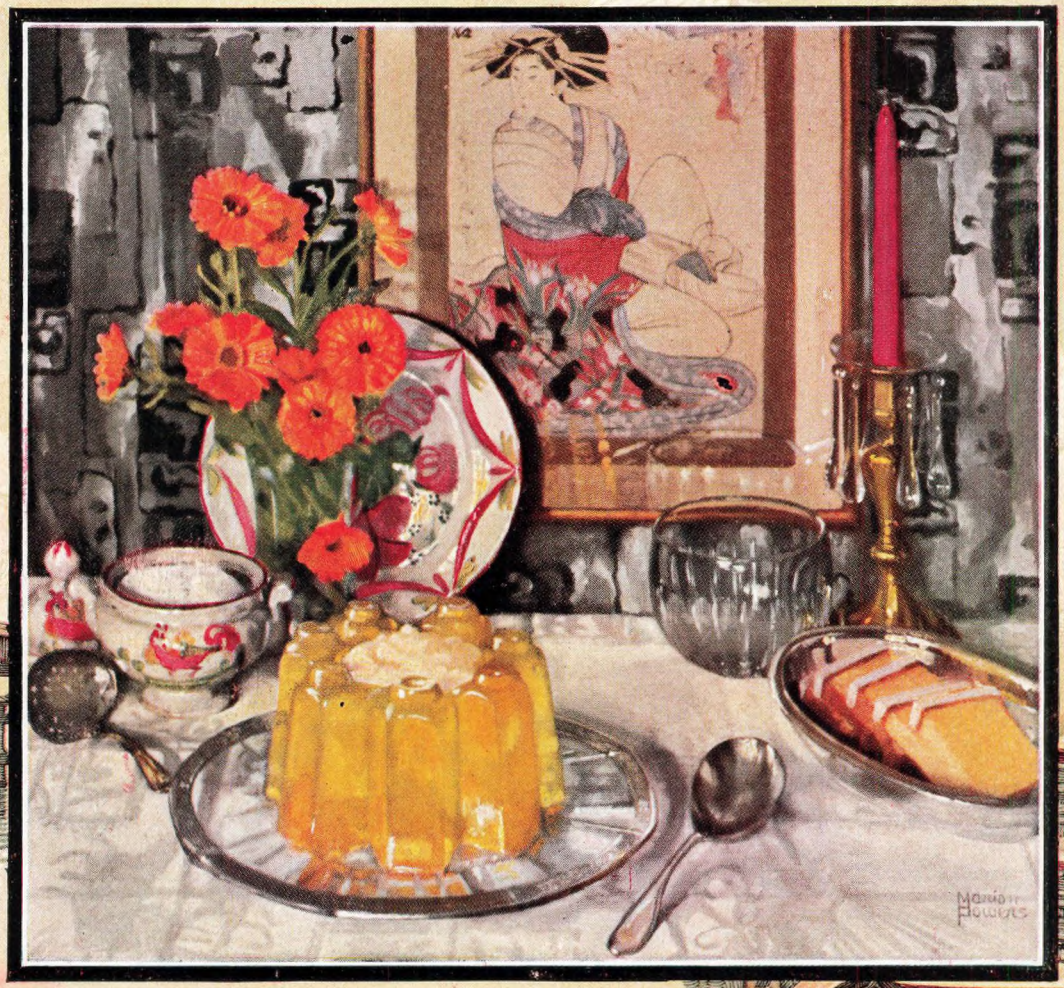

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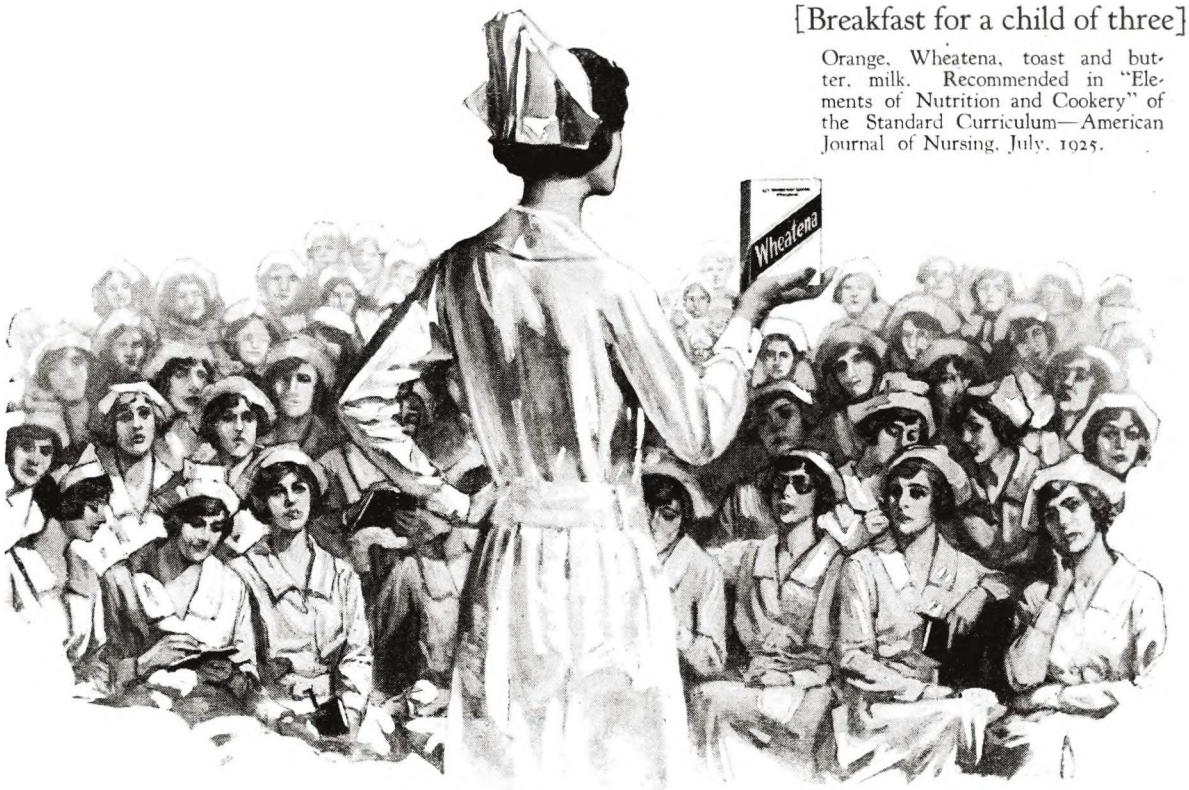

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VOL. LXXX NO. 2

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for **February,** *1926*

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The Understanding Heart

By PETER B. KYNE

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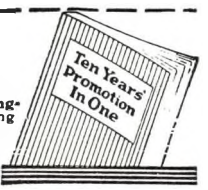

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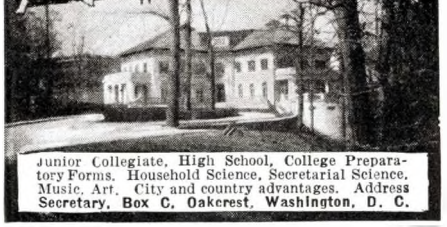

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(Continued from page 10)

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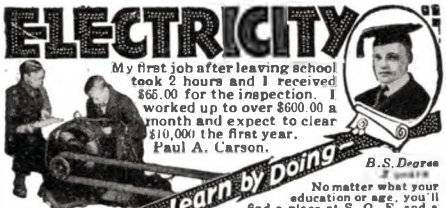

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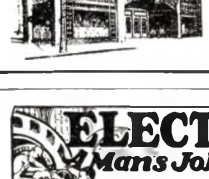

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Cloisonné describes the rare and patient artistry of the box.

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If you want to give a girl a thrill, here's a hint: Give her Whitman's Cloisonné Chocolates!

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An uncommon expression of unusual regard. A fitting gift from a prince to a princess.

A Fussy Package for Fastidious Folks, that green-and-gold package of nut and nut-combinations in chocolate also can be had with a Valentine band in one pound and two pound sizes.

What better Valentine than this heart-decked Standard box of Whitman's? The direct descendant of the chocolates that served the belles and beaux of 1842.

Pink of Perfection describes the *contents*. This dainty box in gold, black and pink gives a hint of the new and perfected forms of chocolates compacted in it.

To be had at the nearby Whitman Agency—usually the leading drug store in each neighborhood.

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FEBRUARY
1926

The Creator of the Gibson Girl

By *Arthur Brisbane*

CHARLES DANA GIBSON'S pictures, illustrating life and manners in this prosperous republic, will appear hereafter regularly in the Cosmopolitan Magazine, and in no other publication except Life, of which Mr. Gibson is the proprietor.

Readers of this magazine are to be congratulated, for Mr. Gibson shows the American people as they are—truthfully, accurately, with keen power and insight.

Being a man of character, Gibson is still a democrat as he was when he began work and the study of American life, as a boy. I knew him then, working from life, and hiring models before he could well afford it.

He shows you our "society," so called, knows how little it amounts to, with its diamonds, opera boxes, servants and all that goes with the parasite existence. But he is always good-natured about it.

He knows that the fat old lady struggling to be thin and make her neck fit her necklace has trouble enough, without being criticized.

Gibson's work today is the best that he has ever done. He recently published a picture of an old man, sitting with his radio at the foot of a lighthouse by the water's edge, listening to a sentimental modern song, the singer wondering whether somebody else was "all alone too."

Of all the men that make pictures in the United States, only Gibson could have made that picture, most beautiful and touching.

Charles Dana Gibson preaches as he draws. Everybody whose work is worth while preaches, for the world needs preaching and teaching.

The Gibson picture in this issue of Cosmopolitan is a sermon for young women, the text of which is "*Listen.*"

"The Girl Who Listens" is never alone, unless she wants to be alone. Man—vain, foolish creature—always likes to hear himself talk. And you will find him crowding about the girl that knows enough to sit and listen wide-eyed, amazed at man's vast intelligence and heroic aspect. The more beautiful girls—Charles Dana Gibson draws them better than anybody else—stand neglected while the girl who listens draws the crowd.

There is a moral in this Gibson picture for men as well as for women. More men have found success in listening than in talking.

Millions have *talked* themselves out of success or a job. Nobody ever *listened* himself out of success.

¶Charles Dana Gibson

There is help and inspiration in Gibson's work. He is a *good American*, as thoroughly American as Pike's Peak, or Crockett's coon-skin cap. Gibson's work is good work, and sincere, as he is. He is one that has never lost a friend, never deserved to lose one. You cannot say that of everybody.

The First *of the* Gibson Girls *of* 1926—

By CHARLES

¶ *Puzzle: Find the*

The Most *Famous* Young Women *in the* World

DANA GIBSON

Girl Who Listens

The Dice of God

Illustrations by
W. Smithson Broadhead

IT WAS Sunday, and luncheon time at the Victoria Falls Hotel. Most of the fifty-odd guests had wandered down the long wooden veranda to the dining-room at the end. But one group of men who had just arrived from Livingstone, and were scattered round a small table covered with cocktail glasses, did not budge, and their reasons for non-budging were two. First: Blake, whose luncheon they intended to eat, was still in the hotel kitchen, deep in confab with the chef, for Blake was no ordinary man, and ordinary luncheons were no use to him. Second: two ladies had come slowly up from the direction of the Falls, and were now in the garden just below the veranda. They seemed unable to tear themselves away from the sight of the great Zambezi Gorge, with its still green waters stealing sluggishly below, and above it those rainbow-tinted clouds of mist which the natives call "the smoke that sounds."

The six Rhodesians had seen that view so often that they were sick of it, but the sight of two pretty women beautifully gowned in slinky-dinky white dresses that suggested "London, Torment, and Town," was another pair of sleeves altogether, and since they first hove in sight, speculation as to who they might be had been rife, not to say rampant; but no one knew the correct answer to the riddle until Blake came sidling back from his *indaba* with the cook. Blake always knew other people's business in richer and rarer detail than they knew it themselves. Put to the question by Brookes, he gave a mere squint after the two figures now retreating into the hotel, and answered without hesitation.

"Those, my dear Nibby, are the two experts who are 'doing' this

The men at the center table were too far away to hear groaned, "He's in the soup, all right." "Hope they

what was said as Blake approached the two women. But Nibby Brookes don't have him pitched out on his ear," was Bad Luck's pious prayer.

By

Cynthia Stockley

Author of those Vivid Novels of

South Africa

"Ponjola"

and

"The Umkuna Tree"

country as it has never been 'done' before, though you are aware that ever since Rhodes opened it up as a realm of rest for rotters, it has been done up, and done down, and done in, and done brown."

Nibby Brookes, like most of the others, tumbled to the truth then—that these were Anne Haviland and Narice Vanne, the writer and the painter! The next thing to know was, which was which? But Mundell, who had been policing up on the Congo border, far from newspapers, needed fuller information.

"Experts?" he demanded querulously. What kind of experts? Who are they? What?"

"Gently, my Blood-Orange, gently," said Blake tenderly. "Don't unnerve yourself. They are not of your world. One is a celebrated writer whose books you have never read but will vainly try to buy. She is now writing another, all about the noble Rhodesian as she has seen him. When done, copies may be purchased for ten-and-six each. *I'm* done. Come and stoke up."

He led the way to luncheon and his partner and best friend, Sir Anthony Tulloch, more familiarly known as Bad Luck, followed, leaning on a stick and dragging his left leg a little, as he had done since the war. Next came Monsieur Brunel, a bullet-headed Belgian from Elizabethville, then the three Mounted Policemen, whose lounging gait, even though all were in mufti, subtly suggested horses.

The two women coming quietly back onto the veranda had an excellent rear-guard view of the party. "Typical Rhodesians!" remarked the fair one.

"Yes. The real soft-nosed bullet," said the dark one with a velvety little drawl. "Fatal."

Gasping and trembling with outraged with blazing eyes. "How dare I—

So light-foot went they on the heels of the fatal ones that they were neither seen nor heard until after Major Blake's party was deployed round the big center table. Then a Mounted Policeman's trained eye spied them out sitting by one of the windows.

"There they are! They must have stolen in like a pair of leopards!" murmured Nibby.

A closer view of them could now be obtained, and several seconds of sheer silence passed while a mental referendum was taken. It is more than likely that the fair one caught most of the votes in the room, as well as at the center table, for she had the kind of golden beauty that immediately ensnares the eye. Compared to her the other, dark and tall and boyish, with her head cocked in the air, was like a silhouette beside a miniature of lilies and roses in a gilt frame. A sigh went up from Blake's table—the sort of combined, concerted sigh that is both seen and heard.

"What say if I go and ask them to come and join us at luncheon?" said Blake, smiling his screwed-up smile.

They told him that though they knew him to be capable of most outrages, they still believed him to be visited by moments of horse-sense, even sanity.

"What'll you bet I don't?" he persisted, still squinting, and screwing an imaginary monocle into his right eye—a habit of his.

They bet him anything he liked, and warned him at the same time to mind his eye. He grew reflectively argumentative.

"Why shouldn't I? They're celebrities and so am I. Celebrities should always know each other."

"Well, you try it," said Anthony Tulloch, and the scar across his cheek and nose gave his smile a peculiarly grim quality.

"Oh, you old Bad Luck! I suppose you think you're the only great adventurer and daredevil in this country?"

"Perhaps," said Bad Luck carelessly, but bitterness was added to the grimness of his smile, and Blake wished he had left the jest unspoken, for his love for Anthony Tulloch was no jest.

"You show him that he's not, Major," egged on young Brookes.

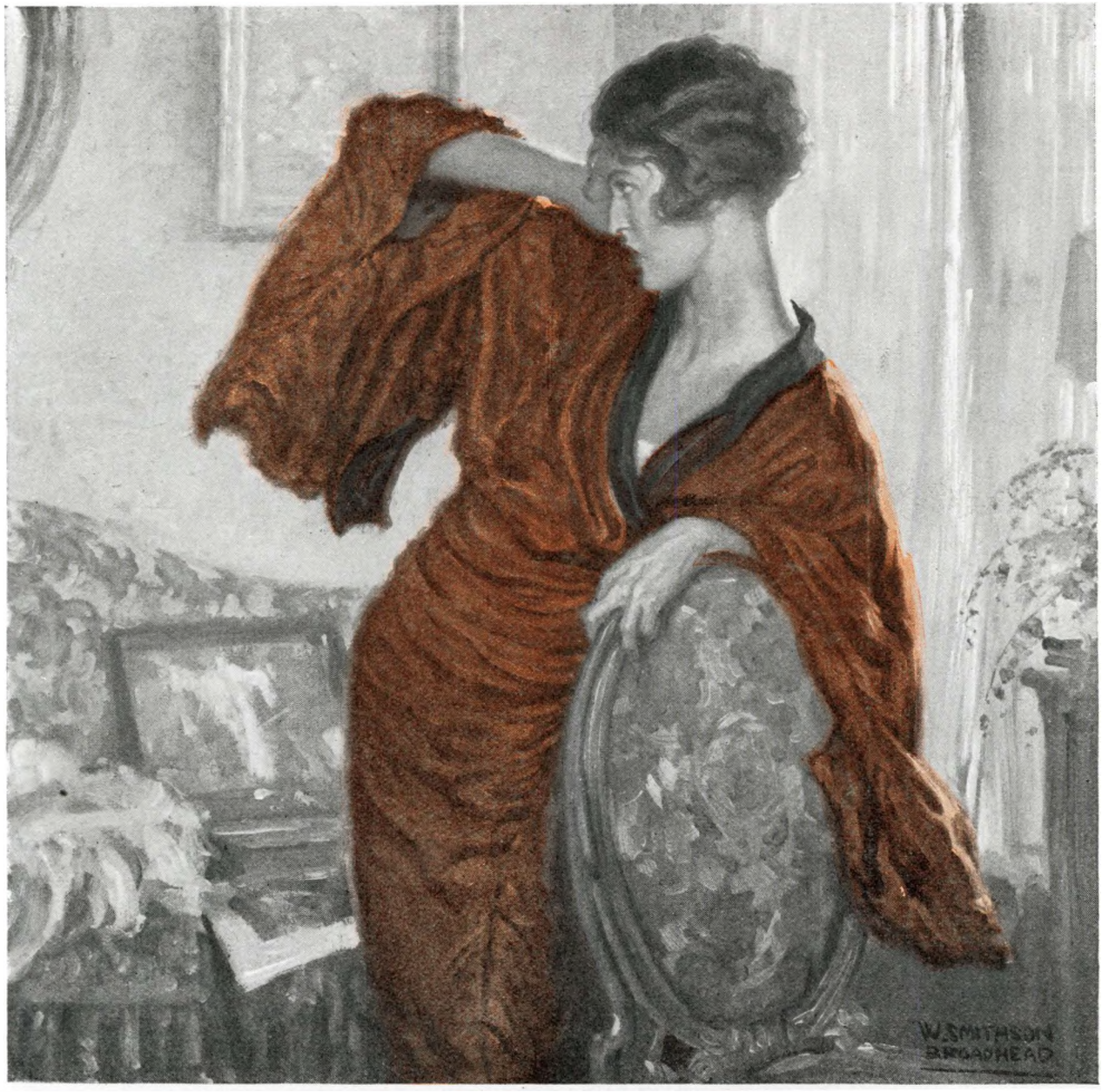
"Yes, go on, Billy," urged Mundell.

"Don't worry, I'm going," said Blake. "I only want to know what the betting is that I don't bring them back."

They bet him variously, a dinner at the hotel that night, free drinks for a week, and ten shillings. Bad Luck laid five to one in pounds. Brunel was the only man who refrained from a gamble. Throughout the discussion he had continued stolidly upon the hors-d'œuvres showing a marked preference for German sausage. But even he suspended operations to watch, when Blake rose from his chair and ambled gracefully across the room.

They were too far off to hear what was said. But to observe Blake was enough. Most of them were sorry for the snub they knew he was going to get, for they all liked Blake. No one could help liking him in spite of, or perhaps because of, his extravagances and vanities. He was the soul of good nature, and bursting with generosity. He stood with his finger-tips resting on the edge of the table, between the miniature and the silhouette. Both were staring up at him in surprise.

From the center table, the dark face could only be seen in profile, but the cold haughtiness of the face of cream and roses would have been patent at any distance under a mile. However, Blake smiled beguilingly from one to the other and seemed quite



astonishment, Narice tried to utter her indignation. "How dare you!" She was white, yes, how dare I?" Tulloch echoed the words with a hard, derisive laugh and a furious irony.

undisturbed. He cocked his head on one side, winked, squinted, and appeared to bore into each listening face with an invisible gimlet fixed in his left eye—another unhappy habit of his. It was a deplorable sight.

"He's in the soup, all right," groaned Nibby Brookes.

"Hope to the Lord they don't have him pitched out on his ear," was Bad Luck's pious prayer.

In common decency they turned away their eyes. Billy Blake was a good chap, and it was a pity to see him so disgraced. Still, his blood was on his own head.

At the sound of a chair being pushed from a table, and the retiring steps of Billy Blake, they all gazed into the *consommé Richelieu* which had just been served. When a fellow who is a decent sportsman is returning from the field after achieving a duck's-egg, it's not the game to stare him out of countenance.

But when they looked up, it was to find Blake scuffling with plates and spoons, and pushing Brunel farther up the table to make room next himself for the lady of the profile. If he had not succeeded in bringing the whole picture-gallery, he had at least managed to capture the silhouette and get away with it. She seated herself, and smiled a gay and friendly smile at them all.

"I think it is most awfully nice of Major Blake to ask me to join you," she said. "That's the best of Rhodesia. Everybody is so jolly and informal!"

They gazed at her with admiration and relief, and saw that she was not a woman at all but a girl. A jolly, sunburnt girl, with a scattering of tiny dark brown freckles across the faint red of her cheeks. Her nose had a slight bump on it as if at some time she had had a spill, this tiny deflection in its straightness giving an added whimsicality to the gay violet eyes above it, and she wore her lips curved, to part into a smile at any moment. Her throat, and a great V on her breast where the gown opened, were burned a deeper brown than her face, but at the edges of this dark-tinted V her skin peeped and glinted like white silk. Her long slim hands were undecorated except by a man's signet-ring bearing a coat of arms.

She looked an utter girl, and there was such an unmarried "come hither" look in her eyes that anyone would have felt challenged to find out on what attitude of mind such a look was based. Two at least of the men at the table made a resolution to solve this problem as soon as possible—Bad Luck being one and Billy Blake the other. Meanwhile the latter was making her free with the pet names of the company.

"This is Sir Anthony Glenpatrick Tulloch, better known for reasons we will not go into as 'Bad Luck.'"

"Oh, *do* go into the reasons!"

Sir Anthony's queer eyes gave her the glimmer of a smile, but their expression transformed itself so curiously when they shot a glance in the direction of Blake's that the latter murmured:

"Later—when he's not here," and hastily continued by denting a finger into his own bosom: "Billy Blake, the fidus Achates of Bad Luck. Next to him you see the Blood-Orange, or Pretty-to-look-at."

Mundell, who really was a handsome fellow, fulfilled his other name by turning scarlet to the roots of his hair.

"He's demonstrating," continued the merciless Blake and

No man, thought Blake, could look at Miss Haviland without an extra beat in his wrist, and he knew Anthony was no bat where beauty was concerned

passed on. "Nibby Brookes, the pride of the police. He wears such be-yu-ti-ful clothes." Nibby also demonstrated. "Castle—British by birth, but Spanish in temper and complexion."

Brunel, who did not come in for any pleasantries, was merely introduced by his military title of Commandante, but Blake murmured into her ear, boring a hole into it with his eye at the same time: "A beastly Belgian!"

"I like Belgians," was the smiling reply, and she gave her attention for a few minutes to the crop-headed one on her left.

His English was poor, but they got along excellently together in French, which Mundell and Castle also spoke well. Blake was able to have the chef up and bully him about the entrée before he had any more notice taken of him by his guest. Also he had time to answer the malicious assumptions and inquiries on his left as to what the blond lady had said and done to him.

"Yes, I did get a snub," he admitted, "but it wasn't my fault exactly. A man is known by the company he keeps. She said frankly she didn't care for the look of you fellows."

"One to you, Billy," laughed Castle. "But I'd like to hear a few witnesses called on that statement."

"One will do," said Bad Luck, who thought Brunel had monopolized the Silhouette long enough. "Perhaps Miss Vanne will tell us."

Not much got past Narice Vanne evidently, for interested as she appeared to be in the Congo experiences of Monsieur Brunel, she heard the question, and with one little stare into Anthony Tulloch's strange eyes, plunged:

"Oh—it was not because she is unfriendly at all—only, well, she doesn't take to informality like I do—hasn't had to stroll round the world and get things for herself—like painters have to. It's different with writers, you know. *We* get all our effects and ideas externally—but *they* live inwards; consequently they're not so simple to get at, and can't unfold to new people so easily."

This was very nice and vague and subtle, and the listeners appreciated it. *Quand même*, as the French say—all the same . . .

So Miss Vanne went further: "Another thing, I expect she didn't want Mr. Morrison to feel out of it. There he is just joining her now. He's her cousin, and making the same trip with us—he looks after things, you know, and has been frightfully good. It would have seemed rather mean for both of us to desert him."

The luncheon party was the gayest ever given by Billy Blake—he came down from Portulloch on an average of once a fortnight to give them—and the gilt crown to its head was that afterwards when they returned to the veranda for coffee, Miss Vanne easily got Miss Haviland and the cousin, Rupert Morrison, to join them. She did it in that simple, eager manner of hers that rushed people along before they had time to think, a manner apparently only to be acquired by a lifelong habit of strolling about the world and "getting pictures externally." Billy Blake wished he possessed

it. He felt that it would take only that last touch to make him perfect.

"They're an awfully jolly crowd, Anne," Miss Vanne's eager voice had been heard to say as she piloted her friends along, with the result that for a moment or two most of the jolly crowd were struck dumb with self-consciousness, all except the incorrigible Blake, who sighed into Miss Vanne's ear the great Rhodesian *mot:*

"Please pull our arms—our legs are tired."

While on her other side she heard the murmur of Bad Luck:

"Surely *you* ought to be the writer. Mere paint could never express your genius."

She turned to him with her open-lipped smile, leaving the others to make friends among themselves.

"I'm afraid I haven't any genius to express."

A wistful look came into the violet eyes. "Since I came out here I've come to the conclusion I can't paint at all."

"Africa usually inspires people!"

"Oh, she inspires me, all right, but there's no material result to the inspiration. She's too big and wonderful to get on a few feet of canvas."

She stood, her hands behind her in rather schoolboyish fashion, looking into Bad Luck's eyes as though she saw distance there instead of an expression that made most women's hearts flutter. He had rarely had a woman look at him in such detached fashion, and it gave him a less pleasing than novel sensation.

"My foregrounds are rotten. But I get a lot of fun out of the sunsets and the mountain-tops." She continued staring dreamily through him as if he were part of a rotten foreground, with a sunset beyond.

Miss Haviland broke in with a laugh as mellow and golden as her hair: "You're like that in actual life too, Narice. Crazy about the mountain-tops, and refusing to see the dull little near-by facts of every-day life—but they're there just the same."

Narice came to earth with a rush. Her gaze left Bad Luck and for a moment rested in a strange, piercing way on Anne Haviland. Then with her usual expression of boyish gaiety: "What does it matter to anyone if I am a fool?" she laughed. "Let's go and watch the Falls."

But Anthony Tulloch had another suggestion to offer. The motor-launch in which he and Blake had come from Livingstone lay at the landing-stage, and he proposed that the whole party should go for a run up the river as far as Kandahar Island, taking tea baskets with them. It was a glorious afternoon for an excursion, and everyone hastened to (*Continued on page 186*)

¶ Henry Ford *and* Thomas Edison *at Longfellow's Wayside Inn.*

¶ *"There are some things we have dropped on the way in this swift age," says Henry Ford. "and we shall have to go back to pick them up. I don't believe we are going too fast but maybe we have been going too recklessly. That's another thing. Possibly we have forgotten to keep some of the old-fashioned things that were pretty fine after all."*

The Amazing *Things* Henry Ford *Told* Frazier Hunt *about* Himself

I'VE JUST returned from a visit with Henry Ford. It's four years since I saw him the last time. He's changed quite a bit.

For forty years he worked and schemed to build up his business, and now he wants to settle back and enjoy it all.

"We've learned to work around here and now it's time we learned how to play," is the way he puts it.

And so today we've got a mellowed, reminiscent Ford, at peace with the world and with his own soul.

"Why, hello there, Hunt! I recognized you through the glass—by the back of your head," he greeted me when I first met him this last time. "Been living in England, haven't you? Well, what's the condition of things over there?"

I explained that I thought they were pretty bad—especially for the working man. "The country has fifteen million too many people," I went on. "Her working people are in a bad way. They've been underfed and abused for generations."

"Well, I don't believe in making things too soft," he answered. "Men are put on this earth to gain experience. That's the only thing that really counts in this world—experience. I don't believe in putting people in bandboxes, packed in cotton-wool. God made fleas to keep dogs busy and troubles to keep man busy. But it all comes down to the thing of gaining experience in this life."

I didn't understand what he meant by "experience."

"Well, experience for the next life," he went on. "Every man is here for experience; he gains it and then passes on."

"You mean to another life after this one?" I questioned.

"Exactly."

"Then you're talking about reincarnation. Let me get this straight—you believe in reincarnation?"

"Surely I do. Each life we live simply adds to our total experience. Everything put on earth is put here for some good—to get experience which will be stored up for future use. There is not one bit of man—one thought, one experience, one drop—that does not go on. Life is eternal—so there can't be any death."

"That's going further than the teachings of the Christian religion," I ventured.

"Well, I believe it just the same. And I believe just as much as anything that in olden times—'way back yonder—they knew something that we have lost—something of the mystery, the riddle of life. I'm just as sure as anything of that . . . I believe that what we call religion, and talk about in terms of belief, was once a definite science and stated in terms of facts and knowledge. The things that are now the unsolvable mysteries of where we come from before birth and where we are going after death, were known to everybody then. Everything about the whole secret of existence was known."

I was dumfounded. "Do you mean, Mr. Ford, that men in the old days knew what became of the soul, the spirit? That they didn't guess about religion but *knew* about it?"

"That's it. Some day we will be wise enough again to see and understand the whole eternal life of the universe—what's going on on the other planets and things like that."

I interrupted him: "Then you believe there is life on other planets and maybe we move from one to another?"

He nodded. "This earth is just a clearing station between past and future lives. We don't know anything about what's on those other planets—except life; I'm sure there's life there."

"Mr. Ford, will you tell me how you worked all this out?"

"Well, every man has to work out these big questions before he can do anything real with his years here. I remember when I was a small boy that I started to ask questions about religion and life and death. I was hushed up, so I started to thinking for myself. I studied about it for years. Finally I got it worked out to my own satisfaction. It doesn't worry me now."

"You know what you are, Mr. Ford?" I said. "You're a mystic—almost like the mystics one finds in India."

"Well, I don't care what you call me—that's what I believe."

In the same tone that he had used in speaking of experience he now spoke of "service."

"Service is what man has to give in this world. Serve people—do things for them—and you'll get along all right.

"I believe that there are entities or little auxiliary life atoms, or whatever you want to call them, flying about and when a person is doing something to help people—doing something for people and not for himself—that these entities fly to him and help him. The vital stuff we need is all about us—it feeds and strengthens our spirit. All we need is to keep our lives pointed in the right direction and what we need will come to us.

"After all, this age is moving in the right direction. We can't stop progress. We can't turn back the clock.

"Sometimes we think the old times were better, and we try to go back, but it cannot be done. We get as near as we can to the old ways, but we always come back to the new. Mrs. Ford and I found that out. You know, I have the house where I was born and it is just as it was when my mother lived there. Mrs. Ford and I thought it would be fine to go down to the old house and get our meals in the old-fashioned way, with no servants around—just ourselves and the children. Well, we tried it once or twice, but the fire smoked and the old-fashioned methods were pretty clumsy—so I noticed that after that we usually took our food with us, ready prepared. No, the old ways look fine in the distance, but we cannot go back.

"Yet we may have forgotten to keep some of the old-fashioned things that were pretty fine after all . . . That's the reason I'm collecting all those American things. Have you seen them?"

I TOLD him that I had and that I thought they were wonderful. One whole end of what once had been a great experimental shop had been turned over temporarily to hold this great collection of common Americana. There was an acre of them already—high bicycles, cutters, Conestoga wagons, Adam-and-Eve buggies, buckboards, hand-pump fire-engines, candle-lanterns, straw skeps for bees, early binders, reapers, ancient tractors—the moving, living, priceless history of common America. A few of the many thousands of pieces were very rare and unusual but for the most part they were the every-day things of the every-day America of the past. And some day Henry Ford will build a museum and here house this story of America.

"You should have something of Abraham Lincoln's and Mark Twain's in there," I suggested. So it was that we fell to talking of these two great Americans and I told him a well flavored little yarn about Lincoln and the choosing of a jury that Carl Sandburg had told me.

Ford chuckled for a full minute. Later on over luncheon he asked me to tell it again to several guests there.

When we'd finished luncheon we walked over to a corner of the new office and experimental building at Dearborn, where he had curtained off a dance-hall, with a raised platform for the orchestra and the "caller" at one end.

"I want you to hear some old pieces," he explained. "How would you like to hear 'When You and I Were Young, Maggie'?"

"Just try me," I answered.

For an hour we listened to a four-piece orchestra that Ford had selected himself—a violin, cymbalon, dulcimer and sousaphone—play the old quadrilles and polkas and waltzes.

"Say, Clayton, play that 'Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines' again, will you, please?" Ford would shout up to the fiddler.

He was happy. "We have dances here pretty nearly every week. It's lots of fun to dance the old square dances."

As the members of the orchestra were putting up their instruments, Mr. Ford said with a chuckle:

"Say, Hunt, wish you'd tell the boys that story about Lincoln and the jury. What's the use of living if a fellow can't have a little fun once in a while?"

The FIRST *New Story by the Author of*

¶ *Aggie, Ralph thought, was one of those who lost everything and gained nothing by being a woman. What would she think if she knew he was in love with Mrs. Grafton?*

The Rat

POOR old Aggie, in what state would he find her? Her letter had sounded very buoyant, overjoyed as she had been by the prospect of their reunion; but Aggie had always had the gift of buoyancy. Ralph Barnaby smiled dryly as he thought of it, trundling through the Sussex lanes on the station motor-bus. He was a pale, dark man with something at once glossy and haggard in his aspect; an air of prosperity; but a prosperity won, perhaps, too late. He dined well; he might have starved in the past.

As a matter of fact Ralph Barnaby, though he had never starved, had for years gone without the things he wanted most, and now that he had won some of them his capacity for caring about them had altered. It was not that his zest for life was blunted; it had rusted rather, so that his enjoyments wore a jagged edge, and this jagged quality showed itself in his demeanor —his bright, observant eyes resting with a sort of bitterness on the familiar fields and woodlands, his lean, neat hand striking a match at a blow and flinging it away, when his cigaret was lighted, as if a malediction went with it. He was nervous today, too, thinking of Aggie and of their youth.

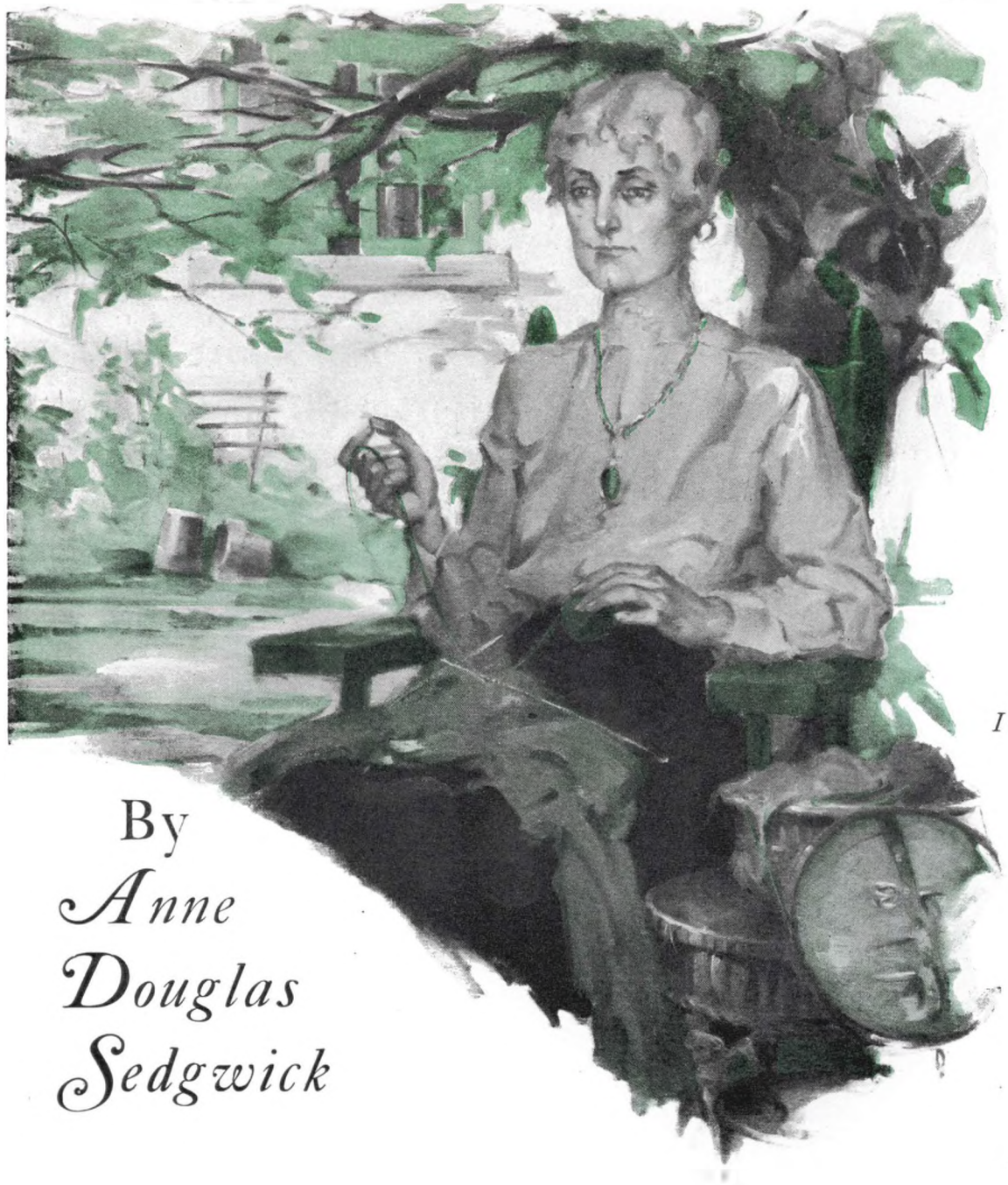
Twenty years had passed since he had seen her, but how clearly he remembered her, the tall, fair, untidy creature, gentle, yet with something wild about her, fond to the point of fatuity, yet quickly flaming. How, for instance, she had hated being called Aggie, or, worse still, Agg; and it was he, with his teasing, malicious affection, who had fixed the derogatory nickname upon her. She had burst into tears one day, he remembered, when he had called her Agg at a tennis party, while Ted Masters was talking to her, and had rushed away to hide in the shrubbery. The name had stuck. It suited her. No one in the family, except her mother, had ever called her Agnes.

Yes, if he had had a hard time, Aggie's had been harder; yet she had managed, all the same, to survive everything. She had managed to get up again, smiling, or almost smiling, after every knock-down blow. She had survived the dense and struggling poverty of their beginnings, though it had drained her youth from her, the elder sister in the crowded country parsonage—with the invalid mother on her hands.

She had never been able to escape, as he and most of the others had, and she had tended and nursed and loved and buried mother, father and the succession of brothers and sisters: silly Dick, who drank himself to death; vain Randolph, who went on the stage, and married a chorus-girl, and died of consumption—with Aggie at his pillow—in the Fulham lodging-house; Margaret with her religious manias; and Gwen, the beauty, who had made a good match and died, after a year of it, with her first baby. Aggie had rejoiced and sorrowed with them all.

When all were dead and her home sunken away from beneath her feet, she had endured the exile to Canada with the grudging, grumbling uncle to whom, Ralph suspected, she had been servant as well as nurse and companion, and in Canada she had met again, and loved, Ted Masters who, after a seven-years' engagement, threw her over for a girl who had money. She had got up again after that, too, as far as he could tell from her letters; at all events she had written of her disaster without one word of bitterness or blame. Ted had met some one who would make him happier; that had been her phrase; and after an interval she had gone on writing about the Canadian birds and rivers.

'The LITTLE FRENCH GIRL'



Illustrations by Dalton Stevens

By *Anne Douglas Sedgwick*

At last, thank goodness—though it was only when her youth was long past and her hopes long spent—Uncle Alfred died and actually—cursed old brute, he had, all the same, shown a tardy decency—left her some money, enough money for her to come home and settle in their old village.

He had been away when Aggie returned to England; his work as correspondent of a London daily had taken him to Italy to write of the Fascisti; and though he had been back for some months he had not till now been able to manage the week-end with Aggie. Truth to tell he was not eager to see her. He shrank from the specter of their youth which the meeting must evoke. He was so changed, and, if she were not, that would make it all the more difficult; for Aggie had always expected more of people than they had to give; and of him what would she not expect? She had loved them all; but he had been the one nearest her. He had been the one who had given her more of life than all the rest of them put together. It had always been with Aggie that he had talked, always to Aggie that he had brought the problems and the solutions, and she had understood and followed.

He had made po· Aggie suffer, too, for it was owing to him that she had lost her ingenuous orthodoxy and he still winced a little in remembering how hard she had taken the loss. How long ago it was! Those were the days in which they read "The Golden Bough" and Nietzsche, Samuel Butler and Schopenhauer. Long ago, indeed! Victorian, almost, those ardors of negation. Organized Christianity, it was true, still smirked and hobbled on its way, respectfully stepping aside to let the chariots of science thunder by and only asking not to be knocked into the ditch; but who really cared anything about the old problems nowadays? They were all as dead as door-nails. Who bothered about souls to save, when souls had been resolved into Libido and Narcissism?

But he saw himself, down from Cambridge, in the dark little morning-room at the Rectory, rather a disagreeable young man, he suspected, lying back in his deep chair and watching Aggie, who would of course be darning at the table, while he tested his latest discoveries upon her. Poor Aggie. She was really of the "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever" type; and he recalled as he helped her to cleverness, her gaze of mingled trust and anguish.

He must have been rather disagreeable, for why couldn't he have left Aggie alone? He had been fond of her, of course, and he had wanted to share things with her; but he had also wanted to test his own power, to compel and dominate. And had there not always lurked a dim suspicion of something stubborn, evasive, in Aggie, something that took refuge in silence at moments of crisis and foiled his subterranean pleasure in seeing her fortresses crumble? Aggie had sometimes exasperated him. She would not

If Aggie was like the meadowsweet, thought Ralph, what did he symbolize? The rat? He had known very unpleasant feelings that afternoon, but to see himself as the rat was the most unpleasant of all.

own to complete defeat. It was always the same old trick of hers. She got up again.

They had rattled along the highroad with the Downs, in the distance, grape-colored and mildly majestic against the sky, and through a fold or wooded valley (woods he remembered, where, as children, they had gathered primroses in spring), and now, stopping by the way to drop sundry passengers, they were passing through a little hamlet of somnolent red brick and thatched beam and plaster. Aggie's cottage stood just beyond it, across the green, and he recalled, in seeing it, the old laborer and his wife who, in their youth, had lived there. It had since then been redeemed to week-end purposes and was now an obvious retreat for an impoverished spinster; yet, among its small old plum-trees and under its recent slates, it looked even meaner and more exposed than he had expected. This was then the acquisition of which Aggie had written in such rapturous terms and he had time before they drew up in front of it for a turn of an old familiar irony.

A tall white ard black figure came speeding to the gate; tall, with pale, untidy hair. It was Aggie, of course, and she had emerged upon the road, oblivious of the onlookers in the bus, to throw her arms about his neck.

"Ralph—dear, dear, darling Ralph!" she said.

Wonderful, such survivals of instinct! It was love, deep love he heard, and instinct in him answered it, bringing tears for a moment to his cold, dark eyes, so that it was through tears he

saw her, so close that she was only visible as an irradiating, benignant presence. Then, as they drew apart, hands clasped, to look clearly at each other, he saw that she was an aged, a devastated Aggie.

Her teeth were blighted and stopped with gold; her hair was almost white and wasted away from neck and temples; strange, irrelevant wrinkles puckered her lips and spun webs upon her cheeks and the voice she spoke in was strange; it must be a Canadian accent and it was intensely disagreeable, even painful, to him to hear it.

They continued to contemplate each other, the bus having disappeared round a turn in the road, and he could remark, his eye running furtively down her spare, tall form, that she was really the typical dowdy English old maid, in white silk blouse, belted at the waist and built up in the neck with boned lace, long black alpaca skirt, and low kid house-shoes, showing jet ornaments on the little straps that crossed the instep. In these days of high heels, short skirts and shingled hair she seemed to belong to an antediluvian era and he realized not only that she had grown old but that, to be so dressed, Uncle Alfred must have left her less money than he had imagined. Her clothes were survivals.

"Oh, Ralph, isn't it too wonderful! I can hardly believe it!" she was saying. She was leading him in, her hand tightly clasped on his, up the brick path between the rows of pinks and violas. "Think of my having found it here! The Grants' old cottage! All beautifully done over, water laid on, a bathroom, and a new roof. Too wonderful!"

IT WAS no doubt a pleasant change from a country where one could pick up an accent like that; but it was really a very mean little cottage and his presence seemed to fill it to overflowing as he followed her with his valise up the precipitous staircase.

"I've kept the window closed and the curtains drawn all day," said Aggie in the little back bedroom, hastening to open the casement—"because of the sun; but it's nice and cool now, isn't it? Only see, Ralph, the view one gets. The Downs over the apple-trees."

"That is an escape, isn't it?" he said, walking to look.

"Isn't it! And there is the garden; I've not been able to do much yet; but it will be so pretty. Of course, the road in front"—she was answering his implied criticism—"it's a pity; but do you know, for a lonely woman like me, it's really rather nice, too. It's not the highroad, you see, and I enjoy watching the dear country things that pass; sheep and cows, and horses going to plow. It's rather a darling of a road, really."

"I'm sure it is; but I'd rather look at the Downs all the same," said Ralph. "Have you got some hot water for me, Aggie? The drive was dusty."

Hot water was there, under its towel, and his favorite soap; he had forgotten that it was his favorite. "Oh, Ralph, you *always* wanted it at home! Don't you remember? The lettuce-green, nice flat, tablet look? And mother said it was too expensive—fourpence a cake it was in those days; and I always contrived it for you!" laughed Aggie. She was highly excited. "I'll leave you then. You'll come down to tea at once, won't you? The drawing-room is at the bottom of the stairs."

"Obviously," Ralph said to himself, washing his hands. "And the dining-room opposite and the kitchen behind. I can almost hear the village handmaiden breathing down there now." But his little room with its white dimity hangings was cool and pleasant. There was a bowl of dark clove-pinks on the writing-table, a volume of "Max's" essays and a Ross and Somerville on the little table by his bed, and over the mantelpiece an old photograph of his mother that he went to look at.

How like himself, really, and how well he remembered her, with her dark, suffering eyes and acid smile. He and Gwen had been the only ones who had taken after her. All the rest had been fair with varying degrees of the foolishness that had characterized their father; for he had been the most foolish of the lot: an emotional Evangelical of a really repulsive type, bearded, beaming, exuding forgiveness and sympathy when none were asked of him, and very easily hurt and disconcerted. Not quite a gentleman, silly old father, that was the simple truth of the matter, and Ralph seemed to see it with a special clearness as he stood drying his hands and looking at his mother's picture—for she, he felt sure, had seen it.

In the tiny drawing-room Aggie, her faded, yellow-white head high under the low ceiling, was poised, waiting to see his surprise; as ill luck would have it, he struck his forehead against the lintel in entering so that some moments passed in assuring her—untruthfully—that he was not hurt, before he could look round. But, with the scent of the lettuce-green soap hanging round him still, the sense of his mother's eyes on his, it hardly surprised him to find himself among the old Rectory furniture. For there was the worn sofa where their mother had lain and the deep armchair where their father had read "The Rock" and the upright piano on which he had first interpreted "Tristan" to Aggie. He could almost believe himself a boy again as he looked; and: "How in heaven's name do they come to be here?" he asked.

"I found them; isn't it too wonderful?—in the Astons' farmhouse. They bought them at the auction and sold them back to me when they found I wanted them so much. Wasn't it good of them? And it makes all the difference of course. The pictures I took with me to Canada."

Yes; there they were, the pictures: Whistler's "Portrait of My Mother," which he had given Aggie on her twenty-first birthday, and, in comical contrast, "The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner," which had come to them from their grandmother and had made Aggie cry in the nursery. And there, standing among the bowls of pinks and roses, just as they had stood at the Rectory, were the photographs of frock-coated, bewhiskered grandpapa with a book under his arm, and capped and tippeted grandmama holding a hideous half-nude baby who was himself, Gwen in her tight-waisted wedding-dress, her hair, under its veil and wreath, distended after the fashion of the time, and the dirge-like family groups, papa in the midst with his absurd round hat and band. Desperately comic they all looked, yet a lump was in his throat as he recognized them.

And there was Aggie, embodying the past. A flush was on her cheek; her voice fluttered as she poured out the dark Indian tea of their childhood. She was moved, ecstatically, terribly moved, for she remembered everything and Gwen in her wedding-dress was as real to her as he himself sitting there, trying not to mind the tea, and they were both as dear to her as ever.

That was all that spinsters of her type came to mean, he reflected; storehouses, pathetic, musty, tinkling storehouses of the past. He felt that he should break something, overturn something, if he moved and he hoped that he might successfully conceal from Aggie that if still dear she was no longer near him and not very real either.

He was sorry for her, very sorry, for she made him think of a dusty, dreary mouse that has been let out of the trap too late. She sat in the sunlight outside the trap, panting softly, not caring to venture far afield, but aware only of good fortune. For Aggie, he saw it more and more clearly as the day wore on, was not at all sorry for herself and he even suspected that she, who had got nothing out of life but this tardy escape, was happier than he, who had got so much. It was pitiful, absurd and a little vexatious, too, to realize.

THEY sat in the orchard behind the house. The summer grass was tall about their feet and over their heads were the gnarled branches of the apple-trees and he had to confess to Aggie that he had lost his old interest in birds when she cried out excitedly at the tinkling passage of a family of blue tits. He smoked and Aggie knitted and though she was evidently shy she suspected nothing of his aloofness, for she talked on and on, eagerly, happily, talked of him and of his full, wonderful life, of how becoming his baldness was and how interesting all those people must be whom he knew in London, people who wrote and composed and painted.

Ralph had to smile to himself when he heard her; the thought of Aggie and his friends was entertaining. How at sea she would have been among them all! All the values of his life, those intellectual and esthetic values, would be almost incomprehensible to her and as for its emotional values, what would poor Aggie have made of Babs and Violet and Germaine? In regard to such illicit love-affairs as his had been he suspected that Aggie kept still her old Rectory judgments. What would Aggie think if she were to know that he was in love with Mrs. Grafton now? She and her like were the background against which poor Aggie's figure stood out so obsolete, so defeated. Alluring, compelling, sophisticated creatures all of them, and, first and foremost, female; whereas Aggie, though certainly female, was only so in the negative sense, the sense in which one lost everything and gained nothing by being a woman.

He was very kind to her, however; he took her in as far as it was possible to take her. He could not tell her about Mrs. Grafton, but he told her about his war work, about those of his friends whose names meant something to her, about his flat in Westminster which she must some day come and see. He had picked up some rather nice things in his wanderings and though she would not like the pictures by his post-impressionist friends, she would like his bits of porcelain and (*Continued on page 180*)

By E. Barrington

A Romance of the most-wooed Woman of her Time

The EXQUISITE PERDITA

The Story So Far:

"MORE sinned against than sinning" is an old phrase that might with more than average justice have been said of the exquisite Perdita. Married off at the tender age of sixteen to one Mr. Robinson, who proved but a rake and a sot without charm and dragged her with him into a debtors' prison, her life up to the time she met Richard Sheridan contained little but tragedy, and that sordid. Then, of a sudden, she was shot into fame like a star from a rocket, and became the darling of fashionable London.

That was due to Sheridan, who, his shrewd managerial eye seeing in her rare stuff for the stage, made her at once an offer to play the part of Juliet in his forthcoming production; and on her all but stunned acceptance, set about advertising her to the London public, first by wheedling famous old David Garrick into tutoring her, and then by making her appear in such fashionable gathering places as the Pantheon.

Mrs. Robinson had but to appear to be pursued by masculine attentions. Men, indeed, would not let her alone. She caught the eye of the young Prince of Wales, then not yet of age, and in strict leading-strings to his parents, King George III and Queen Charlotte. She received offers, mostly dishonorable, from the greatest names in England. That arch-profligate and best-hated of Englishmen, the Duke of Cumberland, brother to the King, proposed to set her up in an elaborate establishment.

By all of which, strangely enough, her pretty head was not turned; indeed, there was much that was fine and sensitive in her, though her path was difficult. She even rebuffed the advances of that volatile, charming Irishman, Dick Sheridan, and converted him to the anomalous part of shepherd over her in this land of hungry wolves. Sheridan it was who wrote the barbed answers she signed to her suitors— and one most sharply barbed to his Highness, the Duke. What partly kept the playwright from pursuing his own suit more ardently was the fact that Perdita early made friends with his wife Elizabeth, that

author of "Glorious Apollo"

Illustrated by
DEAN CORNWELL
and with
old prints

nightingale and rose in one whose singing was no more famous throughout England than her delicate loveliness. He loved Elizabeth—in his fashion.

At last came the night of Perdita's first appearance, which she faced with terrors inexpressible, in spite of Garrick's and Sheridan's encouragement. But she was, it need scarce be said, a triumph; every man in the audience felt himself the lover of that lovely Juliet. Sheridan himself, half intoxicated with the success, would have wooed her favors anew had he not been interrupted by Lord Malden, friend of the Prince, who came up to appraise the new beauty at close range. But next day the playwright apologized for his ardor, and renewed his pledge of disinterested friendship for Perdita.

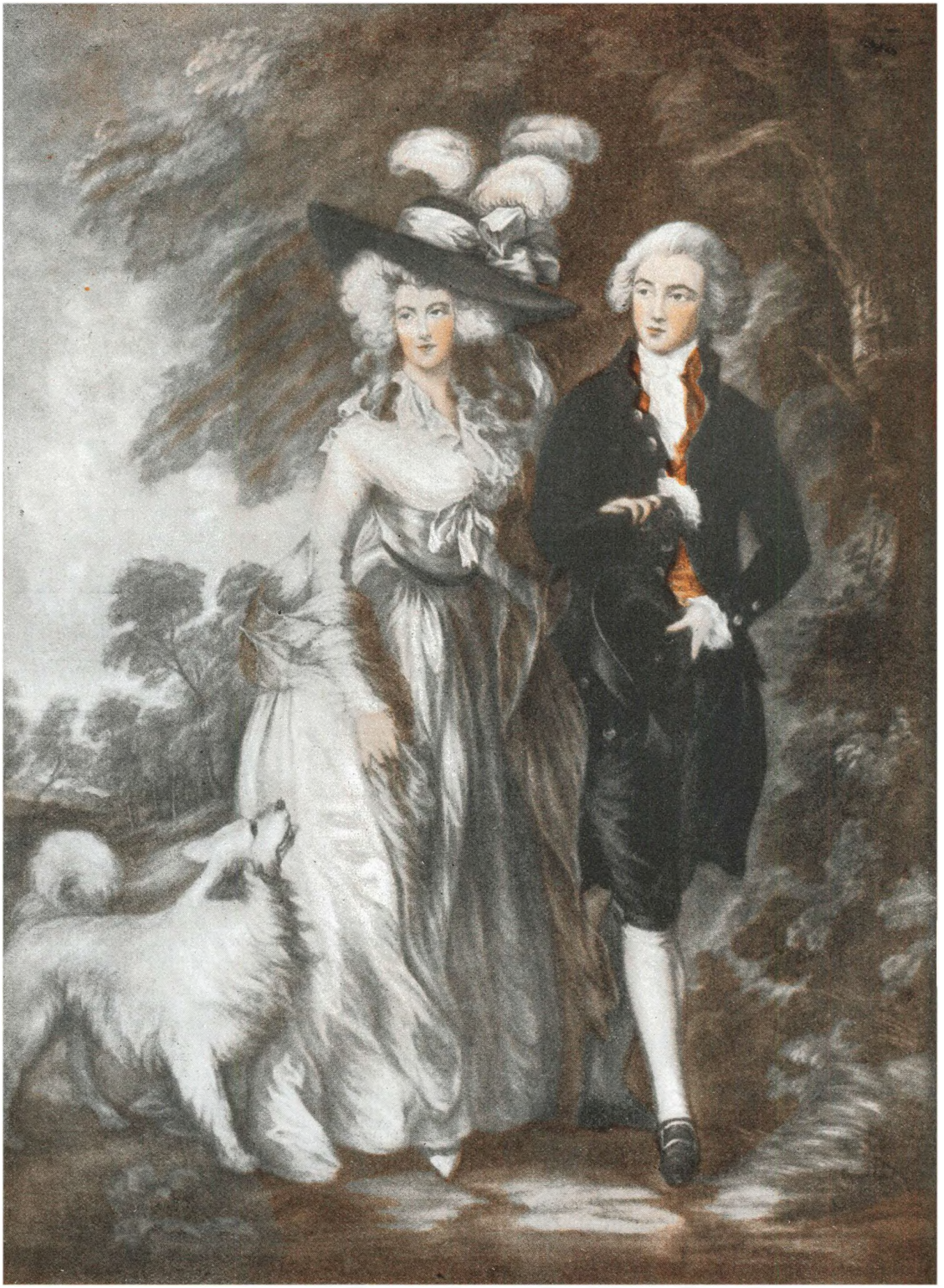
More triumphs followed, and Perdita was launched on that career which made London's ladies ape the very fashion of her dress. Sheridan at this time was writing "The School for Scandal," though in fits and starts, as suited his erratic brilliance. The famous climax of the falling screen he got in his own home, from discovering his wife behind a screen talking to Lord Edward Fitzgerald—Perdita and Mrs. Tickell, Elizabeth's keen-witted sister, being also present that day.

Sheridan, it may be said, felt more than a prick of jealousy toward Lord Edward, though he might have spared himself the pains; for that noble and high-minded Irishman, while worshiping Elizabeth, kept toward her a purely Platonic relationship if ever there was one. His friendship meant much to her in a life that was difficult, what with Sheridan's erratic ways, and his wild extravagance driving them near ruin. But following Sheridan's petulance on the occasion of the screen, Lord Edward felt compelled to forswear Elizabeth's company.

"The School for Scandal" was an overwhelming success; adulation poured in on Sheridan, and what was more to the point, money.

Shortly after, he produced, by request of the King and Queen, "The Winter's Tale."

In this Mrs. Robinson was cast for Perdita, and it was from this she got her name—and also the love of the Prince of Wales. For when she saw him present, she played for him alone, and he sat in his box spellbound, and never took his eyes from her. She was both exalted and terror-struck at the outcome of her efforts. The whole house buzzed with it. After the play, the Prince's particular friend, Lord Essex (the former Lord Malden)



Courtesy Kennedy & Co.

Gainsborough's Famous Painting "The Morning Walk" portraying The Duke and Duchess of Cumberland at the time they came into the life of PERDITA.

talked to her significantly of his royal master, she listening with half an ear, and her eyes cast upward toward the Prince. "Mark my words, Mrs. Robinson," said his Lordship, apropos of royal marriages, "the Prince of Wales is one who will please himself in his marriage, resent it who will. I who live in almost daily companionship with him have a right to my opinion."

Words strangely to be proved and disproved in the coming years, though Perdita listened incredulous.

PERDITA could not get away from Lord Essex even at the supper party she was giving at her house near the theater in Covent Garden. It was a gay gathering, for the evening had put the seal on Perdita's success, and for some time past she had been so much the fashion as to set it in modish quarters of the town. Her woman, Mrs. Armstead, a handsome woman with an intelligent dark face, was often nowadays approached by ladies in the first flight of fashion with entreaties for exclusive information as to whether Mrs. Robinson's winter gowns would be chiefly of satin or velvet, and what furs she had determined to patronize.

She had prepared for this occasion a dress of mother-of-pearl white satin with a knot of holly berries and glistening dark green leaves in compliment to the December season, her lady's hair dressed with the same scarlet berries and white feathers, and as she left the room the maid could not forbear an exclamation of admiration at her own handiwork.

"And I am the more glad, madam," she added, "because Mr. Higham sent this evening while you were playing, to say that he proposed with your permission to bring Mr. Charles James Fox to your supper, and we all know he has the reputation for recognizing a beauty when he sees her."

A familiarity which Mrs. Armstead—who knew her world and was later to take a singular place in it—would not have ventured with any but a player-lady, as she somewhat scornfully called her mistress. It pleased Perdita, however, as she trailed her satin down the stair to her drawing-room, holding her head aloft with the deer-like carriage which set off the line of her long throat—Mrs. Armstead leaning with crossed arms over the stair-rail above.

Mr. Higham, obsequious, with Mr. Fox beside him, was posted at the door. All the guests had assembled while their hostess changed her dress, and the Prince, the Prince, was on every lip. The air vibrated with him, his charms, his grace, his beauty. A wave of this commendation engulfed her as she entered, and greeted her from Mr. Fox as he bowed, gross and beetle-browed, before her.

"Why, madam, what can any man say after thanking you for your gracious hospitality, but that you have stormed the last fort left to conquer? I hear the Queen was enchanted—not that her commendation has any value, except among some of the antiquated Tory families. But the Prince!—the whole house observed that he had no power to remove his eyes from you. I felicitate you on the most important conquest in the habitable world."

She fluttered charmingly. "Oh, Mr. Fox! Surely the King——"

"Madam, the King has neither eyes nor ears. No, in this house dedicated to Beauty and Genius, let us salute the rising sun, and toss off our glasses to the young, the irresistible, the Prince of Hearts—the darling of the nation!"

He said it with such an infectious enthusiasm that it gave the key-note of the evening. All that was not in Perdita's honor was in the Prince's. Champagne flowed like water and when it had made several rounds the company was so far mellowed that at last the two charmers were joined in a toast given by Mr. Fox on his legs and all the company standing—"The Prince and the genius and beauty he has the royal taste to comprehend and encourage—the Prince and the fair Perdita!"

His Royal Highness The Duke of York brother of PERDITA'S *suitor the Prince of Wales*

Perdita, in reply, gave some sentiment with regard to Mr. Fox as the guide and inspirer of something or somebody, but for the life of her could not afterwards remember what or whom. The flattery and champagne combined had intoxicated her and rendered her forgetful of all but a world where it mattered little what a woman said or did not say provided only she were charming. And that she was this in the highest degree men and women alike assured her.

Mr. Fox, sitting at her right hand with the delightful Mrs. Tickell opposite, showed his appreciation in a series of slow, dominant approaches which she found herself quite unable to repel. He took agreement and invitation for granted, and with a veiled desire in his heavy-lidded eyes invaded her on some plan of his own which she was in too high excitement to discern very clearly. The man had the black-browed attractive ugliness of his ancestor, King Charles the Second. Like him also his reputation with women was scandalous, and Perdita knew it, as who did not? But she had heard a whisper running about London that already his influence with the young Prince was marked, and that gave him an interest with her which he could never have exercised otherwise.

"But beware, beware, Perdita!" whispered pretty Mrs. Tickell, when she secured a minute with her. "Don't pane-tiddle [play the fool] with Fox! He's a great big gollupshious monster and if you have him sprawling about your hearth-rug the Tabbies will soon be clawing you and scratching out your eyes."

"Indeed I flatter myself I shall give them no cause as regards Mr. Fox, madam," says Perdita, tossing her lovely head with the scarlet berries. "I have no taste for monsters, China or otherwise, and design to choose better if ever I put myself in the way of scandal, which I won't."

Mrs. Tickell's eyes danced. "Even that precaution won't conciliate the Tabbies—they'll scandalize you with an archangel and with the more zest. And when they get you down—Lord help you! They'll pick you to the bone. Humanity's not the failing of your true Purrers. Be on your guard."

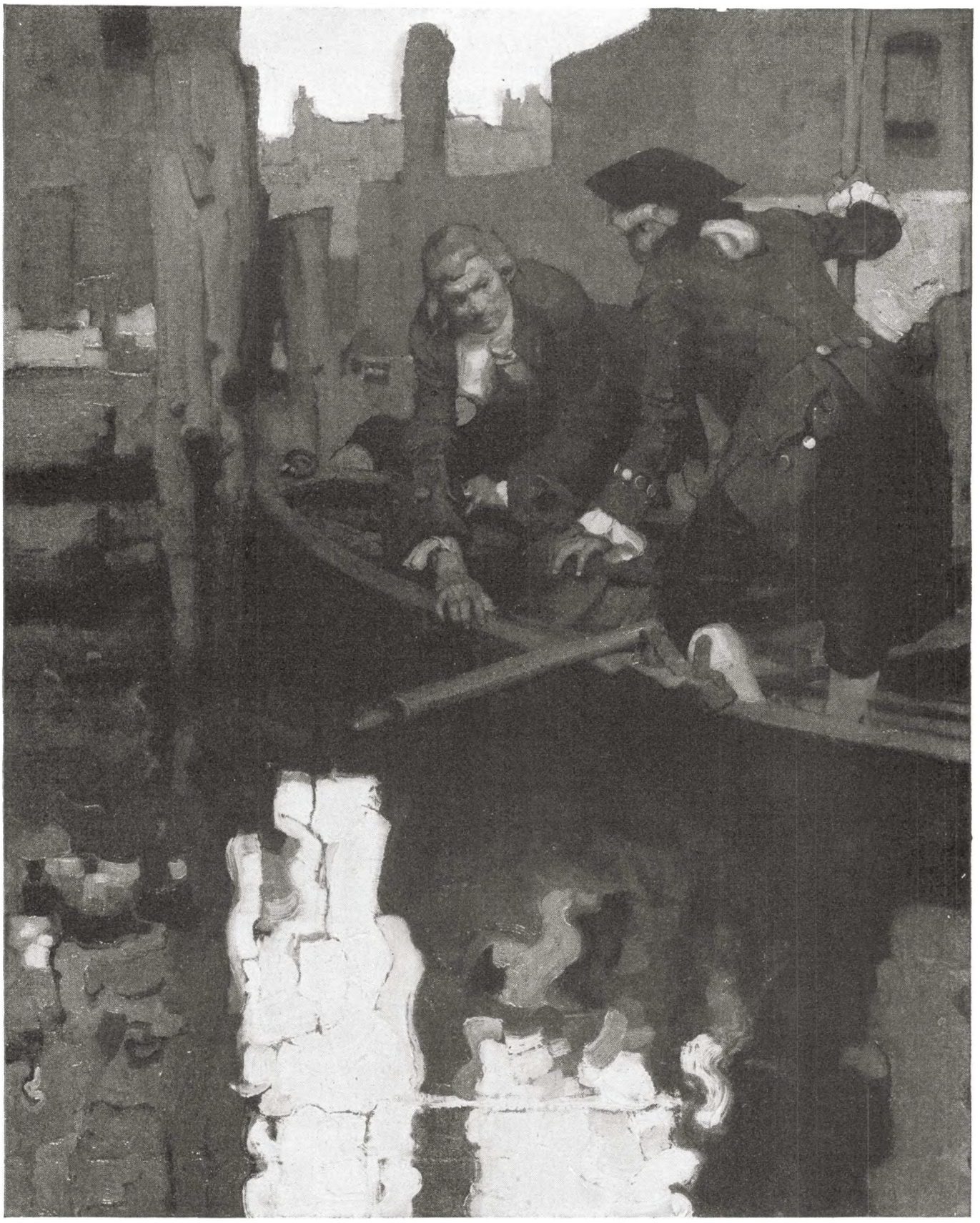
It infuriated Perdita, her eyes bedazzled with the glittering Prince, that Mrs. Tickell or any other should suppose it possible she needed a caution where Fox was concerned, and the angrier she grew the more delighted was Mrs. Tickell to quiz her. Indeed, on the way home she must needs stop her chair in Great Queen Street to trot up-stairs with her budget and burst in upon Elizabeth, sitting by the fire hanging over the theater accounts.

"Don't bepuppy [scold] me, ma'am, but I couldn't go by you with the news that all the town will bubble with tomorrow. Perdita has captured the Prince! He couldn't remove his eyes from her, and sighed until he fluttered all the feathers in all the boxes. And Fox was at her supper after, enjoying his broilo bono and making love to her with *his* eyes. So then up speaks my little I when I got her alone and warned her she won't have a least chance with the Tabbies if that gets about. Lord, she was so angry! Her head is simmering with the Prince, and no wonder."

"Lord, Mary, are you in earnest?" cries Elizabeth, dismayed. "For if so—heaven forbid! Oh, my dear, if you did but know the confusion it will bring our affairs! I hope 'tis only a boy's sheep's-eyes and no harm done. But she is too good a woman——"

"No woman's too good a woman when a Prince is in question," says Mrs. Tickell, nodding her gay little head until her feathers made a breeze of their own. "If it isn't a Linley—that's to say. But you're as pale as pale! Go to bed, for heaven's sake, and don't hang over those infernal papers, and stay abed tomorrow morning and send me a fiff [note] to say how you do. And the deuce take Mrs. R. and her lovers!"

They stayed a moment embraced, each fair head by the other, and then Mary Tickell sprang apart laughing.



"Words cannot describe the strangeness Lord Essex to go to meet the Prince."

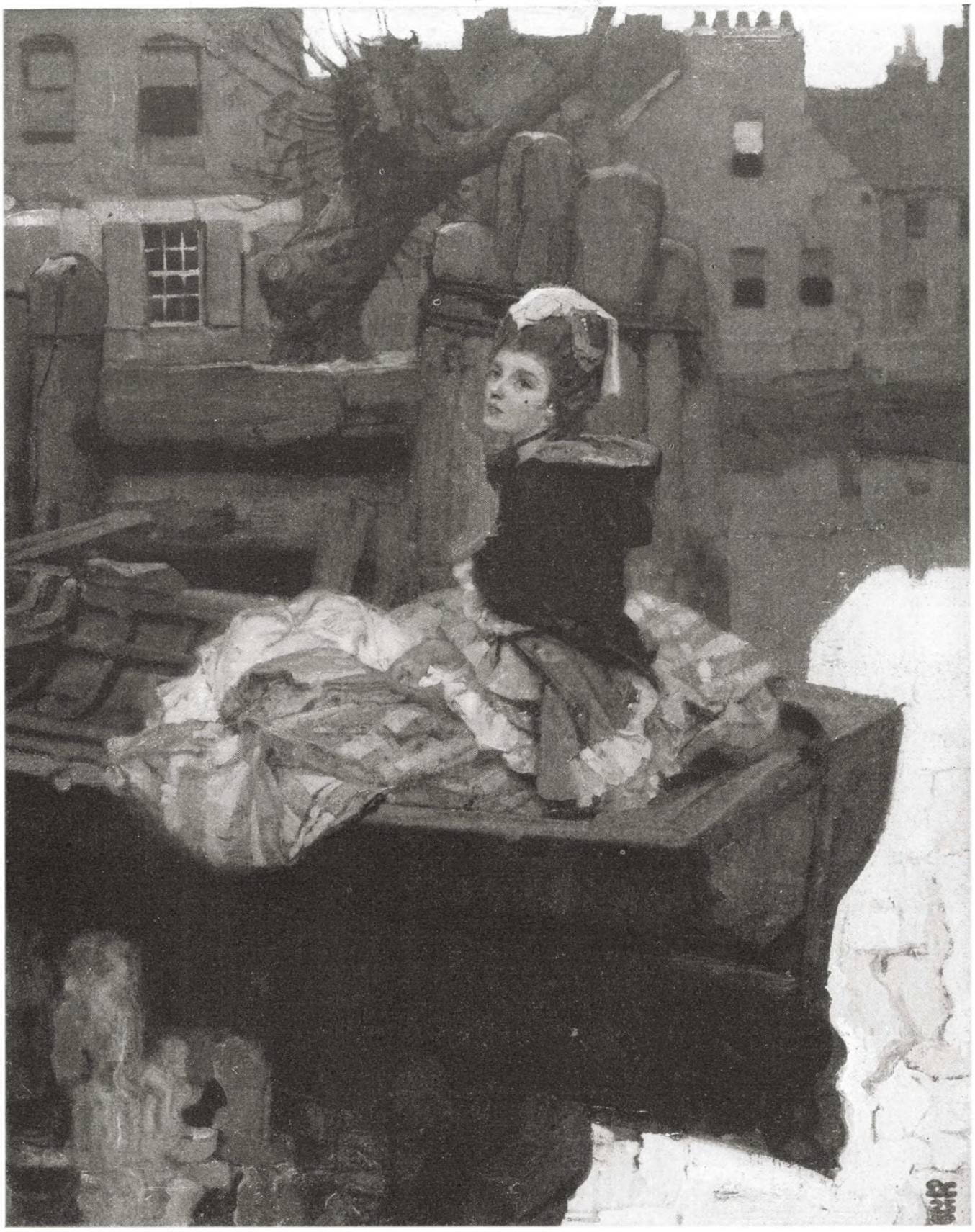
"Well—good night, ma'am, and God thee bless! Don't forget the fiff."

And so down the stair with her and off and away to her home and babies—Tickell at a drinking-bout with Sheridan and a few choice spirits to celebrate the success of the play. Success indeed was generally launched with libations of liquors at Drury Lane.

The evening was voted a brilliant occasion, a fitting crown to her triumph, and as Perdita bid her guests farewell, her eyes blazed contagious fires; she felt herself not only a beauty but a wit, a genius, capable of taking her place in any society, of shining in the highest firmaments open to mortal effort.

Fox, hitching his arm in Higham's, summed up the situation as clearly as the champagne and brandy he carried would permit.

"A charming woman, though by no means so clever as beautiful. I never saw a handsomer if it were not Amoret, and something in the same softly voluptuous style—every glance an invitation. No wonder Prinny was struck down. And did you observe a good-looking, bright-eyed wench in a cap on the stair?



of Perdita's feelings. When she stepped into that boat with it seemed to her that she had broken entirely with her old life.

The waiting-woman, I take it. I am much mistook if she have not more brains than her pretty mistress. Well, here's good luck to them both! I design to see more of the fair Perdita—the little fascinating sentimentalist! A Lydia Languish, if ever I saw one. Sherry must have had her in his eye when he drew the fair romantic." They reeled off together arm in arm.

While Perdita—now to be universally known as Perdita—sipped her chocolate in bed next morning Sheridan sent round a message from the theater that he would call and see her at twelve o'clock. The message surprised her, for he was none too early a bird himself, as many of those connected with Drury Lane knew to their cost. Mrs. Armstead brought the billet, and stood waiting while she read it and scribbled a reply.

"I was on the bend of the stair last night, madam, while Mr. Fox and Mr. Higham were getting their coats."

Perdita yawned an "Indeed," and composed herself for another lazy hour. The impression Fox had made upon her had

worn off in sleep. He now appeared merely a gross-looking young man who could be of no consequence to the brilliant Mrs. Robinson. But still Mrs. Armstead lingered.

"They spoke of you, madam."

She did not even exert herself to lift the lovely lashes sleeping on her cheek.

"Indeed."

"Yes, madam. Mr. Fox said he understood from my Lord Essex, whom he saw on leaving Drury Lane, that the Prince of Wales was absolutely thunderstruck by your beauty and talent. He said he could not have believed that one sight of any person could have had such an effect."

The lashes scarcely moved, but the eyes beneath them were awake. "Indeed?"—for the third time.

"Yes, madam. Mr. Fox is known to be in all of the Prince's secrets and ——"

"It's very strange, I think," said Perdita with dignity, "that a woman in your position should pretend to know the Prince's confidants."

Mrs. Armstead smoothed her apron with composure.

Perdita opened on the brief but warm love-letter she expected. It was signed Florizel. "Well, my Lord, and what does this mean?" she cried. Can you not guess the writer?" said Lord Essex. The Prince of Wales.

"It would be stranger still if I did not know them, madam, since the matter is discussed everywhere, together with the ill terms the Prince is on with their Majesties at the present time."

Perdita opened her eyes widely now and considered her attendant, a handsome woman with an educated way of expressing herself which had surprised her at the beginning of their acquaintance. "You must have some motive," she said, "in telling me this. I never thought you one for idle gossip."

"You do me only justice, madam. My motive I must leave to yourself. But certainly Mr. Fox will be one of the most considerable persons in England."

She busied herself with some laces and ribbons and shortly after left the room without any further disclosures; Perdita, instead of sleeping, reflecting on what had passed. She would have been perhaps a little clearer as to motives had she known that Mr. Fox, leaving Mr. Higham still hunting for his coat for a moment, had ascended to the bend of the stair and paid a few compliments to the handsome woman in cap and lace apron, ending with a word of more importance.

"The Prince is mightily taken with your lady. You will see more of him and of myself, Mrs. Abigail"—"Armstead, sir!" she corrected him with a touch of pride—"eh? Yes—Mrs. Armstead. There is interest in serving a lady of such consequence and I would beg you accept this as an earnest."

Yet Fox with all his perspicuity did not at all divine Mrs. Armstead's reflections as he slid his gift into her hand, and was profoundly astonished when she returned it gravely.

"I thank you, sir—but I am not in the habit of accepting gifts from strangers. I have all I need," and so went quietly up the stair out of reach. These matters she kept to herself.

Sheridan found Perdita still shining with the excitement of the previous evening. She sprang to meet him, crying:

"What more worlds have I to conquer, Mr. Sheridan? I saw his Majesty's delight, and her Majesty relaxed more than once into the softest, most gracious smile! Unless we go as strollers and capture the Tsar of Muscovy I see not what's left to do!"

"The interests of this puny island are not, however, exhausted," says Mr. Sheridan, offering her a chair and taking one.

"How could they," says she, "where Mr. Sheridan's genius scintillates and coruscates and fireworks and outdoes Vauxhall and Ranelagh in brilliance every time I see him!"

He bowed with his hand on his heart.

"Actress!" says he. "Not a word of it do you mean! However, I come with a warning this time. You'll think my conversation a perpetual libel, so beset is it with alarms and censures on other persons' intentions. But you're my first consideration—Juliet—no, Perdita, in future. Why will you be such a beautiful woman? The half of it would serve you on the stage, and a quarter of it would still give your shepherd as many wolves to hunt as he had a mind for."

"What now?" says Perdita, laughing gaily at his droll face.

"I think you know as well as I, madam, that in the play of last night Perdita is beloved by a certain Prince Florizel. There was another Florizel, not on the stage, who could not keep his eyes off her. Don't tell me you don't know it. Indeed, my dear, the Prince of Wales never took his eyes off you."

"And pray why should he?" The lady tossed her head charmingly. "I am sure there was nothing else in the house so well worth looking at! You don't dare call his Royal Highness a wolf, I hope, sir?"

"That remains to be seen! But I am not arrived at the point yet, madam. If his Royal Highness choose to stare at a lady like a suck-a-thumb at lollipops for a whole evening he must expect that all the world will stare at him as well as with him. But that again is not the point. I received a summons to attend his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland in his box——"

The laugh dropped from his face instantly. Indeed she had a most instinctive horror of that bad man.

Sheridan continued to a listener who had grown pale.

" 'Twas to say he had never had the felicity to see me since 'The School for Scandal' took the town and to present me to his impudent jilt of a Duchess. They were there to mortify the King and Queen, to whom it is gall and wormwood to see them, and there she sat playing off her glances on everyone in the house that had an eye to spare for her notorietyship. No sooner was I presented than she leveled their fire at me and I perceived the truth of Mr. Walpole's description of her that I heard from Mr. Fox—'Most amorous eyes,' he wrote, 'and eyelashes a yard long.' Indeed, a captivatingly pretty woman and yet with something about her that to an eye of my experience says 'Beware—and yet again, beware!' "

"But the warning!" palpitated Perdita.

"Ay—that springs from the eyelashes. They're not irrelevant. She says with a mincing prettiness: 'Oh, the charming Perdita! Such beauty is impossible off the stage with its aids in lighting and coloring. What wonder she runs away with the golden apple from us all! His Royal Highness and I could scarce take our eyes from her, unless it was to see how the Prince of Wales stared her out of countenance. She turned from the mock Florizel to the real one with a zest which if her Majesty perceives—well, I should be apt to predict trouble.'

"The Duke, heavy and dull by her side, nodded approval. Much more was said on various matters and I was indulged with a close inspection of the famous eyelashes in their various postures of rally, advance and retreat. The civility was pretty well, I thought, considering my part in a certain billet. If they could have guessed it! But what does Perdita's wisdom deduce from all this?"

"Fear!" said she, looking at him with melancholy great eyes. "The Duke terrifies me, and something (*Continued on page 197*)

By Wm. H. Hamby

A Lot of Sharpers Tried To Take It From Me BUT

I Made My Money Work *for Me*

ONE raw February day my younger brother and I were tracking rabbits through the snow. The northwest wind whistled through the bare Ozark woods; our shoes were full of holes and the snow packed inside around our heels. The trail ran out; the rabbit had eluded us. We turned and looked back. Blue wood smoke was rising from the chimney of the log cabin at the foot of the hill—the cabin in which the Hamby family lived.

My brother blew on his stiffened hands. It was not warm down there in the cabin, but enough sight warmer than out here in the woods.

"Let's go back."

"Wait until we get one more," I urged. "That will make us twenty cents' worth." We got five cents apiece for rabbits, and it was about the only way boys in the hills had of raising money. I had known the whole family to go an entire year without having twenty dollars.

We picked up a new trail and went crunching on through the snow.

"John," I said feelingly, "I wish I had fifty thousand dollars." That seemed the biggest, roundest, most gorgeous sum I could wish for.

"What would you do with it?" he asked.

I laughed. "That is the easiest thing I know."

Afterwards—a long time afterwards—I discovered I was wrong. It was the hardest thing I know.

Earning money is simple compared to investing it. In earning there is only one main problem—you and your job, or you and your business. But when you come to invest it there are several hundred problems—shrewd, grasping, insinuating, talkative problems.

Looking back I see that earning that fifty thousand, so glibly but earnestly wished for, has been a slow and toilsome process. But I have had to use more wits in protecting it than in making it.

My first real money came from teaching school. That was the only occupation aside from catching rabbits that paid cash. I was sixteen and got $25 a month. The next year I secured a better school—one on a railroad—a whistling station of the Frisco. There were 120 pupils in the one room for the seventeen-year-old teacher to handle. There were thirty in the primer class, and four married men studying algebra. I did my own janitor work, and was paid $200 for the six months. I have often wondered if my hate for the job and secret longing for $50,000 did not inspire at least two of my pupils in the choice of their life-work—they became train robbers.

About this time my dream of a fortune was swallowed up, or at least merged into a bigger, more vivid one—an ambition to become a writer. At that time and at that place I could not have picked a more hopeless-looking way of earning $50,000.

That was more than eighteen years ago. My progress has been slow but consistent. Every year has seen an advance both in financial returns and in appreciation from readers. And some time ago I discovered that I had attained that boyhood wish; and that I now had to answer that boyhood question of what to do with the money.

Such money as came my way has been put to work. I have had to work too hard for it to let it lie around idle. I have usually made it earn from eight to forty percent. Often I have made a hundred percent. Twice I have cleared 4,000 percent on investments.

And all the time I have been very careful of my principal. This record was achieved in the face of a very fierce onslaught by promoters, salesmen, visionaries, wild-catters and sharks.

What started the real race for my money—the race the other fellows made for it—was the announcement that I had won a prize offered by a magazine for the best novel submitted to it during the year. The fact that I had been earning a fair income for some years did not make me look half so like shark-bait as the publicity of this one particular check. No doubt there was great smacking of lips among the predatory ones when they read in the morning papers that one "William H. Hamby, a writer of our city, has just been awarded that cash prize," et cetera. They made a magnificent race for that prize money, but unlike the rich man in the Bible, they turned away sad and sorely troubled—not because of their great possessions but because their dotted lines were still unsigned.

What made me particularly vulnerable to attacks was that I wanted to invest my money. If I had been a spendthrift, I would have taken it to Tia Juana. If I had been a miser, I'd have put it in a section of gas-pipe and buried it in the back yard. If I had been a financial hare, I would have put it in the four percent steel jaws of a savings-bank. But I was none of these. In the first place, I had a definite conviction that money ought to earn more than four percent—all that I had ever borrowed had; and in the second place, my observation had taught me that smallness of dividends is not exactly a guarantee of safety—that unless a man uses his head he can lose his (*Continued on page 221*)

By Dorothy Miller

A Spinster who asks

What About Us *Old* Maids?

Photograph Strauss
Peyton Studios

AN OLD maid, I hold, is a woman who wants to get married and can't. Call her a spinster. Call her a bachelor girl. Call her a free woman. Call her what you will, or not at all. But an unmarried woman who is neither a divorcée nor a widow is an old maid. And if she cradles in her breast a woman's heart, she is a woman who wants to get married, and can't.

Proud males, do not smirk. Your conceit in sexual matters ill becomes you. You have bent the knee before many a female who has, by disdaining you, attached to herself the derisive, piteous epithet of spinsterhood.

It isn't because she's never been asked that our old maid can't get married. It is because life plays its little tricks. She has never met her mate.

Though the thought is devastating and the expression of it is painful, I declare here, shamelessly, that by my own tenets—I am an old maid. And it is with humility and a certain blushing timidity that I prepare to speak frankly about myself. I am not a famous person. I am only such a woman as your friend Miss Nellie. Or perhaps such a woman as *you*. I am the potential white-haired, fragile creature of whom all young and all romantic folk ask their elders or their imaginations, "Why did she never marry?"

Youth expects to marry, just as it expects to go to Europe—some day. It is only as youth matures that a sort of panic of hopelessness comes over it with the realization that though it has booked its passage, the hour of sailing will not strike until—tomorrow. And everybody knows tomorrow never comes.

Once I was in love. I was even engaged. I had even bought my trousseau, if you want to know exactly how far things went. But then they went wrong, desolately wrong. Never mind. We won't cry. It all happened a great many years ago, and I have only one pair of hand-embroidered pillow-slips, one cross-stitched tea-towel, and one clothes-pin apron left to weep over. I am, you see, a typical old maid, since I began my career with a blighted love-affair. It is, my intuition whispers, the way most of our careers are begun. Anyhow, to hear us tell it, it is.

When women haven't love to hold close, they embrace interests, one after another, or all at one time. In my own case, I was trained to be a musician. For several years I worked professionally at my musical trade. Then, because I was engaged, I became cook and maid of all work at home. When I was no longer a bride-to-be, some spirit went out of me. I could not resume my musical work, with its nerve-straining public appearances. So I continued to cook, and became a writer. In each of my occupations I have attained a measure, very small, of financial success, and immeasurable delight. And though my talents are slim, my versatility is a great comfort to me.

It is most convenient. You see, in a company of musicians I profess to be a writer. Among the writers of my circle I claim to be a musician. If the artistic crowd is mixed, I am but a plain little home body. Oh, I masquerade most gleefully! But amongst the wives and mothers, there's no disguising me as an intelligent person. However wise I may be in domestic lore, I am, after all, what I am. Condescending glances show that I cannot possibly understand men and children, or how to manage them. They hint, in fact, that I cannot really understand anything about anything.

"Old maids never do know what they're talking about, darling," they seem to say indulgently. "They just never do."

It is very irksome, being thought so ignorant of the most elemental truths of psychology!

There you have me, or enough of me to suffice for purposes of representation. I am not a poor Miss Lulu Bett. My existence is colorful. It would no doubt seem enviably care free to the overworked mother of a dozen children. I am not glum-faced and run down at the heel, living only by the charity of the relatives who support and enslave me, as too oft were the dear put-upon old maids of yore. I am spoiled and proud and independent. I have my professions. I have money of my own in the bank. I keep it there, and graciously spend my father's. There isn't a married woman living who could look me into confusion. There isn't a married (*Continued on page 161*)

The First *of a New Group of* Irish Stories *by*

KATHLEEN NORRIS

Ellen Begins at Home

"Car'rds," *Mrs. Murphy remarked to Ellen and Clem. "You'd think the poor cud eat car'rds the way they talk at the Charities."*

"THERE'S very bad luck in annyone sayin' she's happy," Mrs. Murphy observed pessimistically.

"Well, you've brought very little bad luck on yourself that way, ma," Ellen Murphy Riordan, radiant in a red and blue bungalow apron, from which a tag marked "$2.98" had been but a few moments removed, remarked neatly, as she placed a platter of poached eggs and a pitcher of cream on the breakfast table. "Come on, Clem darling, everything's blue-mold by this time!" she called cheerfully.

"'Darlin'' and 'lovey,' and all this and that—that's the newly-wids for ye!" her mother muttered under her breath.

Ellen rose from the floor, where she had knelt to attach a plug for the shining new coffee-pot and the shining new toaster. Her lovely face was flushed from the kitchen, her mahogany mop curled against her rose-petal cheeks, her dark blue eyes shone like sapphires.

"What do you want me to call Clem, ma?" she demanded good-naturedly, the clever left hand, with its plain ring, manipulating the toaster. "Dumb-bell he may be," she continued, with a glance for her husband, who entered the room at this second, freshly dressed and groomed for the office, "but after all, he's my man, ma. He was the best I could do—oh, for heaven's sakes!"

The last words were emitted after an interruption, during which Ellen had sputtered with laughter and protest, her lips closed by her husband's kiss.

"What is she doin' now, Mrs. Murphy?" Clem asked, establishing himself in great satisfaction opposite his wife. No answer to this was expected, and none was made. Mrs. Murphy merely blinked like an astute monkey, and surveyed the far distance with sad little frowning gray eyes.

"Ma says it's bad luck to say you're happy, Clem," Ellen explained.

"My gosh! Then I've brought enough down on us to sink the German navy," Clem observed, unalarmed, over his newspaper.

"You'll talk different when you've had a taste of it," his mother-in-law told him dispassionately.

"Oh, now come, ma," Ellen said affectionately. "Haven't we had our share of trouble? Grandpa—and Dan——" Her voice thickened.

She gulped, shook her bobbed head, smiled resolutely over her fragrant cup. Her dazzled eyes found the open window where a snowy fresh sash-curtain blew gently, ten stories above the street, in a soft June breeze.

"Clem, what a morning!"

"It's a pip," he agreed, reading. But when breakfast was over, the sheer beauty of the day led him to the sill, and Ellen came and tucked herself in under the droop of his arm, and rested comfortably against him. There was a drift of summer morning haze over the busy streets; motionless clouds rested against the smoke-stacks, over toward the strip of river.

"Ma," Ellen observed, with a cautious backward glance to be sure that Mrs. Murphy was not in hearing, "will feel happier when she gets her teeth."

"And that'll be——?"

Illustrations by
James Montgomery Flagg

"In a couple of weeks. Clem," his wife asked quickly, "you don't mind her being here? I could easy work it that she went back to Moira if you wanted me to!"

"I love having her here," he answered heartily. "Only," he added, "I honestly think she's happier over with Moira and the baby in Jersey."

"Oh, I think so too. She says our bathroom looks like a butcher shop," Ellen giggled; "and she hates the elevator. She'd walk up the whole nine flights if I'd let her. One trouble with mama is, we're too grand for her."

"Well, maybe," Clem conceded simply, with a proud proprietary glance at the brand-new, newly furnished little suite of rooms in which he and Ellen had commenced their housekeeping. There were two brocaded armchairs and a fat sofa in the parlor, a lamp with bead fringes, and a fumed-oak Mission table. The dining-room had a seven-piece set in red mahogany, a hanging square light in Tiffany glass, and a fern in a silver dish. There was one large bedroom, a tiled and shining kitchen, a spotless enameled bathroom, and a small room in which Ellen had at first heaped the thousand and one things for which there seemed to be no predetermined place in her little domain. But this had been cleared out now, for the couch that was nightly occupied by Ellen's mother, who was paying the young couple her first visit, improving the opportunity to make a novena, and get her new teeth.

"Mama's never so happy as when she's got some sort of trial to bear," Ellen now remarked innocently. "But speaking of trouble—look at it," she added, indicating the great stretches of the city that lay beneath their windows, "look at it! Here I am with nothing to do but eat, and there must be something I could do for people in trouble—out there!"

"I know one feller you keep dizzy with happiness," Clem said gently in her ear, as she paused.

With an upward gesture she moved the ear and its fluff of rich dark hair against his cheek.

"Now there's the prison," she began again, indicating the island under the magic arc of the bridge, "and there's Bellevue Hospital, and there are homes for the blind, and charitable organizations and orphanages."

"Oh, there's more trouble than manny thinks!" Mrs. Murphy, who had returned to the room after a brief absence kitchenward, said with mournful satisfaction.

"Why did they arrest you, Jessie?" asked Ellen. "Mama says it was becuz the cops had it in for my yunkle," said Jessie.

"Well!" Ellen declared, "I'm going to do something. Mama, you and me will begin our investigations today."

"Leavin' them smart lady clerks with the sharp pencils tell us where we get off at," Mrs. Murphy, who cherished, from some old cut, a deep resentment against all organized relief and uplift work, said darkly. "They ask you if your man is workin', if they see the poor feller layin' down in the afternoon—and him maybe a night-watchman!—an' they'd cut a gland off a child as soon as look at him."

"One of them young ladies come to mama's once, when we were kids, because my sister had a sore ear in school," Clem contributed, "and she walked into the kitchen, where ma was givin' us lunch, and she says, 'Which is the child with the ear?' 'Oh,' my mother says, 'thank heaven they've all got ears—even the baby!' "

Mrs. Murphy laughed at this anecdote so heartily, albeit silently, that it was necessary for her to lay her grizzled head down in her plate. "They'll do you more good than a circus, thim sort," she observed, with relish.

"I don't care," Ellen persisted, with a solemn uplifted look; "there's trouble and want and sin and ignorance in this city. And I'm going to find something to *do!*"

A week later she gave her husband a full report of her altruistic investigations. It was a warm evening in early summer; Ellen's windows were all wide open to cool, vagrant airs, and in the biggest of the two armchairs was Clem, tired and relaxed after a day's toil and a good dinner, and with his fragrant little loving wife in his arms.

Mrs. Murphy, occasionally clicking the teeth that were still so astonishing an addition to her warped, puckered little mouth, sat in the other armchair at the other window.

"Ye have to gradjooate and enroll and inthrigue the way you'd have influoence wit' thim, to do anny work for the Lord at all in this place!" Mrs. Murphy summarized it witheringly. "Cud you be givin' a cup of tay and a bun to one that'd be askin' you for it?—you cud not!" she added, under her breath.

Clem, looking across the soft silky mop of Ellen's mahogany hair to a clear dark blue sky patterned with stars, laughed delightedly.

"No, but seriously, Clem," supplemented his wife's dreamy voice, "you'd be astonished, in a city where there's as much misery as this, to know how hard it is to do anything. Everything's so organized and so complete! The prison visitors, now; they have to be trained and registered and paid—they said that volunteer assistance only makes trouble."

"Well, I can see that, darlin'," Clem commented.

"Well, maybe," conceded his wife. "But then the hospital prisons," she went on. "We couldn't go there, because the nurse in charge—she seemed to be very nice—explained that many of the girls were mental cases and needed very careful handling. So then mama and I went down to the probation officers, but they're all regular employees of the city, too. So we went down to court."

"There was one Eyetalian woman officer jabberin' wit' a prisoner there—maybe they'd know what she said was all o. k.," Mrs. Murphy said suspiciously. "But I'll bet there was more than their prayers goin' on between thim two. Didn't one of the pollis grab hold of me poor old veil? 'Has your case come up yet, ma'am?' he says to me. 'No,' I says, 'but me fist'll come up and land in the full of your face,' I says to him, very quiet."

"Very quiet!" Ellen laughed. "I wished you could have seen them, Clem. I thought we'd be put out of court."

"The dir'rty look he give me would do your hear'rt good." Mrs. Murphy went on, with enjoyment. "Well, wit' that, I shoved wit' all the stren'th of me ar'rm——"

"The upshot of it was that you can't be a probation officer without training," Ellen interrupted. "They didn't need us there! So ma and I went down to the Sisters' home for the children——"

She fell silent, and the sorrowful cadence of her voice lingered in the quiet room.

"Such babies!" she began again. "As sweet as anybody's baby. Like a flock of little sheep——"

"Now, Elleneen!" her husband pleaded. He brushed the back of his big hand lightly across her eyes and she laughed through arrows and darts as she saw her own tears caught there. "Why didn't you bring one home? Sure we'd give him a good time for a while, if that was all," he said.

In reward he had one of her full, fragrant kisses.

"Ah, Clem, you've the big heart in you! But it wasn't that, dear," she explained. "The nun was telling us—sure they'd find homes for the last one of them if it was only that! But these children have a mother or a father living, do you see? so that they can't make any settlement for them. Maybe the father'd be a decent man that can't keep a home, or maybe the mother'd drink—or whatever—so that they're neither orphans nor anything else."

"So you weren't any use there," Clem inferred.

"No. Well, then mama and I went out yesterday to the Charities. You never saw such a place, Clem! A building as big as the Grand Central, with clinics and offices and elevators, and desks—one room a block square was filled with desks."

"Car'rds——" Mrs. Murphy mused. "You'd think the poor cud eat car'rds, the way they talk. 'Look up his car'rd an' see does he want a full male,' they'll say. 'He broke his leg,' one'll tell thim. 'Well, put it down on his car'rd,' they reply to him."

"Ma sat there like an image, but you bet she didn't miss much," Ellen commented admiringly. "We didn't even know what we wanted to do or how to ask about it there," she went on, as her mother began a deeply significant low chuckling. "They sent us up-stairs and down, and I felt terrible—interrupting those busy women, as ma said, each with a sharp pencil, and stammering and stumbling that I wanted to help."

"Finely, one of thim said we must registher." Mrs. Murphy took up the story. "'Registher me aunt—you'll have me on none of your car'rds!' I tolt her."

"Register for the course in social service," Ellen explained, in high enjoyment of her mother's lawlessness. "So there you are," she added, "hospitals, prisons, charities—there's no way you can break in! But this morning I telephoned Miss Carrie, down at the Shelter Home," she finished more hopefully, "and she says she'll send me a girl on probation. This girl has been arrested for a first offense, and she simply needs a friend. She's to call on me once a week and I—well, I'm to be friendly to her," Ellen finished somewhat vaguely.

"So you're going to have a girl on probation, eh?" Clem asked, very proud of his pretty little wife.

"That's all." She obviously thought it an unimportant trust. "One girl, about seventeen, and I thought I'd be put in charge of a group of forty, maybe! But never mind, it may lead to better things!" Ellen said philosophically.

"What's her name, dear?" Clem asked.

"Oh, wait, I'll go get it." She flashed out of the room, flashed back with a card in her hand. The night was cooling now, but the odor of cauliflower still hung heavily in the darkened halls. "Jessie Slater," she read. "Oh, I hope she's pretty, and my size so that she can wear some of my old things!"

Jessie Slater called on the following Sunday. Ellen had finished the breakfast dishes and was deep in the morning paper when Jessie came in.

A pale little sly-eyed girl, in a cheap dress and flimsy hat. Rouge awkwardly rubbed on her sallow cheeks, rouge stiff on her wide, characterless mouth. Her lifeless, thin light hair had been bobbed; its straight lankiness faintly and unsuccessfully rippled. She wore bangles, beads, finger-rings; she carried a metal bag purse.

Ellen, troubled, rose, beautiful in her bungalow apron, studied her anxiously while they talked. This artificial little being seemed oddly out of place in the clean, sunshiny, white-and-blue apartment.

"I went to church at seven this morning, Jessie. Did you go?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Does your sister go with you?"

"No, ma'am."

Ellen was conscious of starting afresh. "Why doesn't she?"

"I don't know."

"Have you ever talked to her about it?"

"No, ma'am."

"Oh, but why not?"

"She don't live at home no more."

Reminding herself that after all Jessie, and not Jessie's sister, was the problem in hand, Ellen recommenced. "Why did they arrest you, Jessie?"

"I don't know. Mama says she don't know, either."

"Were you in bad company—were you going with girls that aren't straight?"

"No, ma'am. All my friends is straight. Mama says it was becuz the cops had it in for my yunkle."

"Your uncle? What has he to do with it?"

"I don't know."

Jessie looked down at her much-perforated shoes and flesh-colored stockings, and Ellen cast about for fresh material.

"Are you working now?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Oh, that's nice. What are you doing?"

"I ush," said Jessie simply.

"In a theater?"

"No, ma'am."

"Oh? In what, then?"

"In a movie."

Ellen frowned slightly. Not the safest atmosphere in the world for a weak little girl. "Wouldn't you be happier working in somebody's home, Jessie?"

"Yes, ma'am. But ladies won't have you once you're from the Rescue Shelter."

"I see. But what made them send you there, Jessie?"

"Because I was workin'."

It was baffling. Ellen, unskilled as a questioner, was no match for these artless, unsatisfying answers. "Working too young?"

"Yes, ma'am, I was thirteen. And mama kicked me out because she had a fight with my father, and my brother's arm was sore. So I went to my cousin's house and they says it was no fit place for a young girl, and they sent me up."

"I see," Ellen said again. But she (*Continued on page 133*)

The Patent Leather Kid

"Coily, I bet you'd look grand in khaki or a navy-blue low-neck," said Fay. "You're a hot dresser, but there's a soitain sumpin' about a uniform——"

THEY called her that for reasons as evident to the naked eye as she was.

An inventory of her would have run as follows, starting at the top: an impudent patent leather cap; a frenzy of curls; a pitifully exquisite, pitilessly derisive, recklessly painted face; a child's throat; a slender-shouldered white torso submerged just in time (sometimes a little too late) in a bodice of patent leather, strapped over the shoulders, wrinkling about a boyish waist hardly slighter than the limber hips hidden by a flare of patent leather skirt; the mere beginning of a pair of trunks; a long hiatus of all costume; a pair of patent leather slippers.

The hiatus was filled by two of the nimblest imaginable legs, their knees of tremulous cream curdling and dimpling at joints so finely modeled that the beholder thought less of girl than of silken machinery or pliant jewelry.

The Kid danced wildly well in a shady cabaret where her only protection from herself or her company was the understanding that she was the special sweetie of the up-and-coming young prize-fighter "Curly" Boyle, known in the perverse accent of certain native New Yorkers as "Coily Berl."

The Patent Leather Kid's name—if you believed what she told you (which was always inadvisable) -was Fay Poplin. Where she got it no one knew, but it was surely never from her mother or father—if she had ever had either. Still, it was the only one she used, and you could take your change out of it.

She had a wildcat inside the lithe, impossibly white body inside the glossy, flexile armor of patent leather impossibly black for all its flashing light. And there was a world of ugly wisdom back of the eyes that were, one minute, impossibly innocent; the next, intolerably wise.

Usually as restless as spilled mercury, Fay tonight might have been a statuette of marble and onyx as she leered across the table at Curly Boyle where he was attacking a beefsteak, and recounting the fight he had just won.

Fresh from the throb and peril of the ring, he described each lead, block, jab, with the fire, if not the vocabulary, of a poet. But Fay took it all with a bitter-sweet smile of contemptuous amusement. Now and then she would toss him a celery-top, in lieu of an ironical flower, or a sprig of parsley from the platter he was cleaning up. At last she broke right in on the climax of the knock-out punch:

"Boy, you sure are the gravy! There's no denying it, for you admit it yourself; and you ought to know. But how come the newspapers keep saying your fights are all fixed and you only knock out set-ups?"

"Ah, who cares what the doity sheets say!"

In her face there was the meekness of a little girl lisping a prayer, but a she-devil's malice in her drawl as she asked: "Say, Coily, just what is a set-up?"

He was good only at fist-repartee.

He countered feebly: "Ah, go chase yourself! You know dam' well what a set-up is."

"Do I, dolling? A guy was tellin' me that set-ups are has-beens or never-wases who get paid to stand up just long enough to be knocked out. But Coily Berl would never beat up a poor gink who was hired to lay down, would you, dear-ree?"

Curly rolled his eyes in helpless agony toward his manager, Jake Stuke, and Jake growled at Fay: "Ah, lay off him, can't you? Or I might pass you a poke in the jah myself!"

"Yes? And what'd mama be doin' in the meanwhile, pet? Wrappin' this chiny platter round your bald old bean, maybe. Say, what right you got to take a mortgage on a nice boy's life and toin him into a crook? Coily used to could lick all comers, but now he wouldn't dast bawl out that little Wop waiter without you looked him over, signed him up to lay down, and took the long end of the gate."

Jake almost wept as he pleaded: "Say! say! say! soft pedal that stuff, can't ya? Don't I know what Coily's got? Ain't I noissin' him for the champi'nship of the woild? Ain't I got him a clean record of eighteen knock-outs, se'm decisions and not one draw?"

Fay murmured with adorable wonder: "Oh, it was you that did all that knockin'-out, Jakie? It wasn't Coily, after all."

"Shut your trap, will ya?" Curly snarled. "Or do you want me to shut it for you?"

"Anything from you, sweethot, is a gift from hev'm."

Stuke stopped Curly's fist on its way over the table, and tried to silence this Patent Leather gnat:

"Ah, wait ta minut, wait ta minut. Wha'd' you say, Kid, if I'd 'a' matched Coily up wit' some old vet'ran twicet his weight wit' twicet his ring-gener'lship, and he'd 'a' knocked Coily cold in the foist round of his foist fight? How about t'at, eh? How about it? If I'd 'a' did your way, he couldn't get into a p'liminary at the Y. W. C. A. Prize-fightin's a sci'nce; you can't loin a fella to be a champ in one lesson any more'n you can loin him to play the violin in one lesson. You're some dancer and I never seen nobody could shimmy like you can, unless it was a horse in fly-time. But you didn't loin that in one night, did ya? What if some of the sport writers do say Coily fights fixed fights? Look

By Rupert Hughes

A Study in HUMAN NATURE *at its* BEST— *and its* WORST

Illustrations by F. C. Crooks

what they done to Lincoln! They shot him, didn' 'ey? And who was it got crucified? Or had you heard about 'at?"

There was a miserable wisdom in this; though, of course, Fay could never admit that Jake was right about anything; so she cooed: "Excuse me for livin', dearie. In my childish ignor'nce I thought a fighter was a guy who fought another fighter. I see it's somethin' like shadow-boxin'."

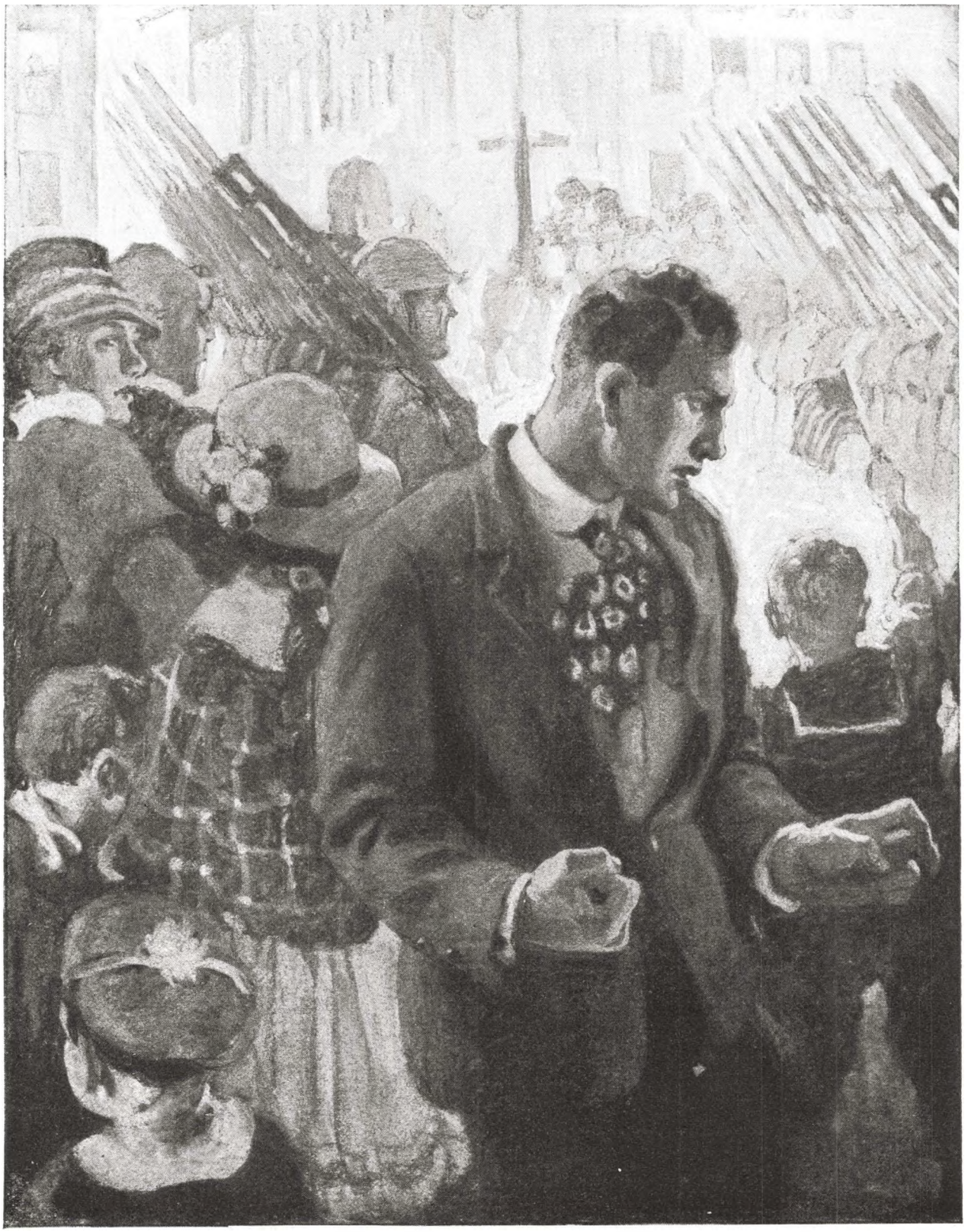
"Ah, say, what the——"

But she had heard her cue and was out on the floor doing her stuff while the saxophonists gargled and snored. The light darted about the patent leather surfaces of her costume, and dreamed upon her snowy flesh, while her ruthless little frame telegraphed messages of an insolence and audacity that could never be said or sung. But oh, how beautiful she was!

Curly glared at her with a passionate hatred. For everybody else he had a heart full of ice-water. The only patriotism he had was his mad longing to be the champion of the United States and to beat down all foreigners. And everybody was a foreigner to Curly—a man from the Bronx or from Flatbush no less than an invader from remote New Jersey, Australia, Ireland, or any other point west.

Then even such patriotism as he had was destroyed by the World War when it broke up Europe and fascinated America. For it hurt the prestige of all pugilists and shut off their future glories. In the public mind a combat with a single adversary on a roped platform presided over by a referee to enforce the rules, was contrasted with the exploits of martyrs in cloud-wrapt airships or ooze-invading submarines or in corpse-lined trenches, with the slaughter of tormented myriads, the crumbling death of cities and villages and the increasing woe of nations. The war was like a battle royal with the fighters blindfolded and nothing barred. If there was a Referee he never intervened.

When at last, with the rush of an uncontrollable mob, America joined the riot, Curly Boyle felt that his country had turned traitor. There was nothing but talk of volunteers, guns, ammunition, bayonet practise. The sacred word "fight" was diverted to the base uses of war. In the throngs about the prize-ring, uniforms were less conspicuous than ordinary clothes.



There are few things as sacred to a man as his hat, and Curly was in a mood to

In the cabaret the uniforms made a wild uproar over Fay, and Curly could tell that their applause pleased her as she had never been pleased before. She looked as if she wanted to cry. Tonight when she came back panting and sank down at the table, she had forgotten her sarcasm. She said:

"Coily, I bet you'd look grand in khaki or a navy-blue low-neck. You're a hot dresser, but there's a soitain sumpin' about a uniform——"

"Yeah!" said Curly. "I been thinkin' about it. But I can't make up me mind which soivice to jern up with."

Jake Stuke raised a hand.

"Accordin' to our little contrack, Mr. Berl, if any mind-makin'-up is to be did, I do it. I do the brain woik and you do the fist woik; and right where I book you. Suppose you enlisted like a fool; what'd they do to you? Set you to peelin' a million potatoes! Suppose you cut your t'umb off or get camp-sickness, or break your back; where are you? Supposin' you got into the trenches and come home wit' a crutch under each arm, if you had any arm to put a crutch under. They'd wave a few flags over you, and call you a coupla heroes, and then forget you. You'd be a lousy bum panhandlin' for poke-outs. No, sir, you stick to the woik I've laid out for you and leave the shootin' to the guys that's afraid to use their fists."

Curly nodded. "I guess you're right at that."

Jake grew magnificent: "Why, if they was any danger—like a ninvasion or somethin', I'd shoulder a rifle meself. But half o' these volunteers that's rushin' to the tailors to get into uniforms is simply stuck on their shapes. This patertism stuff is the bunk.

assault the whole town when Fay said: "Here's your bonnet, dearie. Save that mallet for the Skeeter."

It's like what Fay says: the uniform is becomin' and that's all there is to it."

"I guess you got the right dope at that," said Curly.

Was it a sigh of relief or of regret that slipped from Fay's lips? The veil of almost tenderness in her eyes was gone, leaving them hard and bitter again. They softened only as she glanced about at the eager lads in khaki or blue blouses.

Curly knew those eyes of hers and jealousy choked him. All soldiers, sailors and marines were immediately added to his gallery of enemies. Gradually the public went plumb nutty, and began to call for the draft, compulsory service, a something they called universal conscription. If the act passed, everybody would have to volunteer whether he wanted to or not. Even Stuke was worried.

Curly wasn't afraid of nobody, but a guy hadda right to stick to his own speciality.

Fay, though, could not seem to get his idea into her solid ivory noodle. She was growing so warlike that she would rather dance with a soldier or a sailor than listen to Curly talk ring stuff. There was a funny look on her face all the time. Curly tried to knock it off once or twice, but it kept coming back. Especially when the band played "The Star-Spangled Banner." And somebody was always playing it. Go to a theater or a movie or a restaurant and you hadda keep standing up half the time. You couldn't begin to chaw a potata but what the band would begin to bump the bumps with that old "O-oh, say, can you see by the dawn's oily light——" On the street you was forever tipping your hat to the flag as if it was a lady friend. Curly (*Continued on page 138*)

By O. O. *Mc*

Pardon *the*

Illustrations by

¶ *The octogenarians have beaten the young at their own game.*

THE middle-aged New Yorker these days is the peacock dandy of the town.

It used to be that a quiet manner of dress neatly pigeonholed the gentleman. Now masculine attire beats a bass drum and sends up a rocket. I am not thinking of those lads with butter-bean-shaped riding pants and sports shirts who roam hatless, leading police dogs. The director's megaphone takes care of them.

I am thinking of the stern, cold-visaged men of hefty affairs who have discarded salt-and-peppers, barrel cuffs and white lawn ties for deep-pleated pants, sawed-off vests, waspish coats and silver-gray Homburgs.

Only in a close-up can you tell the near-octogenarian from a collegiate Norbert skipping chapel to attend a fashionable morning musicale. Middle age seems to nourish a consuming fear it will grow old all of a sudden and a delusion that a pink bud in the lapel or a wild cravat will save it.

Every tailor specializes in youthful clothes, and their ads give the impression they can make Methuselah a Jackie Coogan. Old bucks living in daily dread of the ether cone are habited for the college campus.

Flappers prefer them for luncheon and dinner companions, as every smart café reveals.

In those dear old days—and may they never come again—when a man turned forty he began to slide into a state of valetudinarian ease.

He became a one-gallused, wrinkle-socked relic of the past and you had almost to run him down to splice one of those nobby already tied four-in-hands around his neck.

He wore a hickory shirt from the Bankrupt Store and had his shoes shined when the Swiss Bell Ringers played their annual engagement at the Methodist church.

He had a circular hair-cut every change of the moon and his other clothes were known as his "Sunday suit."

He changed only hatbands and underthings with the season.

Today middle age is on a sartorial jazz jamboree. Old age is just a few laps behind, riding hard. It does not jar us any more to learn that the hard-fisted chairman of the board who effects a couple of million-dollar mergers over the luncheon entrée is a wide-pants Willie and that at the end of the black cord around his neck dangles a monocle.

The magnate whose very name makes a thousand puddlers quail may have a Menjou mustache and a Valentino wristband. Even Jimmy Walker, "the peepul's choice" and an idol of the hard-boiled East Side, who is New York's new Mayor, wears a canary-colored shirt with collar to match.

YOUTH is no longer the dapper fop with the impudent swagger. Our young men are as unobtrusive sartorially as a country deacon. Their elders have beaten them at their own game.

Flo Ziegfeld, with his riotous shirts and screaming cravats, is fifty-six. Charles Schwab who when in town appears at the Ritz for luncheon daily with a carnation in his coat lapel, a wing collar with flaring polka-dot bow tie and other Bond Street trappings, is sixty-four.

Chauncey Depew, almost a century plant but spry—I'll say he's spry—is just as much of the dandy today as he was in the eighties or seventies. When he walks to his office of mornings pinkly barbered, faintly scented and boutonnièred, bulbuls chirp with sheer joy and impertinent newsies shout, "Ah, there, Chawn-cey!"

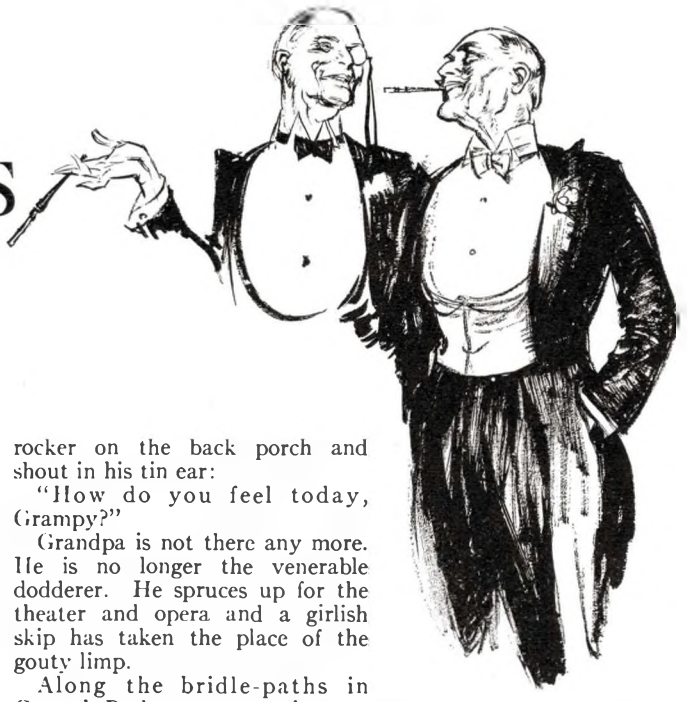
¶ *He used to spend his evenings in the chimney corner. But nowadays——*

Peep into the deep-cushioned lounge of any Fifth Avenue club around the vesperal hour. You do not see the old boys yawning for the Ostermoor. They are Joves riding Olympian clouds of style. White shirt-fronts gleam. Crisp mustaches glisten with pomade.

Men not only dress to stroll the boulevards these days.

ENTRE Plus-Fours

John LaGatta



¶ *They used to turn to gentleman farming. Now they turn to clothes.*

They dress to stay at home. Visit Irvin Cobb in his winter's study on upper Park Avenue and you find him regally enthroned in a house gown of deep silken purple with gray cord and lapels and two-toned chevalier house boots to match.

Drop into the heavily dripping cavern of brocades where a certain poet courts the muse and you will find the poet—as a poet should expect to be found—in a gorgeously tinted *robe-de-nuit* blending with the bizarre color scheme.

Earl Carroll in his roof bungalow in the thick of Broadway's roar lolls in the real robe of a mandarin, the back of which is flamboyantly decorated with a golden Chinese pheasant.

There are breakfast pajamas, lounge outfits and rest suits in the wardrobe of every well dressed New Yorker. George M. Cohan writes plays in a dazzling robe of salmon-pink.

THERE are New Yorkers who go to London for their clothes as regularly as ladies do for their frocks and the veteran John Drew is said to retain a commissionnaire whose duty is to scour the European fashion rows for striking blends in shirts and scarves.

It used to be that when men reached the affluence of a brace of hired coupon clippers, they turned to gentleman farming, shooting-lodges in Scotland or the collection of Innesses and Watteaus. That day has passed.

They now turn to clothes. The biographies of Brummell and Beau Nash become their text-books. To appear in an exclusively two-toned tie or shirt of magenta or mauve is a greater achievement than digging up an undiscovered painting.

Men who used to sneak off to the pipe, slippers and chimney corner when crow's-feet made the indelible imprint are now at ringside tables obeying Tex Guinan's dictum to "give this little girl a hand."

We used to think it an act of daily kindness to step out to grandpa's rocker on the back porch and shout in his tin ear:

"How do you feel today, Grampy?"

Grandpa is not there any more. He is no longer the venerable dodderer. He spruces up for the theater and opera and a girlish skip has taken the place of the gouty limp.

Along the bridle-paths in Central Park every morning are meticulously clipped graybeards enjoying a matutinal gallop—their red vests gleaming through the light fog.

¶ *You won't find grandpa on the back porch any more. He is taking his morning gallop in the Park.*

This winter the prevailing note in men's clothes was brown. And to what length it was carried! Brown the shade of an autumn leaf, brown of deep mahogany, rust-brown, walnut-stain brown, tobacco-brown and chocolate.

Brown scarves, walking-sticks, hats with tiny brown feathers in the side, brown shoes, brown shirts and collars—'kerchiefs, spats, cuff buttons and even the wrist watch straps were toned in with the general ensemble.

By spring the prevailing color may be a Mediterranean-blue and should it be, the veteran chameleons will be doing their stuff.

DAME FASHION is a chimerical mistress. A single buttonhole may throw a man's entire wardrobe out of alignment. There suddenly popped into style a stiff-bosomed shirt for evening wear that was designed to reveal only one stud. And the fashionables had to discard thousands of perfectly good shirts and jewels because of the extra buttonholes!

It is probable that this summer a lot of little Rollos will be wearing suits fashioned from the slack in dad's Oxford bags.

An English novelist came to town wearing an evening shirt-front with tie and vest of the same pattern and in three weeks the same idea was being displayed in haberdashery windows on the Bowery.

A man used to be safe for three seasons with a derby, but now style changes so quickly that when Tommy Meighan revived the derby last winter the fad lingered for about two weeks.

One of the best dressers in New York is sixty-two years old. I saw him recently strolling jauntily near the Plaza. His hat had a Prince of Wales dip in the back. His greatcoat, the russet magnificence of a dying sunset, carried a silk orange 'kerchief in the broad patched breast pocket.

His lemon-colored gloves with the right-hand gauntlet turned carelessly back were deeply black-ribbed. Snow-white spats topped his Oxford browns. His walking-stick had an ivory-white curved handle. There was a light spring to his step and his eyes held a glint of romance.

We do not need specialists in rejuvenation. The tailors and haberdashers have anticipated them. Old youth is here!

Welcome to our city, glandpa! Have you seen the Follies?

By

Rebecca West

A Story of the Thoughts Women Keep to Themselves

The Magician of Pell Street

Illustrations by
John A. Haelen

MR. STAVELEY, who was sitting on the edge of his wife's bed reading the Times, coughed. His wife, Theodora, rolled over and pressed her face against the pillow, and said wildly, "I want to go back to New York."

Her husband paid no attention, for he was reading a summary of the year's racing. Presently she sat up and put her fingers round his wrist and jerked it, saying, "Darling, you coughed."

He bent his lips to her hand and muttered, his eyes going back to the page, "I smoke too much."

She continued to stare at him with enormous eyes. "Are you sure you aren't getting thinner, Danny dear?"

"As a matter of fact," he replied cheerfully, "I am. Lost ten pounds since August. Most remarkable."

"Ten pounds! *Ten pounds!* Danny, that's dreadful!"

"Nothing to worry about, dear heart. I'm still a pound or two overweight."

"Truly?"

"Truly. I'm eleven stone two. I ought to be ten stone twelve."

She believed him, because his voice was touched with that faint solemnity with which he always spoke of physical matters with which he had accurately acquainted himself. He felt that this was a specially respectable form of the truth, free from any dangerous association with ideas.

So she purred contentedly when he gave her shoulder a kindly pat and said:

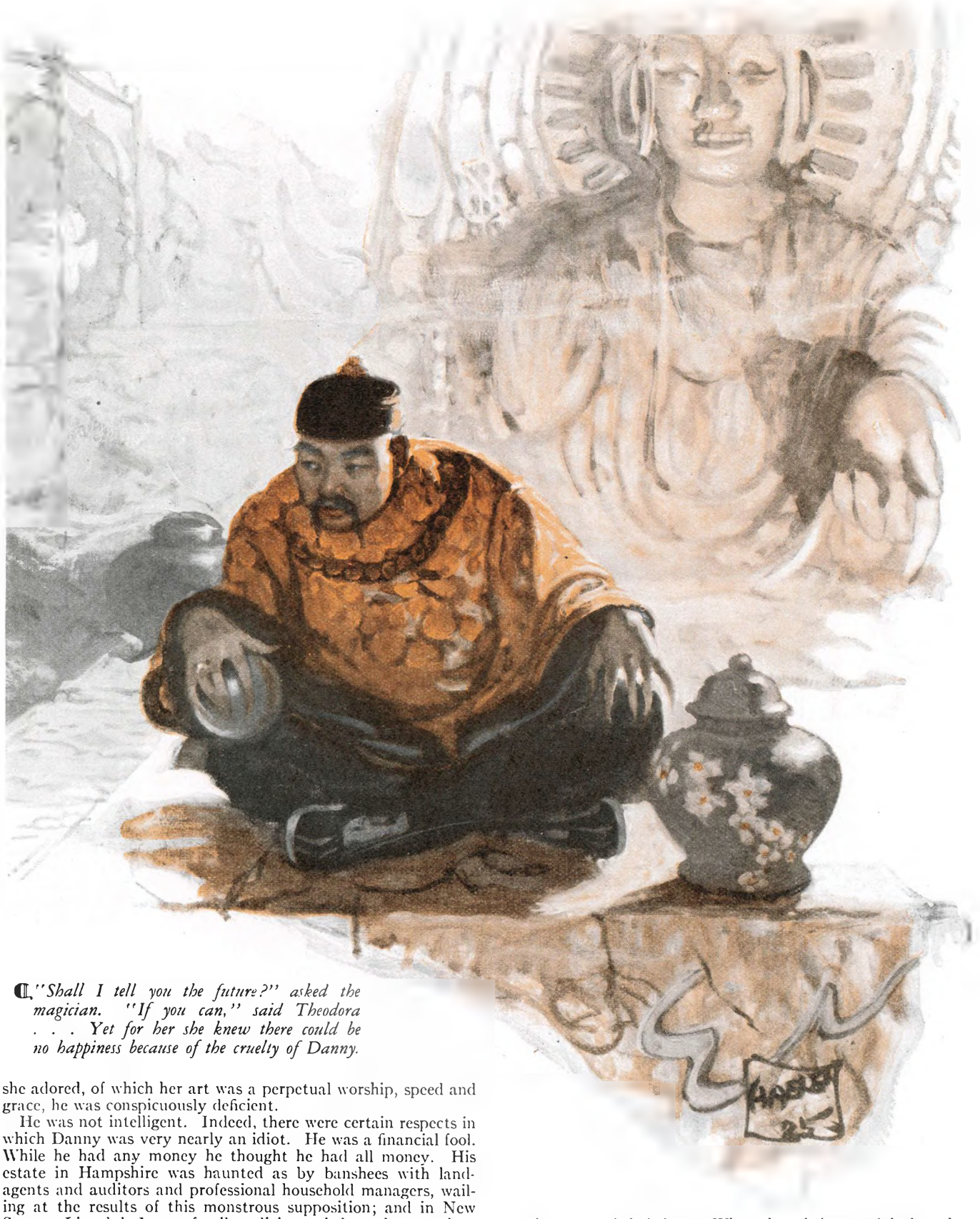
"Better look after yourself, old girl. You're skinny enough, Lord knows. You can't go talking about anybody else." For she knew that this was his way, her Danny's way, of paying homage to the beauty of her body; which was not thin at all, but was the body of a dancer, that is shaped to slenderness and roundness by the rhythms to which it perpetually abandons itself, even as the stone on the bed of a stream is worn to smooth contours by the water that flows over it.

She loved him inordinately. She was well content with this country gentleman she had married, even though he had made her give up her career. A ray of sunlight was now lying on his hair, which was neither fair nor dark, and showed it powdered with gold. "Darling!" she murmured proudly and delightedly, as if this effect was due to some surpassing merit and effort on his part.

But Danny coughed once more. He was coughing much more often than he had done even last week. Roughly speaking, it was about once in a quarter of an hour now. She rolled over again and buried her face in the pillows, covering her ears so that she would not hear him cough, hiding her eyes so that she would not see his dear kind face.

How she loved him!

It is impossible to say why Theodora loved Danny. He was handsome in the standard English way; with clear eyes crinkled up with a special air of seriousness as if to exclude not only the light from the retina but also all disturbing impressions from the brain behind, and the straight nose and firm jaw and good skull of one born of healthy stock who has had all the food and fresh air and exercise he needs from the day of his birth. He was enormously powerful; he was one of those very strong men whose shoulders are slightly bowed, as if they carry their strength in an invisible pack on their backs. But in the physical qualities



"Shall I tell you the future?" asked the magician. "If you can," said Theodora . . . Yet for her she knew there could be no happiness because of the cruelty of Danny.

she adored, of which her art was a perpetual worship, speed and grace, he was conspicuously deficient.

He was not intelligent. Indeed, there were certain respects in which Danny was very nearly an idiot. He was a financial fool. While he had any money he thought he had all money. His estate in Hampshire was haunted as by banshees with land-agents and auditors and professional household managers, wailing at the results of this monstrous supposition; and in New Square, Lincoln's Inn, a family solicitor cried not less continually than do the cherubim and seraphim.

He was a fool about people. When he could not understand what people were doing their proceedings seemed to him without reason or, if they were successful and famous people whom he could not dismiss as idiots, the cloaks for nefarious schemes.

He was not interested in politics.

For the arts he had no use, saving the theater, which filled the interval between dinner and the time when a man goes to bed. Of the sciences he was unaware.

Nevertheless, Theodora loved him extravagantly. There can, indeed, be no exaggeration of the way she loved him. Not because of the passion between them, for that was the effect and not the cause of their love. When she tried to explain it to her friends, she used to stammer confusedly concerning certain instinctive gifts he had, survivals of powers that most people have had to give up in exchange for the doubtful benefit of being human.

You could not lose Danny in a mist on a Scotch moor. He had that mysterious faculty, the sense of the north. You could blindfold him, walk him a mile in and out and back and forward over broken country and spin him round and round; and after a second's setterish lifting of the head he would point due north. He knew too when the wind was going to change, and the rain going to lift; he could tell when people were coming through the woods long before he could have heard their voices; in the night

he would dream distressfully of a horse or a dog, and when he rose and took a lantern and went out to the stables he would find the beast sick as he had feared.

These things gave her infinite happiness to contemplate. Her body was hard with muscles raised by her physical efforts; till she met him she had never in all her life had anything, not a dress, not a day's travel, not a halfpenny, which she had not earned by effort. The effortlessness of these tricks of Danny's, their sheer fortuitousness, rested and delighted her mind. And moreover they were surely signs of contact with something . . . with something . . .

These confused stammerings usually failed to enlighten her friends, though her constitutional desire to tell the truth made her always embark upon them; but they could follow her when she told them that down there in the country he was extraordinarily, beautifully kind. Up here in London he was not: he was apt to be hard and bullying with waiters and commissionnaires, because they seemed to him sharp and knowing like poachers; he was shy and sulky with the men he had to meet who actually liked to live in town because of some jiggery-pokery with politics or what not; he thought London women expected to be talked to too much. It was silly of them really to keep on this flat, he hated it so.

But down in Hampshire she, whose faults were vehemence and asperity, was continually amazed and shamed by the unvarying sweetness of the gaze he turned on life. So long as he was not afraid of people because they were a different sort from him he was prepared to be endlessly, inventively good to them. And if they were ungrateful to him his goodness did not flicker. He would neither say nor do anything that took sides with the malevolence that had been brought against him; merely he would knit his brows so that there was a deep furrow between his kind, empty eyes, that was as touching as the mark of disappointment on a child's face.

That was the dreadfulness of it. Danny would not have done it to her, this awful thing she had done to him, which was making him cough. It was true that the initial cruelty had been his, that he had deserted her there in New York, had left her for two months without a word. But the poor dear had not known what he was doing. He was never himself in a town, and New York is the essence of all towns, the supreme defiance of nature. He simply had not been himself. He simply had not understood.

THERE were excuses to be made for her too, of course. She had loved him so much even in those early days that continued possession of him had been necessary to her soul and body. Without him she had gone mad; there had been days when her maid had had to lift her out of bed and wash and dress her, because the will had perished in her and she no longer had the initiative to do these things. Without him her body had withered as if some merciless and mistaken surgeon had cut out a vital part.

But even if something had happened to Danny which had had the power to reduce him to the same state, he would never have done what she did. He would not have gone to the magician of Pell Street.

Now she said aloud, gently, desperately, "Danny, my darling," and drew the sheet over her face. She lay quite still until she heard the sound of the door opening, and her maid's voice saying:

"Doctor Paulton is here, madam."

She shot up and stared at the maid for a minute. She had known that it would be awkward explaining to Danny why she had sent for the doctor.

Harshly and abruptly she ordered: "Show him up. Show him up at once."

Danny folded up the Times and said: "I suppose I'd better clear out. But I say, old girl, what's the matter?"

She lay back against the pillows, smiled mysteriously, and murmured, "My old complaint."

It was thrilling to see how puzzled and distressed he was. "I say, what's that? I thought you were as strong as a horse. What is your old complaint?" She continued to smile, and he bent low over her. "What is it? You're rotting? No, you're not! Please, Theo, tell me!"

She smiled even more mysteriously, and murmured even more softly, so that he had to put his ear close to her lips:

"In love with you . . ."

His relief was enormous. He picked her up and held her close to him and kissed her on the mouth, whispering, "Dearest, don't get cured, will you?"

How she was enraptured by his relief and his kiss and his evident love; but at the feeling through his clothes of his strong heart-beat hers almost failed. If her traffickings with the magician of Pell Street had resulted in the destruction of this beautiful, this clean, this healthy, this innocent being! She began to shiver slightly, and cried out:

"Danny, would you mind very much if we went back to New York?"

He started back from her. "Why are you always saying that just now? You used to hate New York! Why should you want to go back? Theo, have you anything on your mind?"

"What could I have? You know every moment of my life since our marriage. There's nothing. Nothing at all. But I want—to go back to New York . . ."

"Good Lord, you're shivering! Theo, you are ill! You're all nerves!"

SHE was laughing and shaking her head when the maid showed in Doctor Paulton. Then she had to pull herself together. Little Doctor Paulton was a man who had won his way to fame by a combination of extreme cleverness and inquisitiveness. As a penniless young man he had had to give up research work in applied bacteriology, in which he had shown genius, and go into private practise in order to be able to marry the girl he loved. With great rapidity he had fallen out of love with his wife, and being an acquisitive person who hates to make a bad bargain, he had set about seeing what he could get out of this pit of a fashionable practise into which he had fallen.

He satisfied his scientific side in part by becoming a marvelous diagnostician; and as that could not wholly satisfy him, since it was not his natural bent, he made up the balance by cultivating a furious interest in the private lives of his patients. Shamelessly he let it interfere with his medical conscience; he would send a patient to a foreign spa for a treatment she did not need because he had sent another patient there in whom he knew she was interested, and he wanted to see how that affair would work out. His patients preferred to refer these interventions to personal devotion rather than to the plain fact that he was as curious as an idle old woman. And so he prospered exceedingly.

Both these dominant characteristics Theo intended to use. He would find out the cause of Danny's cough, if there was a cause. If there was not, she would fall back on his inquisitiveness.

Danny met him at the door. "Morning, Paulton. I'm glad you've come. I'm not very pleased with my wife just now. She's——"

But Theo cut in. "Doctor Paulton, I haven't sent for you for myself at all. I'm perfectly all right. I want you to have a look at my husband."

Doctor Paulton adjusted his pince-nez, took a look at her, and took a look at Danny; and there followed a moment when he seemed to be inspecting the pattern of the carpet, but was, Theo knew, taking a look at the domestic situation. And Danny was saying: "Theo, what are you thinking of! I'm as fit as a fiddle!"

"He coughs," she explained. "He coughs all the time. He coughs about once every quarter of an hour. At least. And it's getting worse."

"But, Theo——"

"It really is. Last week it was only once in twenty minutes. I'm sure there's something the matter."

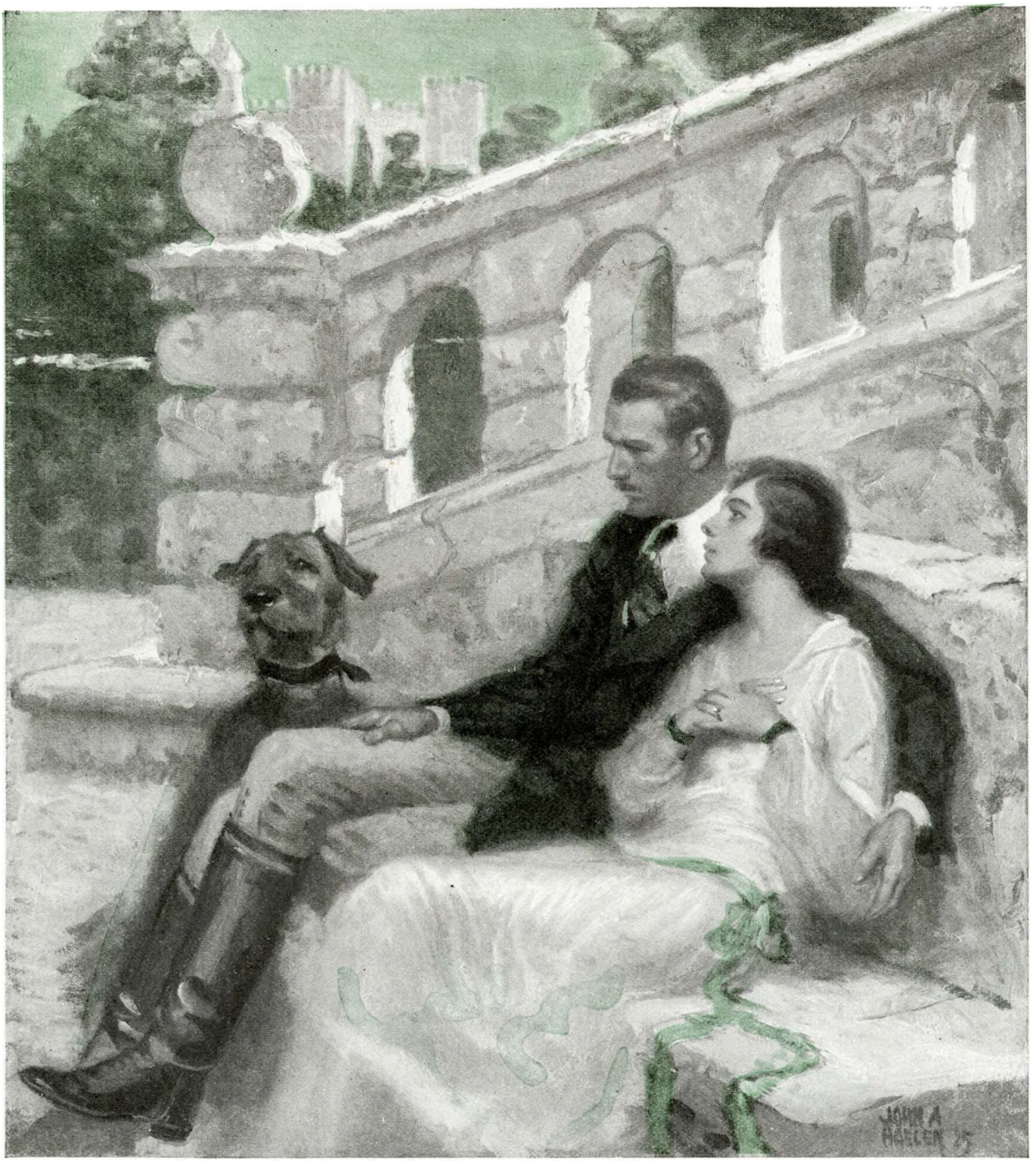
Danny turned to Doctor Paulton with the air of one sensible male appealing to another. "Honestly, this is all nonsense. I do cough a bit, but then I smoke too much. But I never was better in my life."

"Doctor Paulton, you must examine him. Really, there's something wrong."

She would have gone on longer if, oddly enough, it had not been Doctor Paulton that had been moved by her pleas to insist, but Danny that suddenly capitulated. He gave her a teasing smile and said: "Well, we'd better get it over. But my wife's fussing. You won't find a thing the matter with me. Shall we go into my dressing-room? So long, old girl. I'll be back in a minute, and Paulton'll tell you that you're a dotty young woman."

The white door closed behind them. She stared at it, the tears rolling down her cheeks. In a few minutes she would know if what she feared was true; if she was a murderess who had killed something infinitely sweet and good, by what she had done with the magician of Pell Street.

It could never have happened if they had met anywhere but in New York. But then if they had not met in New York they never would have met at all, for Danny did not go to dance clubs or cabarets in London, and he never visited Paris or Monte Carlo; and between these four places her life was then divided. It made her heart contract to think what a mere chance it was that had brought him to the Rigoli, on Broadway, where she was



¶ Theodora loved Danny extravagantly. That was the dreadfulness of it. And he would never have done this awful thing she had done to him by going to the magician of Pell Street.

doing a midnight turn. But once this amazing conjunction of the simple and the sophisticated had been effected, how inevitable had been the rest!

She had made her entrance and was standing beside her partner François, bowing to the applause that came from the faces and hands that dimly patterned the darkness surrounding the vast polished floor; and immediately she saw Danny. He was sitting at a table quite close to her, on the left of the entrance with two women and the Englishman, Freddy Moor—poor, handsome, sodden Freddy, who had come over with some money he had contrived to borrow from long-suffering friends to start life afresh as a bootlegger, and who was being picked clean by amused members of the New York underworld.

She saw at once that Danny was not like that. The grave, heavy innocence of his large fair head made her think of a chaste lion. She perceived with delight, and a determination to alter it as soon as possible, that he was not at all interested in her. His face expressed nothing but a desire to get out of this infernally stuffy hole and go home to bed. This struck her as beautiful and unique. She was infatuated.

She moved out into the middle of the floor, holding François' hand, in the golden circle of the spot-light. Before she had let go François' hand she had resolved to marry Danny. She danced marvelously, and solely for him. A week or two afterwards she had asked him what he had thought of her, and he had replied gravely and without intention to offend, "I thought you seemed an extraordinarily nice girl to be doing that sort of thing."

She had danced with François the waltz that many people said was more perfect than anything since Pavlowa and Mordkin; and she had never danced it better. But on hearing these fatuities she didn't mind. If he was one of those simple souls to whom dancers seem to be a set of persons who enjoy within certain limitations the power to defy (*Continued on page 206*)

By Irvin S. Cobb

He Who Laughs Last

Illustrations by
Leslie L. Benson

IT WAS funny the way the party go formed in the first place. In the East it probably would not occur. Along that coast people are more likely to be stand-offish toward strangers. Even in the West it took an emergency to bring it about.

Here were six persons shipwrecked, as you might say, in the mountains; or seven, counting the chauffeur who didn't count, he being under displeasure and incapacitated besides. To begin with, there was Miss Greta Cave of New York City, and there was her maid, by name Lena Honig and by nationality Alsatian; and she the only foreign-born one in the lot of them. Then there were Mr. and Mrs. Gregory Ware, a very nice, very loving young couple from Council Bluffs. Next was a certain Mr. Hilary Talbott who never did say where he was from but who, judging on his manner and bearing, might very well belong to the planet at large. That makes five. The sixth and last called himself Claypool. Inevitably in any such company he would be the last. He was a native of these parts as was plain to be seen; a sluggish, dull-looking man who wore the wave-brimmed hat of the country and dusty store clothes. From start to finish he had very little to say and that little he said with a marked reticence. He was like a miser of wo ds who saves them up.

The cloudburst that descended on the Great Divide, seeming to make that national hump its especial target, caught them at Lewis's Hotel on Lake McDonald. Miss Cave's big seven-passenger car ran in just ahead of the weather with her man wobbly and deathly sick at the wheel. But the others were already there, the Wares winding up their bridal tour, Mr. Talbott apparently engaged in a round of rather disinterested sightseeing and this Claypool man taking up space in the background. Any background, just so it was unexciting, made protective coloration for him. They were the only transient guests, this being practically the end of the tourist season.

The storm was the equinoctial storm operating several days ahead of schedule. It lasted for two days and nights and when in the second night it wore itself out and died in a violent spasm of clearing showers, the word came that the Great North's main road-bed was scoured out by the roots beyond Wilton, which meant travelers moving in any direction must track around a detour to where trains were being routed over a connecting branch line. In the Rockies detours are sometimes of considerable length. This one, measuring from the head of the lake, would be a hundred and twenty miles, going by way of Finfish, Pony Falls and Cree City.

So the morning of the third day, with the pleasant September sun coming up on a well-rinsed world, found the castaways at Lewis's in this fix. Their predicament thickened as the cloud-rack riddled and lifted off the tall tops above them. For, to crown all else, the resident agent of the bus line plying between the lake camps and the Wilton Station reported that one of his big red carry-'em-alls had gone out of commission from carburetor trouble of a serious nature and for the time being the remaining two were stranded on the farther side of the washout.

After their marooning the sojourners were quite ready to be stirring; in fact, their various belongings were packed. Forty-eight hours of enforced sequestration had made them acquainted with one another, more or less, and the hotel had been made cozy and comfortable as to its lobby by a vast and hospitable log fire, but now restlessness beset the victims of the late siege.

A Story of a JOKE that Came HOME to ROOST

Miss Cave, in her cowboy costume, gave the residents of Pony Falls the initial shock of a series of pleasant shocks.

The local product was the lone exception. He had the air about him of having followed his nose into this friendly refuge, likewise the air of being prepared to follow the crowd out or to bide on with them or to stay on by himself, as the case might be. But Miss Cave meant to catch a steamer sailing from New York on Saturday of the present week and this was a Monday; and the Wares had a shining new housekeeping nest waiting for them in Council Bluffs, and now it developed that Mr. Talbott also had important business impending elsewhere.

"If only the idiot hadn't gorged himself on ptomaines or whatever it is he's got, there'd be no bother about it," stated Miss Cave, invading a sort of conference which had ensued at the clerk's desk on receipt of the latest bad news. She was speaking, and rather bitterly, of her driver. "I warned him mountain-trout three times a day for three days in a row would upset even a chauffeur's stomach. As it is, he'll not be fit for duty before tomorrow or next day, if then. And I'm afraid I'm not up to driving my car, it's so heavy, over these winding narrow roads. I might be willing to risk my own neck but I'm not going to risk anybody else's. And it's a foreign car, an Espagne—that complicates things. I could easily give the rest of you a lift on to this junction town, whatever its name is, if only there was somebody ——" She looked about her, canvassing them.

"I'll try," said Mr. Talbott when her eyes reached him. He smiled a little competent smile. It previously had been impressed upon them, but with no effort on his part, that he was a competent person. "I used to own a car of that make, and drove her myself. I don't think I've forgotten how."

The Wares, standing by and holding hands, said that would be just perfectly splendid, wouldn't it?

"Rastlin' a flivver's about my limit," admitted the Claypool man and then modestly merged into the furnishings as though fearful he had committed himself too far.

"Then that's settled," agreed Miss Cave and sent her maid to get the key to the car from her invalided employee. "Your heavy luggage can be expressed along to you later. There'll be room on the running-board to strap on your hand luggage if you'll agree to limit yourselves to one suitcase apiece and one bag. That's what I'm doing. And the car can be left at a garage after we strike the railroad and Gustav will pick it up there when he gets well. So please pay your bills and be prepared to go"—she glanced at her wrist watch—"in, let's say, not later than fifteen minutes from now. It's only about a hundred and twenty miles as I understand it, but there's no telling what condition the roads will be in after all this downpour."

There was a brisk bustling about then to readjust final preparations for departure. But the bridal pair took no part in this. Their bill was receipted. They retired to an alcove and embraced, remaining happily clinched there until the time limit had expired.

To avoid any possible confusion let us recapitulate touching on the personnel of the group who, prompt on the dot of the quarter-hour, drew out from the log-built hotel on this fragrant September morning.

At the steering place, Mr. Talbott, the cosmopolite, an efficient and mannerly man of forty or thereabouts, smartly but quietly dressed.

Alongside of him, the owner of the car, Miss Greta Cave, distinguished bachelor maid of New York, heiress and horsewoman of note and former amateur tennis champion, dressed for rough traveling in breeches and boots and a riding coat.

In the rear seat the Newly Weds.

In the small convertible seats amidships, Lena Honig, ladies' maid, and — — Claypool (initials and place of residence

unknown), she being on the right and he on the left, immediately behind Mr. Talbott.

In this order they were off; the same order was maintained through the journey.

They made excellent time, considering. At noon when they lighted a fire at the roadside and ate the luncheon which the forethoughted wife of the proprietor had put up for them, the village of Finfish at the half-way point was nearly an hour's run behind them. Also the most hazardous part of the trip was over and done with. At their backs the main range reared, making Glacier Park's steep and daunting side-fence. The expedition had slid along and down the slope of the continental backbone; now negotiate a few of the lesser processes of that stupendous spinal column of limestone and quartz and thereafter the coasting would be dead easy. They'd soon be out on the high plains and, presently then, in a placid valley. The map which Mr. Talbott had been conning proved that; it was a good map giving altitudes and grades.

By now the thing had ceased to be an undertaking and an adventure; it had become a lark. Miss Cave felt almost as though she had known Mr. Talbott for long. He talked well and soundly, the traveled man. The maid was beginning to cast discreet sheep's-eyes sidewise toward the taciturn Mr. Claypool, who either did not observe her advances or else chose to ignore them. But under the gloss of her European training for domestic service, the buxom Lena was an incurable coquette. She must flirt with this unsuitable material if only for the sake of the practise.

As for the Wares, they frittered off but almighty few of the precious golden moments on landscape or waterscape. They were fed up on mountains, but not on loving, and their fleeting honeymoon still rode in g ory. The scenery they did not see but they saw each other, which was sufficient, and in their unrestrained corn belt way they billed and twittered like a pair of cage finches, as Mr. Talbott remarked in a tolerant whisper to Miss Cave, or like two idealistic young idiots, as Miss Cave remarked back to him, keeping her voice down.

All the same and all the time, though, a sort of temporary amiable comradeship was enmeshing at least five out of the six of them, and an average of 83⅓ percent is a good enough average for nearly any social purpose. Miss Cave spoke for the majority, when she said:

"We thought we were going to run into dangers. Instead of that we're having a perfectly corking excursion together. I move we

¶ *"Wou'e!" Mr. Talbott paused it just too rich? I guess I win*

and gloated on the discomfiture of the party. "Oh, say, ain't the first prize of the surprise-barty. No, it's second money now."

do something to celebrate our deliverance from the peril that wasn't there. Who says yes?" Substantially by acclamation the ayes had it.

She said this about half past one, as they were approaching Pony Falls, which from above and across a small prairie they could see where it dappled the flat with the houses of its thousand and odd inhabitants.

"See yonder!" she went on. "When we get there we'll have covered ninety-seven miles and except for a little skidding in the mud nothing has happened that wasn't agreeable. From now on we can just loaf along. So let's think up something we can do—something that's funny or unusual or exciting. You know, something that will give us a thrill or the inhabitants hereabout a shock. It might do them good to be waked up. From the looks of things nothing ever happens around here except morning, noon and night. That's what we'll do."

"For instance, what?" asked Mr. Talbott. He seemed to be entering into the spirit of the mood.

"That's just it," confessed Miss Cave. "All I can furnish is the broad general initial idea. Well, after all that's what an executive mind is for, isn't it?" She laughed at the conceit. "Only when I expect mine to be fertile it immediately becomes futile. One of the rest of you will have to work out the details."

"Gregory's awfully quick at charades and things like that," boasted Mrs. Ware with the pride of a brand-new wife in a brand-new husband's accomplishments. "And anagrams and guessing matches too. Gregory's awfully quick that way."

"I'm sorry, but I don't believe we could do much with charades in a car or in a strange town," interposed Miss Cave with the emphatic snap of decision which, even on this short acquaintance, they could tell was quite a part of her. "Perhaps you can suggest a notion, Mr. Talbott?"

Mr. Talbott squinted into space speculatively. Evidently he intended to frame his proposition before he described it.

"As I understand it," he said then, "the scheme is to contrive a sensation either just among ourselves or one that we can share with the people in these parts. That being the case, why not make a competition of it? We'll club in and buy some trifle or other to go to the winner——"

"I'll donate the trophy." Miss Cave touched a small gold pin modeled in the shape of a riding-crop that was caught thwartwise of her smart man's tie. She unfastened it and stuck it in the upholstery *(Continued on page 162)*

By Victor MacClure

I am Neither Bachelor, Widower, nor MARRIED MAN

THIS month will see the twelfth anniversary of my marriage, and six months from now three years will have elapsed since my wife and I finally separated. I am neither a bachelor, a widower, nor a married man. It is a curious position to be in.

I know that to the outsider my life looks a curious one. I know that some of my married men friends are inclined to envy me my freedom, and the few women of my acquaintance are intrigued. My freedom, however, is more apparent than real—as I hope to show—and the mystery that women are inclined to discover in me is really no mystery at all.

Since before the final separation from my wife I have lived alone in a tiny bungalow on the south coast of England. I do my own housework, and my own cooking. This is not especially uncommon among American men, I believe, but it is sufficiently out of the ordinary among Englishmen of my standing to make me a man apart. I am a hermit without the hermit's isolation. I am a misogynist, it appears, who yet does not dislike the opposite sex.

By the common standard of feminine judgment I ought to be a man neglected—but the truth is that I turn out something neater of appearance than the average, and personally I can vouch for the appetizing and delicate quality of the meals I eat. Moreover, I see to it that when any man friend of mine feeds with me he has a repast that he can go home and brag about. In addition, I take care that my place shall always be shipshape and comfortable. Thus do I underline my independence of women, and increase the bewildered interest in me which is felt by the opposite sex. Women would like to pity me. I won't let them.

Taken by and large my life is happy and my way of living is comfortable. As a writer my work is all in my own hands, and I get up in the morning when I like and go to bed when I like. I eat what I like when I like, and if my work is too absorbing, I can miss a meal or postpone it without attracting reproach. If I choose to slack for a day, I answer guiltily to none but myself. My own conscience is my only mentor. Given the capacity I have for looking after myself, my life would be ideal—if I had never been married. That is the fly in the amber. I am like the man who could be a good high-jumper if he had not a damaged leg tendon, or like the other fellow who could play good golf if only he could learn to keep his head down. I could be a splendid bachelor if only I were not a married man.

How does my marriage affect my solitary existence? Economically I am free of my wife, for it is the fact of her separate income which has enabled us to live apart. She does not bother me in any way, never writes and never indicates by any sign that she is even alive. For all practical purposes I might really be a widower. At one time I could not make a journey on business without consulting her. Now I have only to shut my hut to betake myself to Timbuktu if I want to. For long enough I could not make up my mind to spend an evening at my club without seeing first how the proposition would affect her. Now I can spend all day and all night on my own devices without considering anyone. There were days on end when some stupid quarrel with my wife would hinder and hamper me in my work. Now I can quarrel with none but myself—at least domestically. How then does the fact of my marriage affect me, as it undoubtedly does?

To begin with, there are memories and regrets. I know that I married with high hopes of living my life out beside my wife. I know that I never cared for anyone, man or woman, as deeply and sincerely as I cared for the woman I married. And I have yet to discover the human being for whom I cherish more respect than I do for her. Time and again we misunderstood one another and quarreled bitterly, it is true—so bitterly that at last we parted company—but I have not found anyone yet who was quicker to catch my meaning, or whose meaning I could catch so quickly. The slightest flicker of my wife's eyebrow would give me a whole history. We appreciated the same sort of humor, and what would bore me would certainly bore her. There is none with whom I have shared more joy and laughter, and there is none who has made me more unhappy. There is nobody who has hurt me so deeply, and, if the truth must be said, nobody that I have hurt so much as I have my wife.

If by this acknowledgment of her attributes I convey the impression that I am still in love with the girl I married, I convey a wrong one. Since the bond between us was not strong enough to bear the inconsiderable trials and tests that life put on it—inconsiderable in the sum of things—I know very well now that we made a great mistake in marrying at all. It would be irrelevant to the theme on which I am writing were I to examine the causes of our failure, or to attempt any apportioning of blame for it. Suffice it to say, honestly, that probably the causes were in me as much as in her, and that I accept my share of the blame. I fancy that we are both decent-minded, good-humored, and at heart kindly people—but we can never have been within touching distance of that rarity, lasting love.

At any rate, I am not now in love with my wife. I regret what we might have been to each other and acknowledge with gratitude what she meant to me, but for no consideration under the sun would I go back to her. I am certain it would mean misery for her, as well as for myself.

YET the regret remains. Though I am sufficient for myself as I live now, can look after myself and have work to do that is congenial without being too easy, I always feel as if there were some part of me missing. I don't remember ever discussing my work with my wife—but I have a feeling that there ought to be somebody at hand who would have a personal interest in what I am doing. I feel that my work should be actuated, not by personal ambition, but by the desire to benefit some one dear to me. Let me illustrate my meaning.

Before I married, I had little object in life. I had not worried much about what the future held for me in fame or fortune. My chief concern in wandering about the world was to plaster up the structure of a spoiled education—but even in this I had neither plan nor system. Knowledge meant everything to me, and it did not matter what sort of knowledge. I had an itching curiosity about every process of art and manufacture that came under my notice.

Save for qualifying as an architect in Britain—a qualification that I have never exercised in practise—I was master of none of the devious pursuits by which I contrived to live. My brain was only half alive—if that. Sometimes I was an artist, but I could not draw. Sometimes I was an actor, but I could not act. I was something of a writer, but I could not write. In all my pursuits I gave impersonations of better men, and by the grace of Providence got away with my impersonations, or I would have starved. The trouble with me was that I played at everything and that as soon as I got tired of playing, I quit. It is a marvel to me that people stood me so long. I was without plan or purpose.

In addition to his writing and painting, Victor MacClure does his own housework and cooking at his bungalow in the south of England.

Everything changed for me when I met the girl I subsequently married. It came to me in a flash that I was wasting my time, and I sat down with myself and thought myself out. I saw that I was what is known as a "false alarm."

To start altering one's habit of thinking, or rather, to acquire the habit of thinking, after one has been mooning about for the best part of one's life, is by no means easy. The whole trouble, to my mind, with people who want to succeed and don't, lies in bad thinking—in thinking loosely and in slovenly fashion. When I met the girl I wanted to marry I made up my mind to try to think as clearly and lucidly as I could, to formulate a definite plan and coldbloodedly to think ahead, considering just what I intended to aim for.

Within eighteen months of meeting my girl, I was beginning to make a reputation as a scene-painter and, what is more, was beginning to be paid highly for my work. That I have since had to begin again at another job, owing to a war disability, does not affect the argument. I had found an incentive to work apart from gratification of my own desires. I wanted to show my wife that her husband was worth while.

I wonder if you get my point. With the loss of my wife, I have lost the incentive which in the days of courtship and early married life kept my nose well down on the grindstone. Nowadays, for myself, I don't care a straw. The job that I have set myself I shall do to the best of my ability for pride's sake—but never again for me the working bouts of sixty hours on end which used to punctuate my life as a young married man. I say to myself: What does it matter?

And yet the habit I acquired through the need to justify my wife's choice of a husband still clings to me. Even now, after two and a half years' separation, I find myself considering subconsciously any course of action as in relation to some one outside myself. I find myself driving into my work as though the devil were at my heels. Then I pull up with a laugh and the question: What does it matter?

It is rather ironical that nowadays I score more often than I did when I had the incentive of pleasing my wife. Sir James Barrie quoted a Spanish proverb some time ago. It was new to me. "God," he quoted, "begins giving you nuts when you no longer have the teeth to crack them." In the old days, if a piece of my work came off brilliantly, the first person I wanted to tell was my wife. I valued commendation more from her than from anybody. I always felt that my song of thanksgiving was written for two voices. Now that the occasions for *Te Deum* are becoming more frequent and the tedium of waiting for them is lessened, I have nobody to share the chant. That is part of the price I pay for my so-called freedom. It is poor fun rejoicing in solo.

It is the high spots of married life that I miss in this my solitary existence, though I sometimes wonder, had my marriage been consistently unhappy, if my freedom would be without flaw. Given the aptitude I have for living alone and the sudden necessity for solitude that my sort of work so often demands, I can imagine no method of living more suited for a bachelor. But once having tasted the companionship that even the worst of marriages affords—and mine was far (*Continued on page 136*)

By Pad

Illustrations by

"There's no law," Edith cried out to her father and Belle, "that can make me the slave to your narrow prejudice or send me into this woman's house."

The Story So Far:

A SINCERE but meddlesome and egotistical reformer, Henry Gilbert eventually drove his wife to her death by his endless nagging and threats. He was obsessed with the notion that their daughter, Edith, a healthy, normal modern girl, was headed for perdition, and that her mother was to blame. His supporter in this opinion was Belle Galloway, a reformer like himself—but also a shrewd spinster with her eye on the main chance.

When Mrs. Gilbert had been found one night with the gas turned on, Edith left her father's house for good and came to New York to make her own way by singing. Through Pearl Gates, acrobatic dancer, whom she met in her rooming-house, she promptly secured a position in Downing's cabaret, and soon after she was singing also for the WKL radio station. The latter work brought her innumerable "fan" letters, among them several warm-hearted ones from an anonymous writer who called himself "Man in Love with Your Voice." Edith kept her radio identity secret, and was known only as "The Lark."

As a professional entertainer, she one night went to the home of Jesse Hermann, an extravagantly rich banker, patron of opera singers, and reputed rake. That visit changed the course of her life. Expressing great admiration for her voice, Hermann encouraged her to train for grand opera, and offered her money and assistance. The money Edith resolutely refused to take, but she gratefully accepted Hermann's help, and forthwith began lessons, obtained for her by the banker, under the great Lorelli.

She also saw a good deal now of her new patron, who seemed the soul of disinterested generosity and politeness. Usually they were chaperoned by a Mrs. Alcott. The latter, a cynical woman—especially cynical about Jesse—heartily disliked her part, but was forced to play it by Hermann, who had some powerful hold over her. During the summer, Edith caught a slight cold, and Hermann insisted that she go away for a cruise on his yacht—Mrs. Alcott acting as hostess. Pearl Gates in plain words warned Edith not to go, but the latter refused to believe that Hermann's interest in her was anything but what it seemed—fatherly, friendly and professional.

At Comfort Harbor, on the Sound, Edith came ashore alone for golf; and there she ran into young Norman Van Pelt, wealthy Wall Street operator and sophisticated man-about-town, who was also on the links. Van Pelt, be it said, was the "Man in Love with Your Voice," and had developed a curious infatuation for Edith's radio personality; though she did not know this any more than he knew her identity as the Lark. Jesse Hermann, parenthetically, had been one of the several successive husbands of Norman's mother, the beautiful and sportsmanly Natalie Dubose.

Edith had once before met Van Pelt under circumstances that made her furious with him; but now they struck up a spontaneous friendship, though she failed to tell him she was a guest on Hermann's yacht. They played golf, swam and had luncheon together; and on the last day of her stay he told her about his anonymous love for the Lark. Edith, startled, did not reveal herself, but gave him bantering encouragement.

Meanwhile Pearl Gates, genuinely concerned over Edith's friendship with Hermann, had taken it upon herself to write Henry Gilbert the facts, begging him to take his daughter back home. Needless to say, Gilbert was immeasurably shocked and considered Edith already lost. But Belle Galloway tactfully suggested that if the girl had a real home to come to, she might yet be saved; Henry really ought to marry again. However, she recoiled in apparent maidenly horror when he suggested her as the bride.

Gilbert thanked her sincerely for her comfort, but assured her that for him marriage was out of the question. If Edith was to be rescued, some other way than that would have to be devised.

NORMAN VAN PELT had a perfectly rotten time on the day after Edith's departure. He would have left Comfort Harbor the very next morning if he had dreamed how dull the place would seem and how the time would drag. He played a morning round with some friends but a high wind was blowing and his shots were erratic. Nor could he concentrate. What a bore it was to play with people one cared nothing about.

It had been great fun to play with that Gilbert kid; she went in for it with such complete absorption and she was such a bully little sport. Didn't bother her to be beaten if she got her own shots off well, and she took an interest in your game.

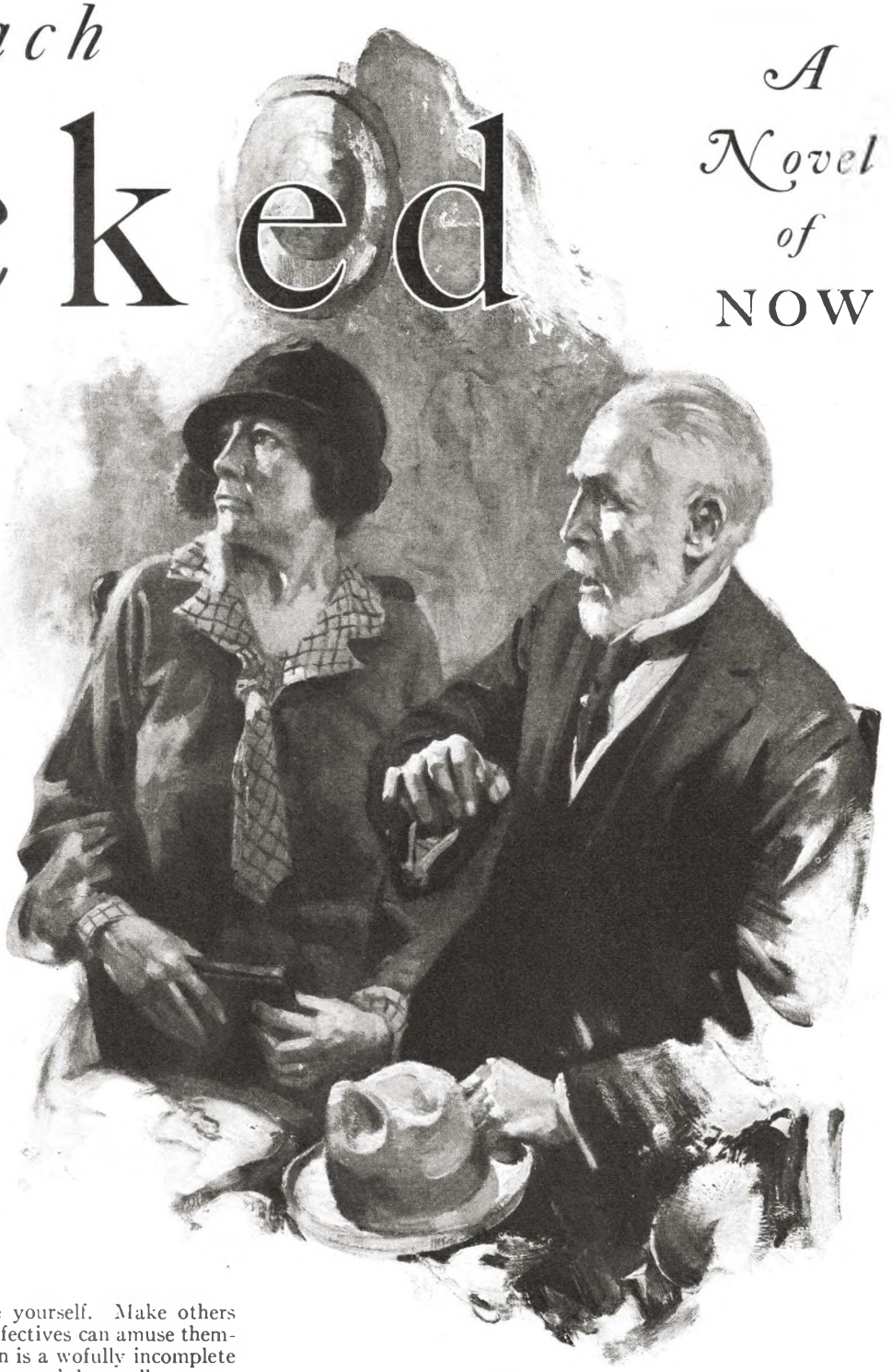
Funny how a kid could go on singing naughty songs in a hashery and still be a clean, wholesome, regular fellow like that. Of course, that job wouldn't last long, she was too clever. Musical comedy for her. Van Pelt knew that theatrical gang; he could help her.

Rex Beach

locked

A Novel of NOW

Marshall Frantz



For that matter he could *make* an opportunity for her: it wouldn't break him to back a production if necessary. What if it did flop? She'd be established. She was a wonder, all right! Good family, breeding, poise! He wished that Nat could meet her. And what a peachy dancer! Yes, and she could swim some! He recalled, with a thrill, that half-hour on the aqua-plane when he had her in his arms.

Dog-gone!

Van Pelt played in another foursome that afternoon and confessed ruefully that he must be overgolfed, something his partner glumly conceded. Later when he dragged himself into the hotel he saw Jesse Hermann and waved carelessly to him but Hermann stopped him, shook hands.

"I noticed the Swan in the harbor," Norman told him. "I've been expecting to see you around the hotel before this."

"I've been loafing mornings and motoring afternoons. Doctor's orders."

"You don't look sick."

"I'm not. I've outlived my ailments. His orders were for one of my guests and they suited me perfectly. We were leaving today but it blew too hard."

"Beastly place," Van Pelt grumbled. "I'm fed up on it."

"You're young, you haven't learned the futility of trying to amuse yourself. Make others do it for you. Only wise people and defectives can amuse themselves. That explains marriage. Man is a wofully incomplete animal. I could have created something much better."

"Better than marriage? A lot of smart fellows have tried and failed."

Hermann's long face shortened. "No, better than man. Not that I couldn't improve on marriage, too, if I tried."

"You did try, Jesse, and I don't see that you succeeded very brilliantly."

"At least I find both amusement and entertainment. There's a vast difference, you know."

"Now that we're on the subject why don't you ask about Natalie? She's well, thanks! Never better."

"My dear boy, your mother is the most charming, the most complete woman I have ever known. In our case that peculiarly delicate relation we call matrimony sickened, faded, died, not by reason of any shortcoming on her part but because of my so-many faults. Of all incomplete men I am the most incomplete: the companionship of one woman was never sufficient."

"Something new to hear you boast."

"Heavens, that's no boast! It's a lament to my vanished dreams. It is the melancholy confession of a disillusioned man. Please convey to Natalie an expression of my sincere regard and admiration." The speaker bowed. "By the way, you asked me once about some enchanting singer you heard over the radio. How did she turn out?"

"I never met her."

"Your interest lagged, eh?"

"N-not exactly." Van Pelt realized of a sudden that his interest *had* lagged; that for a week now he had scarcely thought of the Lark. With a grin he declared: "Anyhow she isn't fat. She's an awfully pretty, awfully nice girl."

"Yes. And happily married."

"What?"

"Married! Didn't you know?"

"Another idol busted. Tonight I take to drink."

"Permit me to speed you on your way to forgetfulness. Dine with me aboard the Swan tonight."

"Sorry! I ruined a good foursome this afternoon and to make amends I invited the men to dine with me and bring their wives."

"Then come aboard in time for a cocktail and bring them with you. The launch will be waiting for you at seven-thirty."

A few moments later Hermann joined his party at the open-air dancing pavilion. They were just finishing tea. As they strolled down to the landing he dropped behind with Mrs. Alcott.

In solitary confinement, Edith's sense of wrong died; terror took its place. And finally despair.

The latter was in no pleasant frame of mind. She had spent nearly two weeks now in a round of the New England seaside resorts and she hated resorts; she had endured an interminable succession of motor trips and she detested motoring; and all the while she had been forced to play a part in a drama which was, alas, all too familiar. She was in a mood now where she scorned herself, was jealous of Edith and nursed a murderous rage at Hermann. He understood her feelings and derived a sardonic amusement therefrom.

"Lois, my dear," he said now, "you have placed me under a deep obligation. Such poise, such patience, such breeding! You have been an example to Edith, an education."

The woman gave way to a gusty explosion of passion.

"I could kill you for what you've put me through. Breeding! What breed of man are you to do a thing like this? Wolf? No—jackal. Wolves run in and pull down their prey: jackals wait for the weak ones, the calves, to drop out."

"Like all women, you're inaccurate. Your natural history is weak. So is mine, for that matter, but it seems to me I've heard of wolves and perhaps jackals that hunt for the love of hunting. But, I repeat, you have been perfectly corking and I have only one more favor, one more tiny sacrifice to ask."

"What now?" Mrs. Alcott's eyes were stormy.

"Simply this: I've invited some friends aboard for cocktails. When they arrive do me the service to give Edith the center of the stage. I'm sure that in your gracious, unobtrusive manner you

can lead them to infer that she is the real hostess aboard the Swan. I have an object."

"You always have an object. What may it be, this time?"

"It will flatter the child."

"Jesse! Am I as stupid as that? Is there—anything else?"

"No. If there were I would count upon your joyful cooperation."

Mrs. Alcott drew a deep breath; in a dry, rustling voice she said: "Thank God, the farce ends tomorrow!"

In accepting his ex-stepfather's invitation Van Pelt had no very fixed idea of acting upon it, for it was his careless custom to promise almost anything to people he did not care much about, and at the last moment to suit his own convenience about keeping those promises; but when he mentioned to his dinner guests that Jesse Hermann had asked them all aboard the Swan for cocktails the women were delighted.

The launch was waiting at the landing-stage; it was but a few moments' run out to the Swan. She was a palatial cruising houseboat and in the soft afterglow of evening she loomed enormous.

VAN PELT'S guests were first on deck and preceded him to the main cabin. When he entered he paused in surprise, for almost the first person he saw was Edith Gilbert. His smile became strained, he experienced a bewilderment that did not clear even while he was being presented to a Major and Mrs. Carthwaite and a meaningless girl and while he was shaking hands with Mrs. Alcott, whom he knew and detested.

Edith's surprise at seeing him equaled his at seeing her; when he took her hand it was cold, and there was a startled inquiry in her eyes. Hermann was beaming benevolently upon them and he was saying: "Edith tells me you're a marvelous golf teacher, Norman. She says you're better than any pro. Whatever you did for her it was a miracle and it made life a lot easier for the rest of us."

"What's this?" one of the callers inquired. "I played with Van this afternoon and he needs a lesson with every club."

"I don't know anything about the game," Hermann was saying, "and I asked Carthwaite along because he does. He's English and all Englishmen are golfers. But he claims to have a piece of shrapnel in his stance or his jigger or something. Anyhow it turned out to be pretty stupid for her, I'm afraid, until you came along."

Van Pelt heard himself saying to the girl, "I thought you were leaving for New York this morning?" He was unable even yet to get the idea of that summer cottage out of his mind; it seemed to him that she had told him she was staying with friends in some cottage.

"We intended to go but it was so stormy——"

Mrs. Alcott added her voice: "Edith is *such* a poor sailor. The trip is hers, you know, and her word is law. We all take her orders." Playfully she pinched the girl's ear. "The sea air has done wonders for you, dear. You can't imagine how you've improved." She turned away then; the conversation became general.

Stewards entered with a massive silver cocktail service and with trays of hors-d'œuvres and they were welcomed with rhapsodic exclamations, with the extravagant persiflage which nowadays accompanies the serving of alcoholic beverages. These people were not thirsty, nor were they dipsomaniacs; they were merely polite men and women who had learned the joys of hypocrisy and had tasted the illicit pleasures of insincerity for the first time since Prohibition had broken down their prejudice against such things.

Something told Edith that this meeting between her and Van Pelt was not accidental but that it had been deliberately planned for the purpose of humiliating her, and that suspicion grew as the moments passed. Bitterly she repented her frank announcement of their first, and her enthusiastic accounts of their subsequent, meetings. Even more bitterly she regretted her lack of complete frankness with Van Pelt himself. If only she had been straightforward and told him everything! But she had never been able quite to shake off the uncomfortable feeling of impropriety which Pearl Gates had implanted in her mind. Evidently he believed the worst. Well, if he knew her no better than that he could believe whatever he chose. She held her head high and carried the situation off as best she could.

There followed a garrulous, if not a witty half-hour, during which a good many cocktails were served.

Jesse Hermann had never been more genial. He displayed a pardonable pride in his yacht and in his guests; more by his manner than by any word or look or action he implied that he took particular pride in Miss Gilbert.

Van Pelt drank with gusto. Beads of perspiration appeared upon his upper lip, his eyes assumed a certain stary wildness. He would have left without a word to Edith, but that, of course, was impossible. He bowed over her hand and said with a smile that was not at all pleasant:

"I must compliment you, Miss Gilbert. You're wonderful! You've got everything and you've been a liberal education to me."

"Thank you," she said. "I must cultivate your knack of being disagreeable. It seems to be the proper thing."

"Don't! There's no money in it and never cultivate any talent that isn't profitable." He glanced towards Hermann.

"You have a remarkable talent, too. The talent for making unpardonable mistakes. It's almost a genius, in your case."

"Right! I'm invariably wrong. That's because I'm singularly stupid for a chap with my opportunities to acquire wisdom. I'll never be a wise guy, but you—you're great, really!" He burst out laughing. "I've been how-dared by hundreds of girls but you're the first one who ever kidded me into apologizing. My hat's off and I salaam in the Oriental fashion. I bump my frontal sinus on the floor."

"I tried to be nice to you for a week," Edith told him in a low voice. "That ought to pay for one golf lesson. Now I can tell you what I wanted to the first time we met——"

"Please don't! No word of praise from you could add to my enjoyment of this perfect hour." He turned away chuckling.

Hermann saw his callers over the side and returned to find that Edith had gone to her stateroom. Later, when dinner was announced and she did not appear, he strolled out on deck looking for her. The captain met him, handed him a note which read:

DEAR MR. HERMANN:

I am taking the next train back to New York and will ask you kindly to send my belongings to my address. Under the circumstances, you'll agree, no explanation is necessary.

Truly yours,

Edith Gilbert

In answer to a startled question, the skipper told him:

"She was waiting for the tender when it got back. We've always taken her orders, sir."

The owner of the Swan slowly tore the note into bits and dropped it overboard; then for several moments he stood frowning out over the dusky harbor.

On his way back to the hotel Van Pelt's friends bantered him noisily about the Gilbert girl in whose company he had been so often during the past week; those cocktails had been potent and even the women joined in teasing him. For once, he failed to defend himself, and later, during dinner, he drank heavily. By bedtime he was quite drunk.

WHEN Edith notified Professor Lorelli that she had returned home and was ready to resume her studies, she was surprised to have him say that he was exceedingly busy and to suggest that another fortnight's rest would no doubt benefit her voice. This was a disappointment, but, under the circumstances, she could not do otherwise than await his convenience. Meanwhile she went back to work at Downing's.

Of course Jesse Hermann communicated with her promptly. She expected nothing less and admitted to him, readily enough, that he had offended her, in fact that he had given her such deep offense that she did not feel it was possible to continue their friendship. He expressed profound surprise and he apologized; in the course of their conversation he made a better case for himself than she did for herself—nevertheless she maintained her position and he was forced to accept it. This he did gracefully enough after telling her that she was hopelessly provincial and that he was quite out of patience with her silly misinterpretation of his behavior.

Edith was content to let the episode end in that way.

When, for the second time, she reported to Lorelli, he informed her with voluble regret that his engagements had multiplied so that it would be quite a while before he could find time for her. He was apologetic but indefinite and while he professed every confidence in her operatic success, he suggested that it might be well for her to look about for another teacher.

Edith left him, sick with dismay. Another teacher, indeed! How could she find another? He was the best in the city and his recommendation alone was a guarantee of a rôle. He had been so enthusiastic, he had held her so closely to her work! Could this be Hermann's doing? Surely he was neither so small nor so vindictive.

By this time, that first fiery (*Continued on page 151*)

By *Jack O'Donnell*

I Tramped Back To Health

And I Had To Run Away *From Home At* 16 *To Do It*

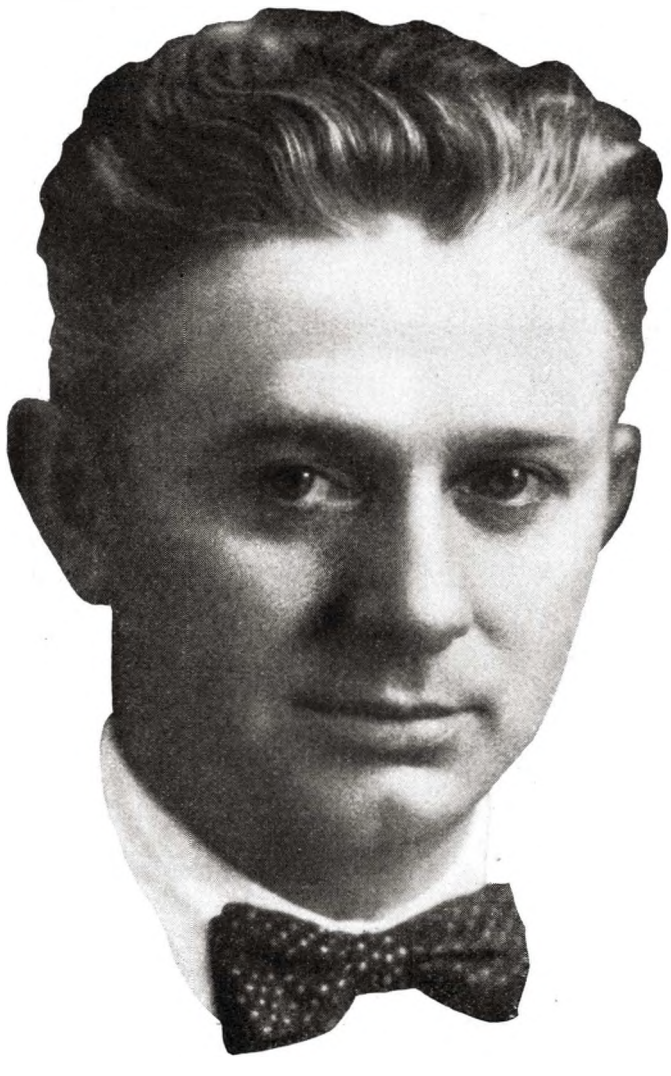
I HAVE beaten a death sentence. By refusing to accept the dictum of doctors and friends, I have lived twenty years beyond the time appointed for me to die. I expect to go on living at least another quarter of a century.

Yet in the gamble of life I got away to a poor start. I was born in a house of mourning. Two weeks before I came into the world my brother Arthur died. The doctor called it pneumonia but the neighbors, who had watched Arthur's vain struggle for life for almost twenty years, employed a homely Ohio phrase to describe his ailment. They called it "lung trouble."

My earliest memories are of these same neighbors telling my mother of the remarkable resemblance I bore to Arthur. The same hair, the same eyes, the same coloring. Instinctively I dreaded these comparisons. To me they seemed to imply an ominous prediction.

Like my brother, I grew up to be a spindle-legged, thin-chested, delicate kid. I made the acquaintance of many doctors. They were eternally placing stethoscopes on my chest, pouring medicine into me. Old Doctor Gill, kind and gentle soul that he was, often held whispered conversations with my mother and father after these examinations.

After each conference my mother would wear a worried look. Whenever the neighbors came in for a cup of tea or a few minutes' gossip or both they rarely settled down to either without first discussing my health and my looks. Invariably some one would say, "He's just like poor Arthur."



I was fourteen years old before the full significance of the stethoscopes and the pitying remarks of the neighbors was driven home to me. One of my playmates mischievously tied a tin can to my dog's tail. I was furious and challenged him to a fight. When I stood before him, fists clenched, he looked at me and shook his head.

"I don't want to fight you," he said, "because my mother says you are not strong; you have lung trouble."

This diagnosis came with cruel suddenness, like bad news in a telegram. The fact that it was sugar-coated with sportsmanship failed to lessen the shock of it.

All the coddling, all the doctors' visits, the stethoscope, the references to my resemblance to Arthur had a clearer meaning for me now. Going home, I questioned my mother. Did I have lung trouble? Was I going to die? Holding me close, she tried to reassure me but her arms were more consoling than her words. The latter lacked the positive quality.

I put the question to the doctor and demanded an honest answer. He told me I needed plenty of fresh air and sunshine, that I was delicate like my brother who had died and "predisposed to certain ailments." After that there was some talk of Colorado and California, but it would require considerable money to send me to either of those places. My father was not a wealthy man. He owned the house in which we lived. That was about all. He could not afford to send me away.

There seemed little left for me but to wait and die.

Then rebellion was born in me. I rebelled against going to school. Why go to the trouble of getting an education only to die as Arthur had died at twenty?

I rebelled against the doctors and the remarks of the sympathetic neighbors. I rebelled against the sentence which hung over me. Life was sweet. I wanted to live.

I made up my mind I *would* live. If California or Colorado could give me life, I'd go to California or Colorado, or to the ends of the earth for all that!

I got booklets from the station-master telling about the health-giving qualities of the air and sunshine of those states. I read and reread these until I became convinced that out beyond the Rockies health and longevity awaited me.

But how was I to get there?

As a boy around Norwalk I often played in the railroad yards. I had seen many men climb into box cars to beat their way. I had seen them between baggage coaches on fast-moving passenger trains. There were the magic carpets! There were the means of travel to the land of healthful anodynes—fresh air and glowing sunshine.

I would go on my own.

I was sixteen when I reached that decision. I was a skinny, thin-chested kid, weighing just a trifle less than ninety-five pounds. I had never known what it meant to sleep outdoors at night. Rarely had I ever been away from home except for a fortnight when I had run away to the city. I was wise enough to know that hardships would be my companions once I set my face to the West; that there would be danger, and hunger and fear along the road. But also there would be adventure, romance, health.

I chose an October night to make my start. I wanted to begin my journey under the stars because I realized that it would be wise to face the worst when my morale was highest. A long journey by day would leave me ill prepared for my first night on the open road.

My preparations for departure were severely simple. I put on my best suit, a salt-and-pepper brown, a cap, my heaviest shoes, a lightweight overcoat which would not interfere with free movement in (*Continued on page 112*)

Illustrations by Charles D. Mitchell

¶ *"I knew all the time you loved me," said Jane. "But you were an awful fool to tell me so."*

Romance,

1926

Model,

by

Royal

Brown

Less Excitement

EASTWARD turned the coupé into Arlington Street, moving along its course with an inexorability which Jane, had she been more of a philosopher and less of a flapper—though she would have scorned the sobriquet now accounted passé—might have likened to the inexorability of life itself. As it was she sat with her pretty if wilful little chin snuggled down into the warmth of her furs. The furs, symbolic of that luxury in which she had been lapped all the years of her life, had been fashioned into an evening wrap to protect Jane from whatever untoward winds might blow. Beneath was a wisp of an evening frock, fashioned to expose Jane to whatever wind might blow.

Either, that is, the chill north winds of feminine appraisal, or the torrid siroccos of masculine enthusiasm. Jane, who was twenty and definitely designed to allure, normally weathered both with equal insouciance.

Yet at the moment Jane was assuring herself that she was bored stiff. With life, men and anything else she could think of offhand. Especially, her escort was being permitted to realize, with him.

Nevertheless, he made no effort to break the silence they had driven in so far. He merely drove right on, continuing east instead of turning south into Marlborough Street, as he should have.

Jane lifted her chin from the furs.

"Why—you drove right past!" she announced, her eyes wide.

"So I did!" he retorted equably. "How careless of me!"

In his voice there was something Jane did not care for at all.

"Well—aren't you going to turn around?" she demanded, in the tone reserved for her family when they opposed her, and the young men she had rejected when they displeased her.

When she wished to, Jane could look misleadingly angelic. She had, none the less, a temper to match her hair, which came close to being red—even though one young poet (Harvard '28) had likened it to molten gold as it chills.

To the young man beside her it was evident that Jane's temper was about to swing into action. But he remained unperturbed. His hair *was* red.

"I doubt it," he replied amiably.

The coupé turned into Commonwealth Avenue and picked up speed.

"Will you tell me what you think you're doing?" Jane demanded.

"Ducking the Minots' dinner," he replied. "I phoned our regrets—they don't expect us."

"They may not expect you," she assured him, "but I certainly gave you no right to tell them not to expect *me!*"

"You see," he went on, as if she had not spoken, "there's going to be *another* new man at the Minots' tonight. And new men are your meat, I've noticed. You eat them up—and something ought to be done about that, you know!"

"And what do you think you're going to do about it—try cave-man stuff?" she demanded, with a scorn that should have stung.

He refused to be stung. "You wrong me," he said. "My interest in you at the moment is purely professional. If you will look upon me as your physician——"

Jane did not so look upon him. She looked at him in a manner which must have shriveled a man with less red in his hair. But he appeared unscathed.

They had known each other a scant two months. He had come from Philadelphia, where his social background was as good as

hers happened to be in Boston. He had graduated from Johns Hopkins, with some honor, and then spent two years studying abroad. So equipped he had come to Boston to act as assistant to a psychiatrist of national repute.

The latter had achieved many honors, which he wore lightly, and one daughter, who weighed on him heavily. Jane was the daughter. A joint in his armor, a thorn in his flesh.

In the course of his professional career he had achieved greatly. His colleagues listened to him with respect, as did his patients. He was honored by all, with one notable exception. Jane was the one notable exception. She accused him of wanting to try out all his silly old theories on her. So far from being amenable, she went out of her way to prove him wrong by doing exactly the opposite of what he advised, always.

Jane had been "out" for two seasons. She was popular and always on the go.

"You can't keep it up," her father had assured her after a particularly hectic season. "Your nervous system is like a storage-battery. A continual drain——"

"Exhausts the battery—how perfectly simple!" Jane had finished airily. "Interesting if true—but how do I know you're right?"

"I have no difficulty in convincing other people," he had observed dryly.

"But they don't know you as well as I do!" she had retorted, kissing him on the tip of his distinguished nose. "By-by. I'm off! I'll do my best to exhaust my battery and then you can have absolute proof—hold me up as a horrible example."

A lawyer who is his own client is notably a fool. Jane's father realized that a physician who tries to prescribe for his own daughter is in even worse state.

Of her father's new associate—seated beside her this November night—Jane had heard much before she had set eyes on him. All her father's enthusiasm, however, had suggested to her no more than that the newcomer would prove a total loss. As far as she was concerned, that is.

In that she had been wrong. So much they had discovered during their first encounter. She had further discovered that this young man from Philadelphia had an engaging grin and a charm that successfully masked the profundities of his professional activities and that, although young and devoted to his profession, he had no intention of growing a beard to obscure the evidence of his youth.

Further than this, he had a sense of humor and was what Jane called a perfectly good man.

"Although," she had informed him candidly, "I should think you'd hate to be always prying into other people's minds. It seems indecent, somehow."

"I hope you aren't going to hold that against me!"

"It *is* a handicap. I'll always feel as if you were trying to read my mind."

"I am—at this moment," he had confessed audaciously. "But then—don't most men?"

"Yes," Jane had admitted, not being subject to false modesty. "But they haven't had your experience."

"I hope to enlarge mine," he had suggested.

"At my expense?"

"More likely at mine," he had retorted, with his charming, disarming grin.

It had been. At first Jane had humored him. She had, indeed, been very nice to him and even put herself out, at times, that he might learn whatever he needed to learn about women from her. In time, however, her interest in him had begun to wane. Just about, deplorably enough, the time his interest in her had begun to wax.

This was what her friends called "Jane's way," in a tone that imputed criticism. Jane considered that obviously unfair. She never led a man on. Or at least hardly ever. A bit at the start perhaps. After that it wasn't necessary. What Jane did do was to give a man a chance to interest her. Which, surely, was sporting of her. If he failed, what more could be expected of Jane?

As far as this young Doctor Sherrill of whom her father so approved, was concerned, Jane had gone to the trouble of taking him apart to see what made him go. She had discovered that he was no different, for all his reputed cleverness, from any other man christened James and familiar to his intimates as Jimmy.

All you had to do was to hold out your little finger and he wound himself around it. All very satisfactory, in a way. Yet after a girl has been out two seasons, that becomes the sort of continuous performance that lacks variety.

In a word, Jimmy Sherrill had fallen for her. And that was where Jimmy got off.

It is true that she was going to the Minots' dinner with him tonight—or at least that had been her impression—but that had been arranged for ages ago. Back in October, before she had been quite sure he would propose.

He had. A week ago. And been rejected.

"I rather expected that," he had assured her. Then instead of threatening suicide or something like that—as some of Jane's rejected suitors thrillingly had—he had lighted a calm and contemplative cigaret, before adding, "Is your 'no' final?"

"Absolutely!" Jane had said, with almost inhuman emphasis—there was something not to her liking in his proposal or his reaction to her refusal of it.

He had eyed the tip of his cigaret for a moment. Then: "You'd make a good surgeon—no faltering with the knife!" he had commented.

This had suggested sarcasm to Jane, but his eyes had been guileless. Rather had they seemed almost approving. And a moment later he had taken her breath away by saying in the most casual tone imaginable:

"I've got to run now—but I'll see you Tuesday night, of course. I'll drop round just before eight and take you along to the Minots' dinner."

They had seen each other in between, not only because he was her father's associate, but because they moved socially in the same orbit. But he had no more than nodded, blithely enough, leaving what Jane's best friends and severest critics were already referring to as "Jane's latest victim" in undisputed possession of her. A poor victim, was Jane's private opinion. New men were her meat, as Jimmy had so unchivalrously remarked, but she found the newest one less exciting, so soon, than Jimmy had ever been.

Even so, Chichester—that being his name—did suggest a bludgeon of sorts with which she might club Jimmy. This she felt a desire to do for some reason she could not put into words and didn't bother to.

Jimmy, being a psychiatrist, could have told her it was because he, Jimmy, didn't look as if he were suffering enough.

It was as well he didn't tell her.

Tonight she had greeted Jimmy with an air of indifferent acquiescence. She had been prepared to hold the pose indefinitely, but he had taken her unawares.

"You must need patients badly—if you have to kidnap them this way!" she suggested, as the coupé sped on.

"I do—but not badly enough to kidnap them," he retorted serenely. "My motto is, have patience and patients will come. Nevertheless, I am very glad to have the chance to take your case. I have a feeling I can cure you——"

"Of my distaste for you?" demanded Jane nastily.

He merely grinned. "Being feminine, I suppose you must be personal," he commented. "But why drag in the fact that I proposed—and was rejected? I fully expected that and was all set for it. It's over and done with anyway—why not forgive—and forget?"

"The way you acted?" suggested Jane unwarily.

"How did I act?" he asked.

Jane bit her lip. She hadn't meant to admit that anything he had ever said or done made the slightest difference to her.

"I let my judgment be swayed by my emotions," he went on. "That was a mistake and I acknowledge it. Doesn't that constitute sufficient apology?"

"Apology!" said Jane, between her pretty teeth.

"What else can I say—truthfully?" he protested, as one who tries to be reasonable. "As a man I may bless and adore your sweet eyebrows, but as psychiatrist I cannot but realize that you are spoiled, perverse, possessed of an ungovernable temper and——"

"What?" gasped Jane furiously. "Why, you——"

"Be sensible!" he pleaded hastily. "You must know that what I say is true. Your own father says the same thing. He——"

"Don't you dare tell me to be sensible!" she broke in. "I *am* sensible. It's you had better be sensible. Don't you know I could have you arrested for trying to carry me off this way?"

He grinned. Maddeningly. Jane felt like digging her charming nails into him.

"Do!" he begged. "Don't you know that lovely ladies always go a little mad about a man once he's in jail? Even the lowest-browed, most evil-visaged murderer is not immune. They send him flowers and other tokens of their deep regard. When I emerge they will besiege me—my waiting-room will be full."

¶ *"What made her get that way?" asked the policeman, ignoring Jane. "Too much jazz," said Jimmy.*

"Will you stop this nonsense and let me out?" raged Jane.

"I am not going to let you out anyway," he retorted flatly. 'As for nonsense, perhaps you are right. I'll get down to business. To begin with, you have a long ride ahead of you."

"Oh, have I!" breathed Jane, bending forward and snapping off the ignition.

This had been in her mind all along, awaiting a good opportunity. Now they had come to where Massachusetts Avenue crossed Commonwealth. A traffic officer stood there; toward him Jane, escaping from the coupé, sped swiftly.

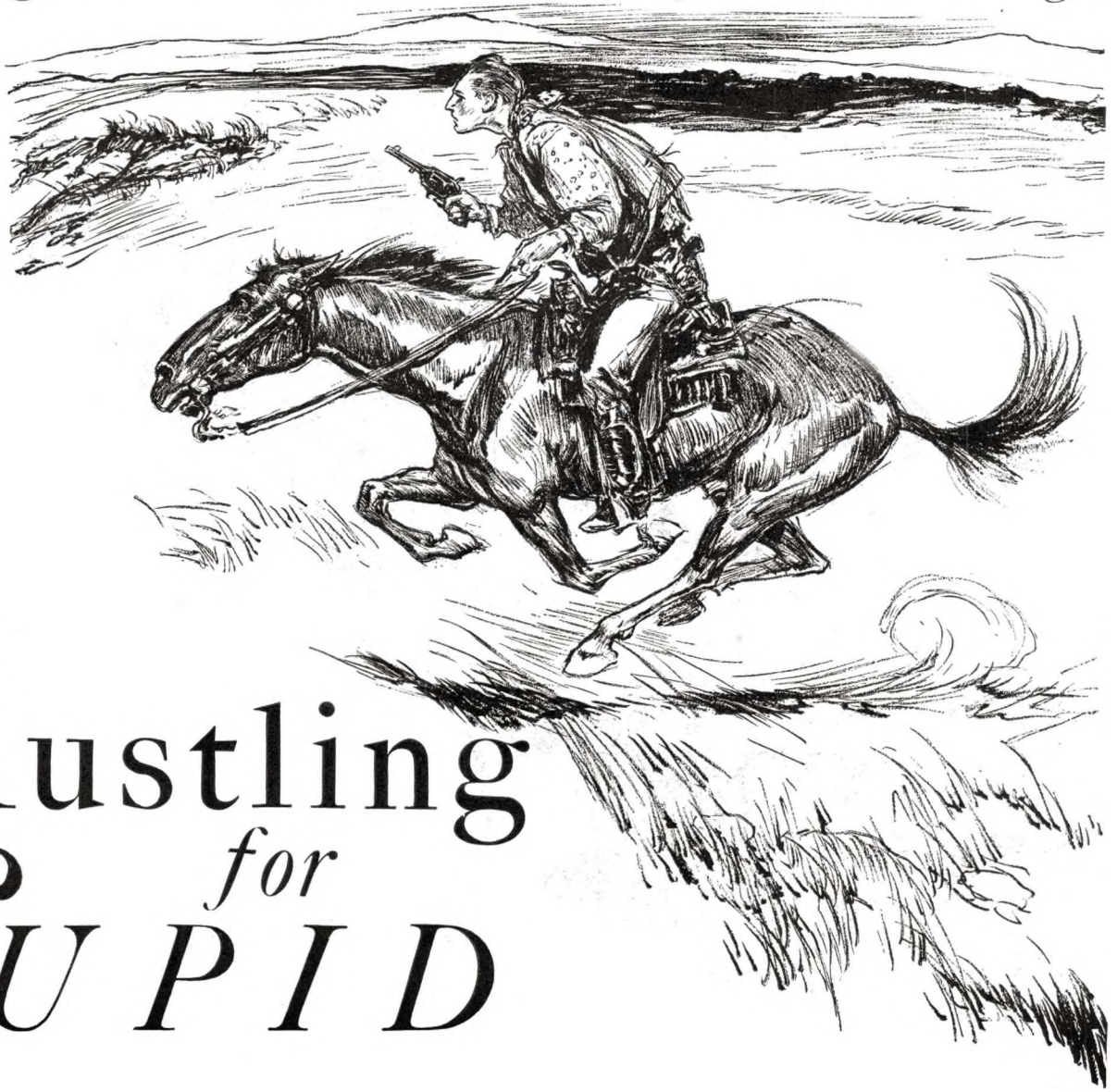
"Arrest that man there!" she commanded, breathlessly yet imperiously.

"What man?" demanded the officer, reasonably enough.

"In that coupé!" stormed Jane, in a tone that suggested she was about to stamp her foot.

The traffic officer glanced at the (*Continued on page 216*)

A Romance of the Days of Free Range



Rustling *for* CUPID

"THERE'S an old sayin'," Dad Tully remarked as he pared a sliver off the corral gate and fashioned a toothpick for himself, "to the effect that the course of true love never does run smooth. And I reckon that's right. Every time I see a young couple fallin' for each other like a hod out of a twelve-story window and proceedin' to leap into matrimony without lookin', I follow their marital career and very frequently find a divorce. Whereas the boy that had a hard time landin' the lady most generally has ample opportunity to get acquainted with her; by the time he feels it's safe to pop the question he's either certain she's worth while or he changes his mind an' marries a widow woman."

I ventured to inquire what incident had set his mind to a consideration of true love and its alleged trials.

"I been talkin' to old Chief Sassy Jack over to the Indian Reservation," the old cattleman replied. "It seems the Indian Agent over there is all for law and order, so he's forbid his Indians to get married until they've first blown themselves for a marriage license an' engaged a parson or the justice of the peace to tie the knot. No more swappin' of ponies for a likely young squaw on his reservation.

"Sassy Jack had traded for a handsome half-breed girl only the day before this order come out, an' he's mad as hops an' wants to know if this new rule is retroactive, or does he have to go to all that unnecessary expense. I told him to put up a fight and maybe he gets away with the decision. If he loses I suppose I'll have to loan the old horse-thief five dollars for his license."

Speakin' of true love (Dad went on) makes me think of old Hank Blatchford and his son Bradley and the little school-teacher over to Sycamore Creek—away back in the days when I'm general manager for Old Man Mulford's Double M ranch down in Grant County, New Mexico. The earliest record of Hank Blatchford dates back to one bright morning in the late seventies when a mean-lookin' *hombre* rides into Deming on a blue roan saddle-horse and lights at the Nugget Saloon. There's half a dozen town sports an' cattlemen standin' at the bar, takin' their mornin's-mornin', but the late arrival ignores the company, goes clear down to the end of the bar and calls for two glasses—one with water in it and one without.

The barkeeper gives him a mean look, but he set out the glasses in a sperrit of curiosity, whereupon the new customer sorts out a four-bit flask, pours himself four fingers and is about to cork his flask and return it to his hip pocket when a bullet busts it under his hand. A split second later another bullet skids the glass of whisky off the bar and one of our outraged citizens is standin' there with a smokin' gun, watchin' Hank Blatchford to see how he's goin' to take this gross familiarity.

"What's run up your back, mister?" says Hank politely.

"I'm mortally offended by your actions," was the reply. "If you're permitted to introduce a habit like that in a free country, the Nugget Bar'll close its doors in bankruptcy and we'll all go thirsty. Hear me, stranger. You order the bar whisky and pay for it before you drink it. The chaser is a sign of contempt for good whisky. That's barred!"

"I prefer my own brand," says Hank Blatchford, "but not having any more of it left, I'll buy."

"For yourself?"

"Surest thing you know. Are you folks all mendicants that I should spend my good money to slake your thirst?" He throws a quarter on the bar and immediately the barkeep sweeps it into the till and orders Hank out of there on pain of sudden death.

by PETER B. KYNE

Illustrations by
Louis F. Wilford

"The boy's honest!" pants Old Man Mulford—"true to the code of the range—kill a rustler wherever you find him."

The next we hear of Hank Blatchford he's drawin' fried beef, beans, black coffee, sody biscuit and forty dollars a month from the Diamond A. I reckon they must have been right short-handed to have hired him.

Hank's reputation for thrift is honestly earned. He's one cowboy that never gambles, buys his drinks wholesale or otherwise disburses his finances on vain trifles. He has an abidin' respect for interest compounded and when, in the course of five years, he quits the Diamond A and allows he'll try runnin' a few head of his own, his action occasions no surprise. It's all free range in them days—except to sheep men—and presently folks begin to notice Hank Blatchford's brand. It's a swastika—for good luck, I reckon.

Pretty soon folks begin noticin' that swastika a lot more than they used to, and about three years after he gets into business for himself there's upwards of a thousand head of Swastika beef cut out of the Double M round-up. Old Man Mulford scratches his head, perplexed-like, when I tell him about it and says to me:

"Son, that two-handed head of she stuff Hank Blatchford started with three years ago certainly has some peculiar qualities. His short yearling heifers drop twins and his long yearlings drop triplets. Another strange thing is that about seventy-five percent of Hank's calves are of the male persuasion. Well, we'll keep an eye on Hank. The day he come into this country I figured him for a no-good skunk and now I'm certain of it. Something tells me he's right handy at runnin' his iron on other folks' calves. We'll watch Hank."

We did, but to no avail. Other cowmen took to watching Hank also, but with all the bunch of amateur cattle detectives after him he gets cautious and nobody ever gets anything on him. Once in a while he'd buy a few hundred head, but most generally he pinned his faith on the law of averages and let nature take her course. Old Man Mulford swore Hank never got less than a hundred and fifty percent calf crop when other cattlemen were surprised if they got seventy-five.

In ten years Hank bought up a lot of land controllin' waterholes, usin' the land scrip nobody thought worth while to bother with in them days, and presently us folks awakes to the fact that here in our midst a cow-puncher has in fifteen years got control of half a million acres of the best free range in the state an' is runnin' thirty thousand head o' cattle. He's as prosperous as a burro knee-deep in alfalfa when many of his neighbors has gone broke.

Also, he has married a girl he'd known back in Abilene, Kansas, an' they have one child, a son which they name Bradley Blatchford, after his mother's people. As if to prove that there is a God that takes a personal interest in human affairs once in a while, Brad Blatchford resembles his father as much as a Chinese cock pheasant resembles a moltin' Plymouth Rock hen. He breeds back to his mother's people, which his mother's a most excellent, kindly, Christian woman, an' how she ever come to pair off with Hank Blatchford is one of them mysteries that's puzzled me so much I've never had the heart to get married myself.

Well, young Brad grew up in our midst. He got a common schoolin' and when he was fifteen he could make a top cowhand. Also it requires a trained bucker to get out from under him. He's sent away to high school presently an' then the Blatchford blackguard puts Brad through college and eventually he comes home with a sheepskin entitlin' him to practise law.

Young Brad is surely a credit to his paternal ancestor—the first and only credit I reckon Hank ever had. At that he ain't commended for it from his neighbors, about half of which lays the blame for Brad's decency to his good mother, whilst the other half has its doubts and puts Brad on probation. Most of them, bein' cattlemen, are pretty familiar with the law of throwbacks and they can't very well see how a cow-thief can sire anything but a cow-thief.

Brad takes after his parent in one particular only. He likes cows and he hates the law! Still, it's a moot question whether he hangs out his shingle in Deming or goes out to his father's ranch, until a bunch of nesters over on Sycamore Creek holds a meetin' and puts over a school district. I never did see a nester that didn't have more children than some folks have hay.

IN THE course of time there arrives at Sycamore Creek, under contract to teach the district school for three years, about as sweet a sample of the stronger sex as ever come to New Mexico. Her name's Sybil May Hamilton and she's all the way from Boston. About twenty years old and one of these small, enticin' sort of women that mother six-foot sons—perfect as to form an' more than that as to face. She has a low, soft way o' speaking and it's very refined. You couldn't get Sybil May to talk shrill if an Apache was chasin' her.

Added to that she has a fine sense of humor, which is God's most signal blessing to a woman, she's a good sport and as far as I can see—although I was too young in them days to see much—she's not the sort of woman to use her manifold advantages as a club to beat the brains out of her hopeless and insistent admirers. In short, Sybil May is a lady, the sort that's bred from generations of folks with family pride, traditions an' self-respect.

Old Man Mulford's the second of the cow persuasion in our country to see Sybil May and meet her socially. Brad Blatchford's first, on account none of us ever have any business callin' us to Sycamore Creek. After failin' to evict those nesters by fair means and foul, the cattlemen, by common consent, elect to make believe the feed's poor along Sycamore Creek and if nesters had been there they've all moved away!

Sybil May teaches school a matter of four months and nobody but Brad and them nesters—and they're all married men—know of the smile the Almighty has bent upon New Mexico, until along about the Christmas vacation Sybil May comes into Deming and drifts into old Man Mulford's bank to cash an accumulation of salary warrants. The cashier looks her and her warrants over and asks her politely is she prepared to be identified. Sybil May smiles and says she's perfectly willin' to be identified if so be there's some prominent citizen in Deming willin' to take the risk; lackin' such volunteers she's more or less at the mercy of the cashier.

"Don't you know nobody in this town, miss?" says the cashier.

"Nobody, sir," says Sybil May.

Thereupon that ornery cashier allows it's against his orders to cash salary warrants or checks for anybody not havin' an account with the bank.

"This is a cold and suspicious bank," says Sybil May sadly. "May I speak to Mr. Mulford?"

Of course the cashier, who has already fallen in love with her, notwithstandin' the fact that he has a wife and four children to home, is willin' she shall have anything he can give her, provided it ain't the bank's money. So he leads her into Old Man Mulford's office and says:

"Mr. Mulford, this young lady says her name is Sybil May Hamilton and that she teaches the district school over to Sycamore Creek. She wants to be identified so I can cash her accumulated salary warrants."

Old Man Mulford—which he's an old-fashioned Southern gentleman if there ever was one—rises, bows and says that identifyin' school-teachers from Sycamore Creek is his long suit. "I am delighted to identify Miss Hamilton," he says.

"But you've never seen me before, Mr. Mulford," says Sybil May.

"My dear Miss Sybil May Hamilton, I've never even heard of you before," says the old warrior, "but ever since I been old enough to play with matches I've been willin' to take a chance. You're fully identified and vouched for," and he takes her salary warrants and initials them "And what's more," says he, turnin' to the cashier, "if Miss Hamilton should inadvertently overdraw her account with this bank, she's good for it. If those nesters on Sycamore Creek ever get behind with her salary and she needs an accommodation, you oblige her."

He bows again, indicatin' that the interview is finished. But it's far from finished with Sybil May, although bein' a lady she ventures, after thankin' old Man Mulford, to ask is he terribly busy this morning.

"No gentleman could ever be terribly busy in the presence of a lady," says the old gallant. "Please to set down and tell me what's on your young mind."

The cashier retires to his cage and Sybil May sets down and looks across at the old man with them bright, whimsical, fun-lovin' brown eyes of hers. "I haven't any more business to discuss," she says. "I just thought it would be a pity to meet the biggest man in the community and not get acquainted with him to the extent that I might venture to ask his advice in an important matter."

"I am appreciative of your trust and confidence, Miss Sybil. In what manner can I be of service to you?"

"I want to know all about Brad Blatchford," says Sybil May. She was never a girl to fiddle around, pickin' up grains of information. She wanted the whole sack and went straight for it.

"As far as I know, Miss Sybil, Brad Blatchford is a handsome, well-educated, amiable, kindly, honest gentleman."

"Can you say as much for his father?"

"I'd rather not discuss Hank, my dear. When I can't say something good about a man I refrain from sayin' anything bad. Answerin' your question, however, I'll say that in contradistinction to his son, Hank Blatchford is homely, uneducated, unamiable, ungenerous and stingy."

"I have been told repeatedly that Brad's father is a cow-thief."

"So have I, Miss Sybil, but I regret to state that it's never been satisfactorily proved. He's never even been indicted. Sometimes I think our community is a bit backward in its duty."

"Has he an account in your bank?"

"No. I refused to take his account."

"Would you make him a loan?"

"No."

"Of course if he put up satisfactory collateral——"

"I'd be suspicious of it."

"Would you loan Brad Blatchford money?"

"Yes, I'd take a chance on Brad."

"Without security?"

"To a limited amount, yes, provided he planned to invest the money in a venture I regarded as sound."

Sybil May rested her face in her hand and studied the carpet a minute. "Brad Blatchford has asked me to marry him," she says presently.

OLD Man Mulford stiffened. "This is a bank, young lady, not a matrimonial agency," he reminded her. "Are you, by any chance, in a fair way of reciprocatin' Brad's tender passion?"

"I don't know," says Sybil May, and a couple of tears start and drift across her sweet face. "I liked him awfully well the first time I met him. He asked permission to call and I granted it. The next thing I knew I had received half a dozen anonymous letters——"

"Just what might be expected of nesters," says the old man. "Of course you didn't pay any attention to anonymous letters, did you?"

"Of course not. Then the women came to me——"

"Just what might be expected of a lot of women. You didn't pay any attention to them, did you?"

"No-o-o, but I—I was afraid just the same. When Brad called again he had a beautiful driving team in a fine buggy. He asked me to drive over and meet his mother. I did."

"And found the finest, plain old mother in the territory," says the old man. "I have a lot of respect for Mrs. Blatchford. Brad looks like her, don't you think?"

But Sybil May was too broke up to answer. Finally: "I took a tremendous liking to you, Mr. Mulford, on sight. I know everybody trusts you and I—I didn't have another soul to—talk this matter over with, so I—please forgive me for inflicting my troubles on you, but you're sort of fatherly and I——"

The old man gets up and takes her hand and pats it and makes her to home. "Now, then," he says, "when Brad asked you to marry him did he say how he expected to support you?"

"Yes, he mentioned that. It seems he hasn't any money of his own. His father pays him seventy-five dollars a month as riding boss of the Swastika. Recently he asked his father to

¶ *"Until I get to feelin' sorry for myself, Miss Sybil," I says, "I don't want the woman I love to be annoyed feelin' sorry for me."*

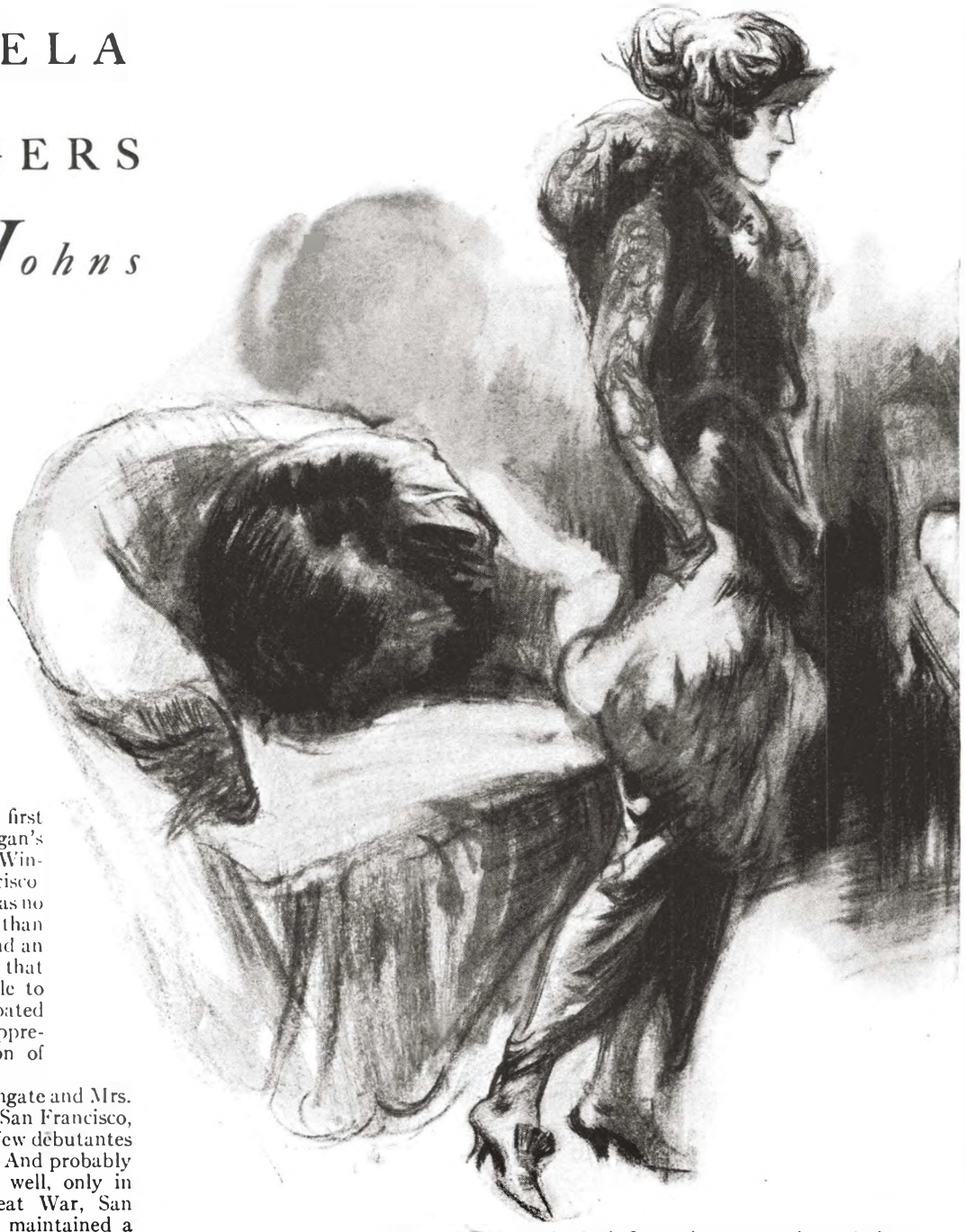
admit him to a partnership but that plan wasn't acceptable to Mr. Blatchford, so Brad doesn't know what to do."

"Well, seventy-five dollars a month isn't enough, my dear. You couldn't live in a shack doin' your own cookin', havin' a new dress once a year, growin' old before your time and with nobody to associate with on terms of intellectual equality."

"I—I—haven't permitted myself to think much about it, Mr. Mulford. I don't know whether I could love Brad that much or not, and it wouldn't be fair to him to permit him to run the risk. I'm afraid I'm not big enough to stand having people say my husband is a cow-thief just because it is generally believed that his father is—or was. We Hamiltons *(Continued on page 100)*

By ADELA ROGERS St. Johns

A Story of a Man who could not undo the PAST



Must this little flower thing, Amy, be crushed for a man's ambition? thought Dolly Wall.

IT WAS in June that the first rumors of Amy Cardigan's engagement to Royce Wingate startled San Francisco. And even then, when there was no more to base surmises upon than a tea or two at the Palace and an occasional ride in the Park, that old and very exclusive circle to which Amy belonged anticipated trouble and turned an apprehensive eye in the direction of Mrs. Dolly Wall.

For the story of Royce Wingate and Mrs. Wall was public property in San Francisco, known to everyone except a few debutantes like Amy Cardigan herself. And probably the debutantes knew it as well, only in those days before the Great War, San Francisco society buds still maintained a semblance of innocence. The fashion of cool knowledge and frank speaking had not come in then.

The world had accepted the thing, as the world does accept things when there seems nothing else to do about it, and almost everyone in the city by the Golden Gate knew Mrs. Wall by sight. The men admired her for her vivid red head and her sumptuous figure. And the women gazed at her covertly, as nice women always gaze at women outside the pale, and envied her diamonds and were surprised at the stunning way she wore her clothes.

Except for the diamonds and a certain hardness and the spectacular quality of her good looks, she wasn't so different from other women.

Which was manifestly unfair.

When Royce Wingate came down from Goldfield to San Francisco, having struck pay dirt to the tune of many millions, he brought Dolly Wall with him. And that was quite as it should be, seeing that Mrs. Wall had furnished him with the money to get his start, and that she had earned that money by plying the most ancient and dishonorable of professions during the hectic days of the last Nevada gold rush.

They were picturesque and marked figures from the very first, those two. Of all the gold-rush millionaires who hit San Francisco along in 1907 and 1908, none was so noticeable as Royce Wingate. It was bound to be so. For he was a big man, and a handsome man, with a dark and dangerous air, and a smile that more than one woman remembered to her sorrow. He had, too, a possessive, intimate way of looking at a woman, as though they shared in common the secret of her weaknesses.

In Goldfield, a young doctor with a thin, sardonic face had once flung Kipling's damning phrase in his face, by way of insult. "They should call you 'Love-o'-Women,'" he said, and his voice shook.

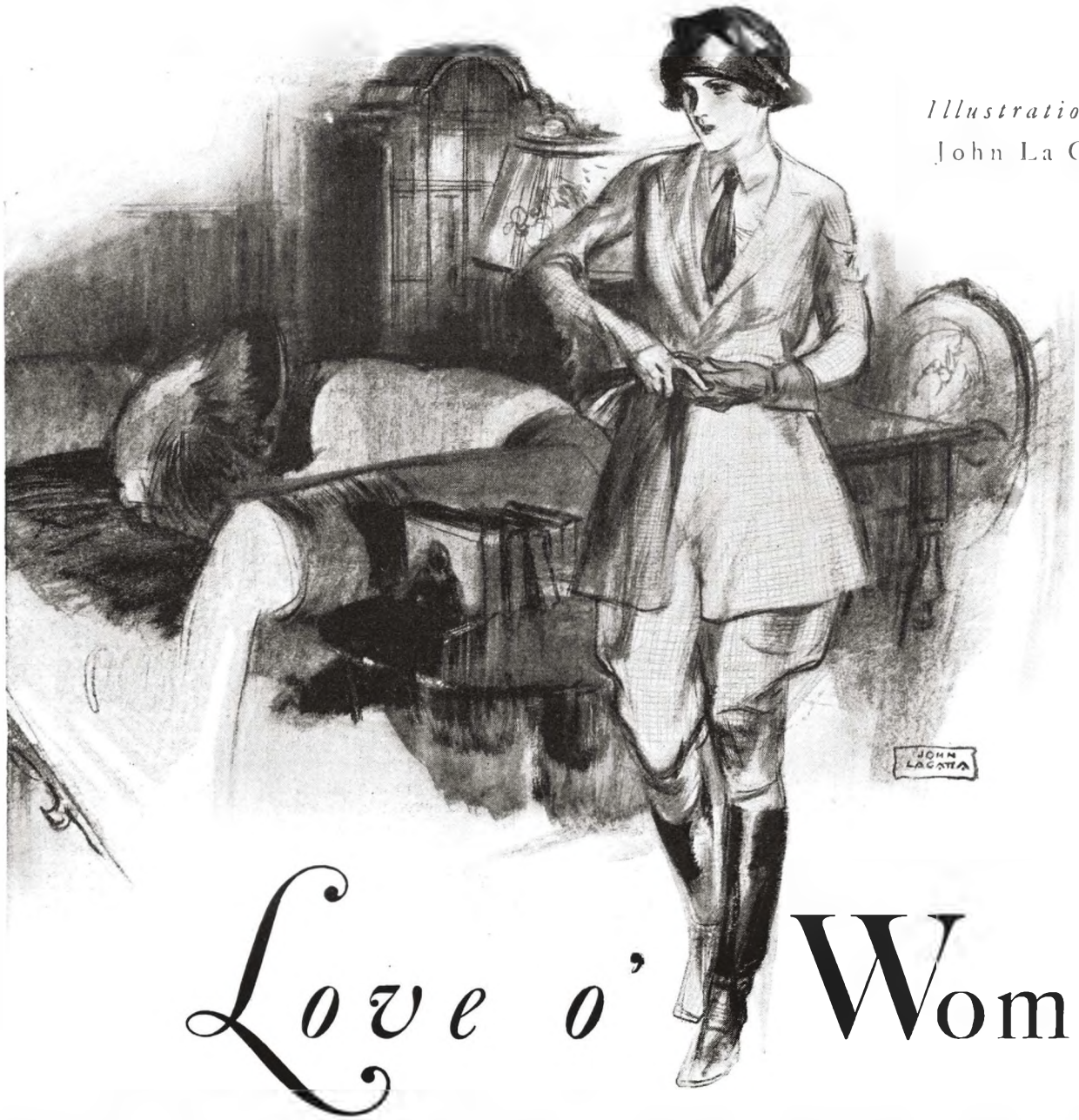
There was justice in what he said, although in his heart there was nothing but black rage. That was why he dared to hurl that phrase by way of insult straight in Royce Wingate's teeth, in spite of the fact that Wingate had a reputation for being a quick man on the draw, and had already some notches on the handle of his gun. For there had been a girl who looked upon the doctor with favor before Royce Wingate came along.

"Any girl would have done as well for you, Love-o' Women," he said bitterly, "but she was the only one for me."

And since this was true, Royce Wingate was silent and went his way with his gun still in his pocket.

That was before Royce met Dolly Wall. How they met and where they met cannot be told here. But in that meeting, both seemed to find an answer to the fierce and primitive hunger within them.

Having found her man, Dolly Wall left forever the gay and sordid path upon which she had traveled. From that day to the day of her death, her black eyes knew no man as a man except



Illustrations by
John La Gatta

Love o' Women

Royce Wingate. And for a time Royce philandered no more. But only for a time, Royce being, so they said, one of those men who can never be convinced that the word *women* has a singular which can be used on occasion. Even his fear of Dolly and her temper could not hold him from that game he seemed bound to play until the very moment when a veritable fire from Heaven eliminated him as a contestant. A vain man, he was.

Dolly had a temper. No doubt of that. Nor had her mode of life taught her self-control. Goldfield knew that temper well, and shrugged its shoulders, because after all what could you expect of a woman with that hair and those dark eyebrows that just met above her sharp, handsome nose?

As for San Francisco, if it wanted proof, there was the shocking affair at Tait's the night that Dolly Wall discovered Wingate there with a young woman of rather provocative beauty. In those days Tait's was the fashionable place to dine before the theater, and everyone was very gay and elegant, until suddenly they became aware of a tall woman in a low gown the color of an opening fuchsia. None of them ever forgot the picture she made, hurling plates and water-bottles and invectives in no mean fashion. But some of them were a little annoyed when their names were mentioned as spectators in the spectacular reports of the affair that appeared on all the front pages the next morning.

Thus it may be seen that while Dolly Wall was not a woman one could recognize, neither could one totally ignore her. Yet for all her past sins and present reputation, Dolly had her good points. She would have gone upon the rack for the man she loved, without a word, which is more than can be said of some more civilized women; and she had a queer, perverted self-respect.

"I'll tell you," she once said to a woman friend who came to her weeping over the sad lot of the social outcast, "it's like this, my girl. Fate shuffles the cards, and you got to take and play the hand you're dealt. I didn't choose this sort of thing and no more did you. But I've done my best according to my lights and I'll be hanged if I'll go sniveling around, hanging my head. I don't like it, but I can take my medicine graceful."

Thus she was not to be openly slighted with impunity, nor gratuitously insulted. If you let her alone, she went decently and quietly on with her own life. If you went out of your way to flick her on the raw she would retaliate with all the swiftness and venom of a rattlesnake.

It was Dolly Wall, in the old days in Goldfield, who once said to an extremely respectable wife as that lady ostentatiously drew aside her skirts in passing Dolly on the street: "Don't worry, lady. My clothes won't contaminate you. Your husband buys mine, too."

Nor was the episode of the dishes the only one that mingled fear with the many other emotions concerning her that had dwelt in Royce Wingate's heart.

These things being true, it is not difficult to understand that during the summer, while he courted Amy Cardigan, he moved very softly. He did not want to hurt Dolly. No one else in the world could really hurt her, but he knew that he could. That was only one of the reasons he put off telling her until it was too late to avert the catastrophe that engulfed him. The other reason was undoubtedly fear.

As the summer drifted by and rumor grew to a certainty, people began to speculate as to whether Dolly Wall knew what was going on, and as to whether Amy Cardigan knew of the

existence of Dolly Wall and the part she had played and still played in Royce Wingate's life.

"Bah!" said Amy's aunt, one Nell Templeton-Decourcey-Davenport-McMahon, whose knowledge of the world was by no means limited to what she had learned from her three husbands, "the girl's in love with him. What would she care? She's head over heels in love with him, and why shouldn't she be?"

She said it to that round, soft, bald Ernest Whitehead, who by means of some extraordinary and unexplainable talent had ruled San Francisco society for many years.

"He's a handsome man," said Mrs. McMahon, chuckling, "and if I were ten—or twenty—years younger, I'd fall in love with him myself. I never regret my lost youth, Ernie, except when a man like Royce Wingate comes along."

"You always did have low tastes," said the tsar peevishly. "I admit he's handsome, and the Lord knows he knows it. But there are other handsome men. He's a bounder, Nell, if he is a millionaire. I can't understand what Amy's mother is about."

Mrs. McMahon lighted a cigaret and leaned back comfortably in her big chair. "Well, Ernie," she said, "you've recognized his social existence. I understand he's now a member of the Mercury Club."

"Don't be an idiot, Nell," snapped the little man. "A man among men—that's different. He's becoming influential in a business way. He's—he's on boards and things. But I don't invite him where there are ladies if I can help it."

"I expect you'll have to invite him everywhere after he marries Amy. He'll be one of the inner circle of circles then," said the old lady, with a mischievous grin.

"I expect I will," he said furiously. "I expect that's one of the reasons he wants to marry her."

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," said Mrs. McMahon amiably. "He's an ambitious son-of-a-gun. It tortures his vanity to be left out of things. Now he's come this far, he wants to go the whole way. And Amy can take him. Incidentally, his money won't do the Cardigans a bit of harm."

"Nell, how can you talk like that about your own sister, selling her daughter to——"

"Hey," said Mrs. McMahon, "get off your own foot, Ernie. It's not the millions the girl's after. She's in love. That being true, I don't imagine her father and mother object to the money. Jack Cardigan was always a fool. When the fire wiped him out, he just stayed wiped out. A worm. A mere worm. As for my sister Janet—Janet, if you'll excuse a bit of plain speaking, is a whited sepulcher. She wouldn't sell her daughter. But since Amy wants to marry this young Don Juan, Janet will manage to shut her eyes to his record for the sake of a few millions. I only hope this red-headed woman of his will allow her to keep them shut."

"He's not so young," said the tsar, "and since you know so much, is he in love with Amy?"

"As for that," said Mrs. McMahon, "he's in love with himself. But like most men who have roved the seven seas of romance, the time has come to think of settling down. It comes to all of us, Ernie. When I say settle down, I am speaking comparatively. He is now willing to dilute the wine of love with some of the plain water of domesticity. Speaking of which, will you mix us a highball, Ernie?"

"Don't call me Ernie," yelled the tsar, springing up. "I suppose you're right. I perceive that there is a desire to place himself upon the same safe and respectable footing occupied by the big men with whom he associates in a business way. Naturally, he would pick a wife who can accomplish for him the things of social standing and prestige which he could never accomplish for himself. But I wish he had picked out somebody besides Amy. There is something mighty sweet about Amy."

Her aunt nodded. "Sweet and pretty, but not overly bright," she said. "So she ought to make a fine wife. Brains are an awful handicap to a woman if she expects to be happy in this life."

IT WAS not really strange that the two women about whom so many people speculated that summer should be the last to know of each other. It is always like that. For while almost everyone will talk about a woman, so few people will talk to her.

Who, for instance, would speak to Amy Cardigan of a Mrs. Wall, who lived somewhere outside the garden of life, amongst those weeds of whose very existence Amy was not supposed to know?

Particularly since Amy was one of those girls to whom happiness appeared to belong by divine right. She was like a Persian kitten, scampering in the sunshine among the spools of bright and tangled silks. The little affectations, the fluffiness, the bright and cunning swiftness, seemed only to emphasize the wistful helplessness, the cruel peril of so small and slight a creature.

Mrs. Wall's contacts were necessarily narrow. Men she distrusted and women distrusted her. Which really did not matter much, after all. She was used to loneliness. And her life beat like some great pulse, in one artery alone.

Ernest Whitehead, who by a wave of his pudgy hand made and unmade social destinies, would have told you that it was simply impossible to sympathize with such a woman as Dolly Wall. One of the things, in fact, that just aren't done. But for all that, there was something tragic, something terrible during those summer days in that love of hers for her man.

ODDLY enough, when the first whispered hints of this thing began to explain to Dolly the intangible something that was troubling her, she kept it to herself. Which was not her custom, Dolly being one of those women who possess no restraint, who have no secrets.

This time some deep and subtle intuition kept her silent.

She knew from the beginning that this was different. She did not feel angry. She felt threatened.

The first time she heard the name of Amy Cardigan, it had only a vague familiarity to Dolly. It would have passed her by but for something pointed in the giggle of the saleswoman as she pronounced it. Why should the fact that she had waited on Amy Cardigan that morning cause the woman to giggle so knowingly over waiting on Mrs. Wall in the afternoon?

Under the brim of the dashing black hat she was trying on, Dolly stared at her coldly, her eyes keen in the shadow. These saleswomen in fashionable stores knew everyone and everything in the way of the latest gossip. And the woman's guilty flush brought a hard, pinched look about Dolly's nose and mouth.

At home she brooded over it, gazing out into the little green square that spread before her window. Amy Cardigan. Not an actress. Royce had rather a penchant for actresses. There had been that dancer who was head-lining at the Orpheum. A skinny creature past her youth, but with a personality like a flame. Poor thing. In the end, Royce had been abominable to her. And the ingénue of a stock company, who was neither so innocent nor so young as she looked. At the recollection of her, Dolly Wall's fine teeth snapped together viciously.

But she was sure that Amy Cardigan was neither an actress nor one of her own kind.

The very next morning she stumbled across that name in the society column of the Chronicle.

Now Dolly was very fond of the society column. She read it first, and then she read the comic strips, and then the drama page. The society column amused her very much. It was like a peep into another world. Particularly did she take a childish pleasure in the descriptions of luncheons, where the tables were banked with flowers and the ladies wore such and such frocks.

Also, she sometimes found Royce's name mentioned in connection with some large affair. She rather liked that. She was excessively proud of Royce. So clever, so successful—her man. And there was no sting for Dolly in the fact that he had a chance for position and she had not. Dolly Wall had gained a certain philosophy and she no longer wasted her energy railing against the world's injustices. The double standard was quite all right so far as she was concerned.

She had even given up the hope, long ago, that Royce would ever marry her.

"What a knock-out I'd be in society," she once said to Royce, with one of her rare laughs. "More than that, I don't know as I'm hankering after it, either. From what I've seen of them around the Palace and the Fairmont and at the shows, they look pretty frumpy to me."

Sitting up in bed, her long hair streaming over her shoulders, Dolly Wall studied the item in the Chronicle that had to do with Amy Cardigan. Being a student of the society column, Dolly knew that there are ways and ways of mentioning people. And the way they mentioned Amy Cardigan was very special indeed. Not only was she one of the season's most beautiful and popular débutantes, not only was she chairman of some brilliant affair being arranged by the younger set, not only was she the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Wayland Cardigan, but she was "The only granddaughter of Mrs. Eleanor Templeton."

Dolly Wall stirred her chocolate meditatively. "'The granddaughter of Mrs. Eleanor Templeton,'" she said gravely. "Can you imagine that?"

It was not that Dolly had any great awe of old Mrs. Templeton, who was a tradition in San Francisco. But she was impressed by this tracing of lineage. This girl must be somebody.

As they had once loved each other, so they hated each other—Dolly Wall of Goldfield and her man, adventurer and prospector, known to have at least two notches in his gun.

Consequently she could not be the sort of girl with whom Royce Wingate would be apt to follow his usual methods. In his present position, he wouldn't risk playing games with the granddaughter of Mrs. Eleanor Templeton.

Then what was he up to?

When the answer dawned upon her, she upset the chocolate and sat frozen while it ran in ugly rivulets over the blue satin counterpane. Her face was like granite, hewn by the chisel of pain. She put one hand to her breast and pressed down, as though she tried to still the violent, deathlike pangs of her heart.

When Royce came to take her for a drive that night, he found her strangely quiet. There were dark smudges under her eyes that no amount of paint and powder—and Dolly was always lavish in matters of make-up—could hide.

Those telltale shadows of her anguish gave Royce an apprehensive moment or two. But she said nothing. Only her eyes followed him about, as some stricken animal might crawl after the hunter who has wounded it.

In the weeks that followed she was unusually tender with him, with the tenderness of the woman (*Continued on page 126*)

By George ADE

I Keep Myself Young

by Doing TWICE as Much Work as I Did 20 Years Ago

ONE fact I think I have checked up. No man can be given a permanent label by reason of his post-office address. On a map the States are differentiated by various bold colors but the residents are not. The geographical lines are imaginary and so are most of the distinctions.

Nevertheless, the myths survive. New England is the home of yarn mittens and wooden nutmegs. Boston is the fountainhead of culture. New York is headquarters for alluring vice and *à la mode* sophistication. Philadelphia has just taken a sleeping powder. Chicago is rowdy. Salt Lake is the home of whiskered Mormons. South of the Mason and Dixon fence are soft hats and goatees. West of the Missouri you run into red shirts and sheepskin trousers.

All of which is just as authentic as Little Red Riding Hood. If a traveler could be transported to a strange city while blindfolded, and then be permitted to look out from the principal hotel at the main business street and size up the pedestrians, he wouldn't know whether he was in Providence, Tulsa, Atlanta or Tacoma.

Georgia has been advertised in conventional fiction as the home of the languid and easy-going Southerner and when you look for some of the interesting specimens you discover Bobby Jones, Ty Cobb and Young Stribling.

I have friends who insist upon regarding Indiana as a region of dialect and galluses. They ask me about the "craps" and want to know, gosh ding it, if everything is hunky-dory down in ole Injeanny. To which I reply, controlling my annoyance as well as I can, that the dear old State is quite all right except that most of our legislators are wearing cantaloupes above their shoulders in place of heads, and, instead of making laws for all of the inhabitants, they take orders from those pop-eyed fanatics who have not yet been sent to asylums.

Whenever the ignorami begin hooting at Indiana, just because it is Hoosier and has a county called Posey, I not only throw Benjamin Harrison, General Lew Wallace, James Whitcomb Riley, Booth Tarkington, Meredith Nicholson, Theodore Dreiser, George McCutcheon and David Graham Phillips at them, but I bring up as reserves a lot of additional and unsuspected data regarding the great and the notorious who spent their formative periods right here in our commonwealth. Referring not only to Abraham Lincoln, Uncle Joe Cannon, Ray Long (the editor for whom I am writing this piece) Henry Ward Beecher, Hewitt Howland (the new editor of the Century), Edward Eggleston, William M. Chase but also to Zella Nicolaus, the most expert blackmailing vamp in the history of finance (Wabash, Indiana), Tod Sloan, who revolutionized the riding of race-horses (Kokomo, Indiana), and Kid McCoy, the whirlwind pugilist who could dodge anything except a Los Angeles jury (Zionsville, Indiana).

I could name a lot more, but I don't want to pile up too many names for fear that some investigator may call attention to the fact that most of these celebrities left the State as soon as th y were old enough to ask for railroad tickets.

Twenty years ago, about the time when I first began to attract friendly smiles at the bank, I did something so unusual that it was almost spectacular. As previously related, I moved down to Indiana and prepared to spend my summers in a pleasant shack in a grove, so far away from any urban influence that I could be a real Gaffer Green. Not a gentleman farmer or a suburban connoisseur of aristocratic bulls and heifers, but a detached and segregated corn-fielder who knocked around in old clothes all day and invariably failed to dress for dinner.

I have conducted a freak establishment and my experience cannot be a guide or a warning to any folks who lead normal lives which are lashed up by the usual family associations. I am a bachelor and my home is kept in order and made a place of civilized abode by two capable and determined women whose most extreme compliment for me would be that I don't interfere much with those details of management regarding which I am grotesquely ignorant. The overgrown park which I fenced off around my house, on the assumption that some day the United States Army might drop in for a visit, is under the despotic control of one Gus Bengston, a Norwegian with an overdeveloped conscience and an incredible appetite for work.

The gardener is also the caretaker, with a bungalow in the offing, and then there is the young man who drove the car home from the west coast of Florida and who has remained here ever since because down in Clearwater the real-estate agents, singing in the subdivisions, make so much noise that one cannot sleep of nights. His soft, Southern, magnolia, orange-blossom and mocking-bird accent is so rare in these parts and so entrancing in its dulcet mellifluence that Sunday visitors come miles to hear it.

IF YOU think you are going to hear a couple of hosannas in praise of life in the country as compared with the hectic hurry-up of the big cities, you will be disappointed. After all these years of experimenting I don't know whether I was wise or wimple-headed in taking up my voting residence so far away from any place in particular. I wanted to escape some of the allurements and distractions of club life and find it possible to arrive at my desk without hurdling seven or eight pitfalls, but maybe I covered too much distance when I ran out.

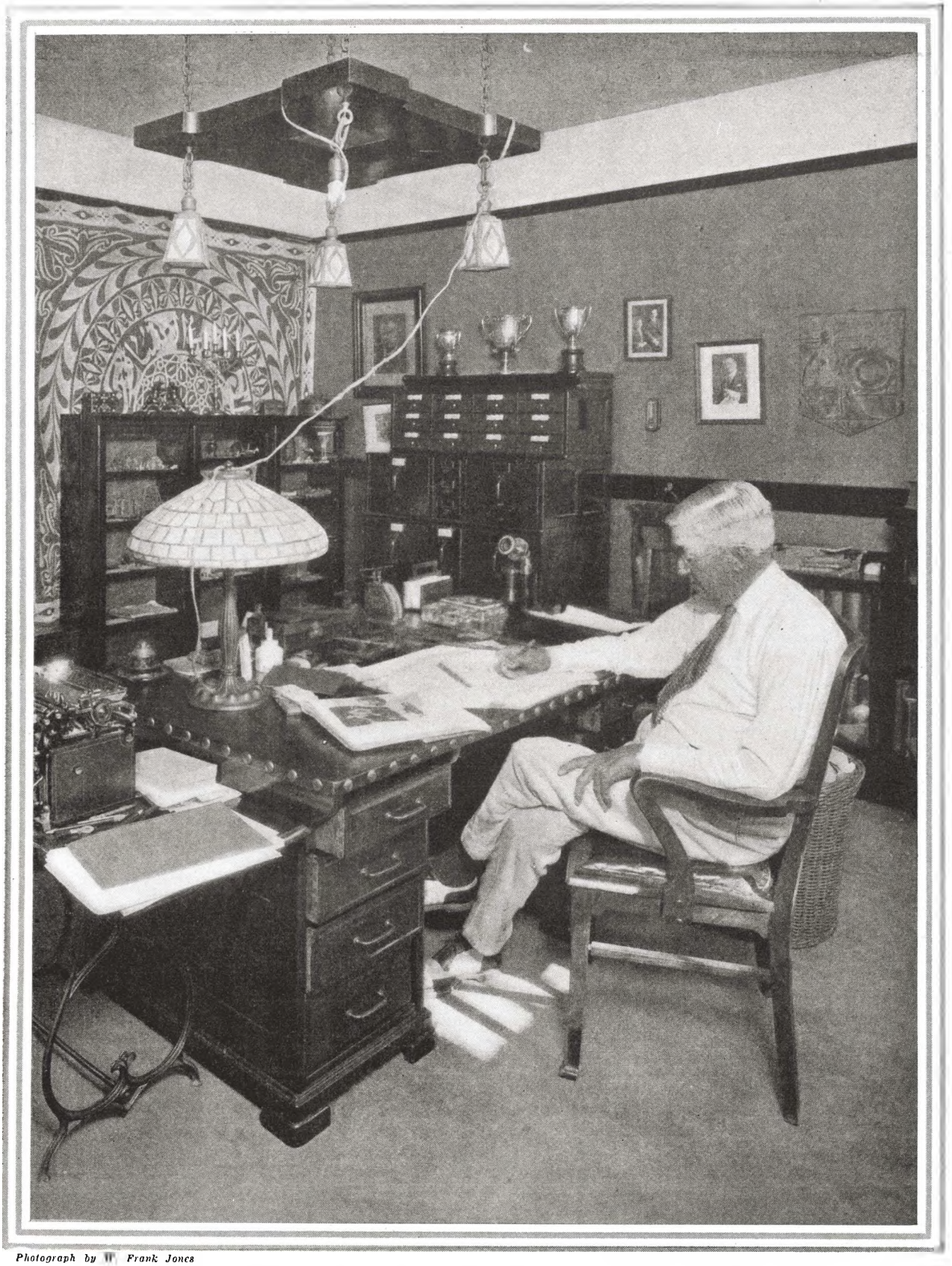
During the first three weeks after I settled in my new home and reveled, for the first time, in wide expanses of elbow-room and a real sense of proprietorship, I made up for lost time and turned out a play called "The College Widow." It was approved by the public and never had to be revised and it did over two million dollars at the box-office before it went to the stock companies.

One year later I wrote another play, in the protecting quietude of my summer shack, and it died such a shameful death that we had trouble in finding pall-bearers.

In the opinion of several candid friends, the writing output began to sell off about the time I moved out to the edge of the map and severed diplomatic relations with the night-hawks. Possibly I got the flabbiness induced by an upturn of prosperity or maybe it was a plain case of rust. Of course I was in the tropics or semi-tropics every winter, but at any rate for eleven months in each year I was away from the show-shops and the crowded corners and the bustling hotels and the clamorous clubs through which I had swum my way for about fifteen years.

No longer could I whistle the song hit the day after it came out. I had ceased to be Dun and Bradstreet on current scandal. Every time I strayed back to the Avenue and saw the new styles, I could only yammer and point. I learned that there were some developments which could not be observed at long range. Even now, I suspect that small talk and table manners cannot be absorbed over the radio.

After I had been in the woods for a while I found that I was frightened over the prospect of meeting the more intensely cultivated city types. They were full of earnest talk about things which had been out of my zone. Most of the topics which they chewed to pieces had nothing to do with making the world any brighter or better, but these topics seemed relatively important to the cocktailers who were discussing them. I could not simulate excitement over matters which I did not know about or care about, so when I became tangled in one of these high-tension *conversaziones* I would become numb all over and lose control of the vocal



Photograph by W. Frank Jones

¶ *In his workshop at Brook, Indiana, George Ade begins his day at 7:15 every morning.*

cords. Often my only solace, while I was adding my portion of gloom to the general gaiety, was the knowledge that they never would invite me to come again.

Don't think I am saying that one who lives in the country loses track of what is happening at the news centers or puts in long hours of dumb solitude. I do more reading and more talking per day while out in Iroquois Township than I do at the Plaza in New York or the Athletic Club in Chicago. I will admit that out here we do too much talking about crops and the weather. Also, we magnify the local happenings and become excited every time a tire is punctured.

I do not concur in the small-town diagnosis revealed by "Main Street." There may have been, once upon a time, out on the raw Northwestern prairies, an assemblage of hopeless vulgarians and coarse-fibered chawbacons such as Sinclair Lewis pictures. Every small town has too many haw-haws and know-it-alls in whom ignorance and prejudice are appallingly combined. But they do not dominate the whole program. Not any more.

The membership of our country club is drawn from small towns within twenty miles of the course. I happen to have on my desk a list of the sixty men who played in our annual golf tournament. We have doctors (*Continued on page 160*)

This Girl Wished *for a* Palace

IN A large picture house in New York, suddenly one evening a man in front of me signaled for aid—and soon I was helping him carry a fainting woman up the aisle. A young usher hurried down to meet us; and a bit later, to my surprise, he showed us into a spotless room that looked like a little hospital. A doctor and nurse were waiting there. My curiosity was stirred, and later that evening I came back to ask the doctor about his work.

"Are you fairly busy here?"

"Oh, yes!" he answered cheerfully. "Over three thousand people in the last year have been brought into this room. We get 'em of all sorts and kinds, old and young and middle-aged, from New York and all over the country, too, people who are visiting here. Most of our patients are women and girls; for it seems as if this big city at times were just packed full of secret excitements. Women hug them to their breasts, and walk the streets and get all tired out, then drop in here to try to forget. But before they know it, some bit of drama on the screen acts like a spark to the powder within—and so up the aisle they come."

Then he gave me this little yarn, which I'll try to repeat as he told it to me:

Late one afternoon last month, the ushers carried in a young girl. She was a sturdy, well-built little thing, but her hat was off, in one clenched hand, and her face was very white. No time to call an ambulance. A half-hour later she lay on that bed, with a small baby by her side. She asked if it was a girl or a boy.

"A girl," I said.

She tucked it close and shut her eyes, and just for a minute she lay very still. And I watched her and wondered. She was so small. Not seventeen, by the looks of her. She had short hair and a face like a boy's—but her eyes, which suddenly opened now, were feminine a hundred percent. I'm a pretty tough old doctor man, but that look got me. I took her hand.

"It's all right, kid, you've come out of this fine," I said. But the orchestra down in front crashed into jazz at that moment, and we could hear it faintly here.

With a queer little smile, she squeezed my hand. "Doctor," she asked, "is this the first baby to be born in this dear old

home?" She spoke with an accent of the West; her voice was sweet and husky.

"Oh, no, we've had two others this year."

"Oh, gee," she smiled, "will you listen to that?" Tears started but she forced 'em down. "God bless our home," she whispered. And then—"Still, when you come to think of it, it isn't so queer as it might be, at that. For if it weren't for the pictures, Doc, this kid would never have had a chance. Not a chance," she repeated, and shut her eyes.

"Tell me about it," I suggested; for I could feel that her pulse was strong, and that she was excited and wanted to talk. Her smile had a kind of quiver in it. She lay there a minute with eyes tightly closed.

"Well," she answered, after a while, "the whole story of my young life has been—wait a minute—let's think about this." And she puckered her face into a comical little frown. "We'll call it, 'Mothered by Movies,'" she said. "My real mother died when I was born. And I was born lame. Been lame ever since. That didn't bother me very much, because my father ran a garage, and we didn't think much of people who walked. But what lamed me most of all was the little town we lived in, out in southern Illinois. It was so dull the roosters yawned. They did for a fact—I used to watch 'em open their beaks for a crow and then yawn. They just couldn't help it. The town was like that.

"But when I got to be fifteen, the pictures came—to a place about four miles away. And I went as often as I could, and the movies began to mother me. I sat right up and opened my eyes to all that I'd been missing in life. No one was ever lame on the screen; they just seemed to dance along. They jumped out of windows and landed on horses, they rode off in autos with millionaires. Nobody lame and nobody dull, something doing for everyone all the time. Life in big cities? Oh, my Lord! Jerusalem the Golden, with jazz and money blest. It took only a year of the pictures to drive me crazy for New York.

"I arrived about three years ago, with thirty-six dollars and twenty cents. I didn't know anybody here but a drug-store clerk with a harelip. He steered me to a rooming-house and then I started out for a job. The first day I started at eight o'clock, the second at seven, the third at five—but they beat me to it every time. On and on and on I walked. My lame foot ached half through the night, and in the morning it was so stiff I had to throw it out of bed. I ate hot dogs and watched my cash go, nickel by nickel. Lonely? Ouch! My harelip friend then came along and took me to the movies one night. The picture was about life in New York, and he asked me what I was laughing at. I said, 'Life is not always what it seems.'

"BUT he took me to his drug-store then and gave me a tonic, and I went on. And in a few days after that I landed an eight-dollar job, putting labels on shoe-polish cans. I had a wonderful time that night—saw Jackie Coogan at his best—and in the weeks that followed, my 'movie mother' kept right on. One night when I was dead sick of my job, she showed me a girl on the screen who got up in the world by going to night-school. So I did that—and learned to stenog—and in less than a year I was getting fifteen dollars a week.

"So much for my commercial career. But long before this I'd begun to move in social circles, as they say. At first I just moved round and round inside a circle all my own. On Thanksgiving afternoon I went to the pictures all by myself, but I met a girl in the place where I worked, so at Christmas there were two of us at the movie theater. And a couple of boys sitting near us got fresh in the dark and had to be told a thing or two. They edged into our circle, though, and in a couple of months or so I had quite a bunch of friends—about a dozen fellahs and girls. We met in movie parlors or in the drug-store of my friend, and planned out what we'd do that night. A few of our gentlemen friends were looking for trouble—beginning with jazz. But though I'm all there with my tongue, you can't jazz much with a limp like mine.

"And besides, my dear old movie mother had been attending all this time to the religious side of my life. I went to the pictures instead of to church, and you've got to admit that, when it comes to religion and morality, the movies are right there.

"Every film that I saw said, 'Be a good girl, and keep out of trouble.' And I did. It was easy. For one thing I've noticed about New York is that there are lots of streets where a girl like me can walk for miles without a single millionaire shoving the diamonds into her hands.

"But I did meet a boy, a year ago, who seemed so drawn by my quick, bright ways that, before I knew what was going on, we were sitting at the pictures one night deciding whether or not to get married. We didn't want to very much, but my good old movie mother whispered sternly in my ear, 'You go and get married right away. If you don't, you'll have an awful time.' And she showed me so many pictures of just how awful it could be, that I came out strong for wedded life. But he wouldn't go to the Methodist church and I wouldn't stand for a synagog, so we compromised on City Hall, and a big man there with three gold teeth took a look at our license and tied us tight in the bonds of holy matrimony.

"That was about a year ago. I'm nineteen now and he's twenty-three. I've gone right on working these last six months; I'm getting twenty-two dollars a week and he's getting twenty-eight; and we've put some money in the bank. But his parents are dead and so are mine, and I've worried some in these last weeks as to where my baby would be born. Hospitals seemed so big and cold, and our furnished room so dingy.

"'Where can I find a palace,' I asked, 'for my baby to be born in?'

"I RACKED my brains and walked the streets, or sat in the subway alongside of girls who were working on crossword puzzles there—and I wanted to ask 'em, 'Help me on mine.' I worried my husband with it, too, till the poor kid couldn't sleep at night, and he'd groan at me, 'Well, why won't a good clean hospital do?' But it wouldn't do.

"I guess you know how it is. A girl gets queer in her head at such times. So on I went with my worrying. I gave up my palace of gold, and on Christmas Day I prayed, 'Oh, Santa Claus, dearie, give me a home—a nice, quiet, peaceful one, just for one night—so my little Jew-Gentile can open his eyes on something kind of personal.'

"And all this time," she ended, "I never once thought of this mother of mine, with her home all waiting, her palace of gold. And I never even dreamed of this when I dropped in here this afternoon. But she took things right into her hands. She showed me a picture of the Old Homestead—mother with spectacles, reading her Bible and praying for daughter to come back. And that got me tearful. So here we are. And it's quiet in here—and you and the nurse have been so kind that maybe you'll let us stay awhile and have a cozy little nap. We're sleepy, both of us, aren't we, dearie?"

She cuddled the infant by her side.

"Could you get the proud father on the phone?"

She gave me his office telephone number, and a bit later he arrived. Nice-looking young Jew but thin as a rail, and greatly excited. The pair were such babes in the woods that I took their affair in hand and arranged for a room in a nursing-home.

But when the ambulance had arrived and we put her on the stretcher, as she was carried out through the house, the early evening show had begun; and 'way down there on the screen, "mother" had on her spectacles once more and was getting out her Bible; the orchestra played "Lead, Kindly Light." Then the girl on the stretcher—that queer little mother who looked like a boy—buried her bobbed hair in the pillow and cried a little in the dark. But when we came out into the big lobby, her eyes again were as bright as you please, and she threw a smiling look about.

"A gold palace, all right—but oh, Doctor," she said, "just think of this baby in years to come—through all the stress and storm of life—looking back on the dear Old Homestead here!"

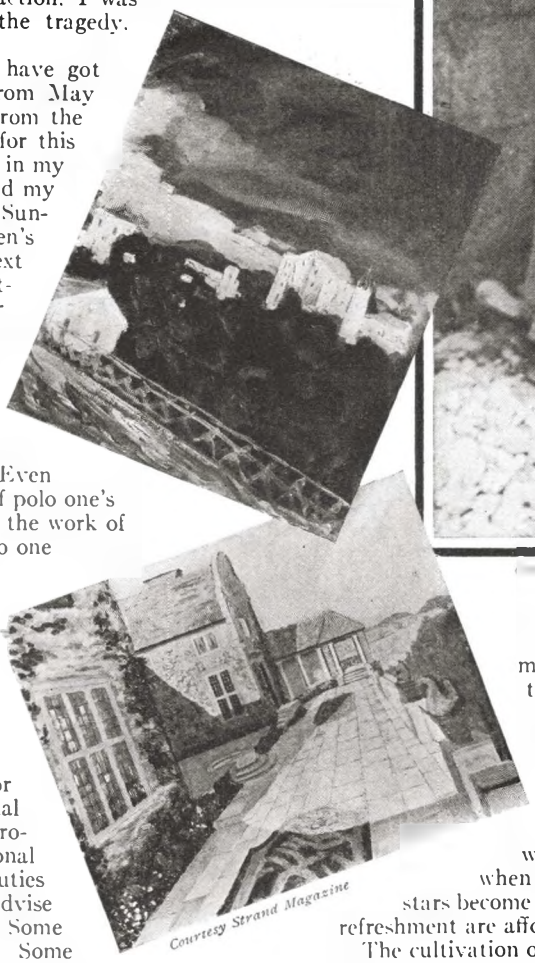
So the doctor finished his little yarn.

A few minutes later, in a gallery high above, I stood by a small booth of steel, inside of which was the god of this place, the *deus ex machina*. The man who ran it had for a moment stepped outside; and glancing in through the little door, I saw the huge machine running alone—with a low, weird buzz and a violet light playing all about its head. From its one great eye, a stream of light poured through the darkness far down to the screen, and projected some thrilling drama there, which was holding the thousands of people below apparently spellbound and enthralled. It seemed like some great creature alive. "Mother Movie," I told myself.

And remembering what the physician had said to me, I began to feel the presence of countless other bits of drama lurking down there in the dark—excited hopes and feverish plans, glad expectations, deep suspense—the kind that makes the hands grow cold and clench together in one's lap. For it's a queer big city, you see—not half so hard and commonplace as it appears.

When Life Harasses *Me*

I Ride My *HOBBY*



By Winston S. Churchill,

I CONSIDER myself very lucky that late in life I have been able to develop a new taste and pastime. This hobby—painting—came to my rescue in a most trying time.

After I left the Admiralty in 1915, in one of the most harassing periods of the war, I continued to be a member of the War Council. Thus I knew all that was going on without any executive duties. Moreover, what was going on had deeply involved me in its responsibilities.

I had to watch the unhappy casting away of great opportunities and the feeble execution of plans which I had launched and in which I heartily believed. One dwelt in a sort of cataleptic trance, unable to intervene yet bound by the result. At a moment when every fiber of one's being was inflamed to action, I was forced to remain a spectator of the tragedy, placed cruelly in a front seat.

I do not know how I should have got through these horrible months from May till November, when I resigned from the Administration, had it not been for this great new interest which sprang up in my mind and kept my fingers busy and my eyes alert. Some experiments one Sunday in the country with the children's paint-box led me to procure the next morning a complete outfit for painting in oils. During all that summer of 1915 I painted furiously. I have never found anything like it to take one's mind for a spell off grave matters.

Golf is simply no use to me for this purpose. I find myself thinking of serious business half the time. Even between the chukkas of a game of polo one's thoughts sag back occasionally to the work of the day or of the morrow. But no one can paint or try to paint, which for this purpose is the same thing, and think of anything else. Two or three hours pass in a flash. One forgets that one is standing up or that it is luncheon time. One forgets utterly the work of the past or the worry of the future.

Many remedies are suggested for the avoidance of worry and mental overstrain in persons who over prolonged periods have to bear exceptional responsibilities and discharge duties upon a very large scale. Some advise exercise, and others, repose. Some counsel travel, and others, retreat. Some praise solitude, and others, gaiety. No doubt all these may play their part according to the individual temperament. But the element which is constant and common in all of them is change.

Change is the master-key. A man can wear out a particular part of his mind by continually using it and tiring it, just in the same way as he can wear out the elbows of his coat. There is, however, this difference between the living cells of the brain and inanimate articles—one cannot mend the frayed elbows of a coat by rubbing the sleeves or shoulders; but the tired parts of the mind can be rested and strengthened, not merely by rest but by using other parts.

It is not enough merely to switch off the lights which play upon the main and ordinary field of interest; a new field of interest must be illuminated. It is no use saying to the tired "mental muscles"—if one may coin such an expression—"I will give you a good rest," "I will go for a long walk," or "I will lie down and think of nothing." The mind keeps busy just the same. If it has been weighing and measuring, it goes on weighing and measuring. If it has been worrying, it goes on worrying. It is only when new cells are called into activity, when new stars become the lords of the ascendant, that relief, repose, refreshment are afforded.

The cultivation of a hobby and new forms of interest is therefore a policy of first importance to a public man. But this is not a business that can be undertaken in a day or swiftly summoned up by a mere command of the will. The growth of alternative mental interests is a long process. The seeds must be carefully chosen; they must fall on good ground; they must be sedulously tended—if the vivifying fruits are to be at hand when needed. To be really happy and really safe, one ought to have at least two or three, and they must all be real. It is no use starting late in life to say, I will take an interest in this or that. Such an attempt only aggravates the strain of mental effort. A man may acquire great knowledge of topics unconnected with his daily work, and yet hardly get any benefit or relief. It is no use doing what you like; you have got to like what you do.

The most common form of diversion is reading.

By the Rt. Hon.

Winston S. Churchill

Chancellor of the Exchequer in Great Britain, which corresponds to Secretary of the Treasury in the United States

following his hobby in London's East End.

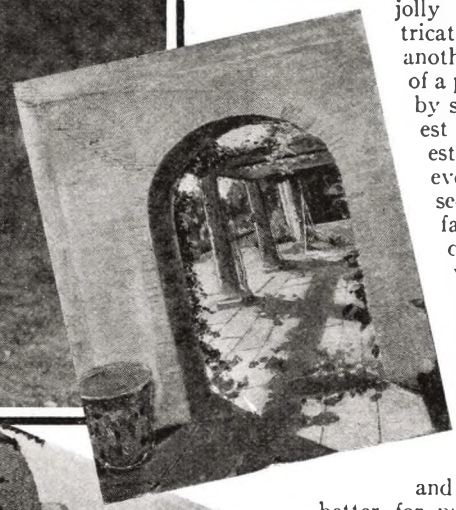
In that vast field millions find mental comfort. Nothing makes a man more reverent than a library. As you browse about, taking down book after book from the shelves and contemplating the vast, infinitely varied store of knowledge and wisdom which the human race has accumulated and preserved, pride, even in its most innocent forms, is chased from the heart by feelings of awe not untinged with sadness. Think of all the searching inquiries into matters of great consequence which you will never pursue. Think of all the delighting or disturbing ideas that you will never share. Think of the mighty labors which have been accomplished for your service, but of which you will never reap the fruits.

"What shall I do with all my books?" was the question; and the answer, "Read them," sobered the questioner.

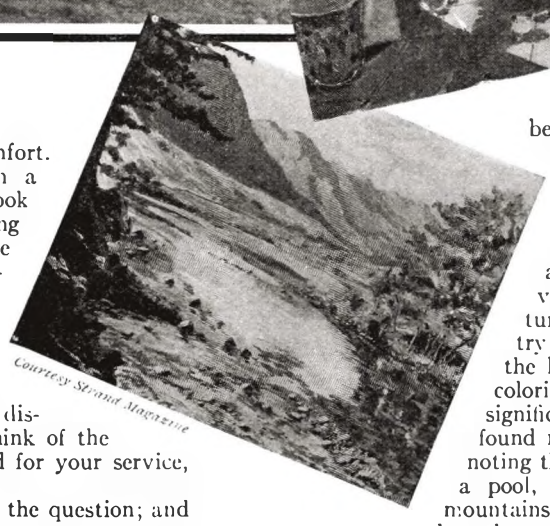
But if you cannot read them, at any rate handle them and as it were fondle them. Peer into them. Let them fall open where they will. Read on from the first sentence that arrests the eye. Then turn to another. Make a voyage of discovery, taking soundings of uncharted seas. Set them back on their shelves with your own hands. Arrange them on your own plans, so that if you do not know what is in them, you at least know where they are. If they cannot be your friends, let them at any rate be your acquaintances. If they cannot enter the circle of your life, do not deny them at least a nod of recognition.

But reading and book-lore in all their forms suffer from one serious defect—they are too nearly akin to the ordinary daily round of the brain-worker to give that element of change and contrast essential to real relief. To restore psychic equilibrium we should call into use those parts of the mind which direct both eye and hand.

Many men have found great advantage in practising a handicraft for pleasure. Joinery, chemistry, book-binding—if one were interested in them and skilful at them—would give a real relief to the overtired brain. But best of all and easiest to procure are sketching and painting in all their forms.



And what fun it is! All these bright, jolly colors and their intricate relations with one another. The whole plan of a picture, built up stage by stage from the remotest distance to the sharpest foreground, absorbs every faculty, and yet it seems a different set of faculties from those required in ordinary work. Never mind if the result is not impressive—if comprehension and aspiration have far outrun the means of execution! A few sweeps of the palet-knife will clear the scene, and the canvas, all the better for past impressions, may be preserved for your future enterprises.



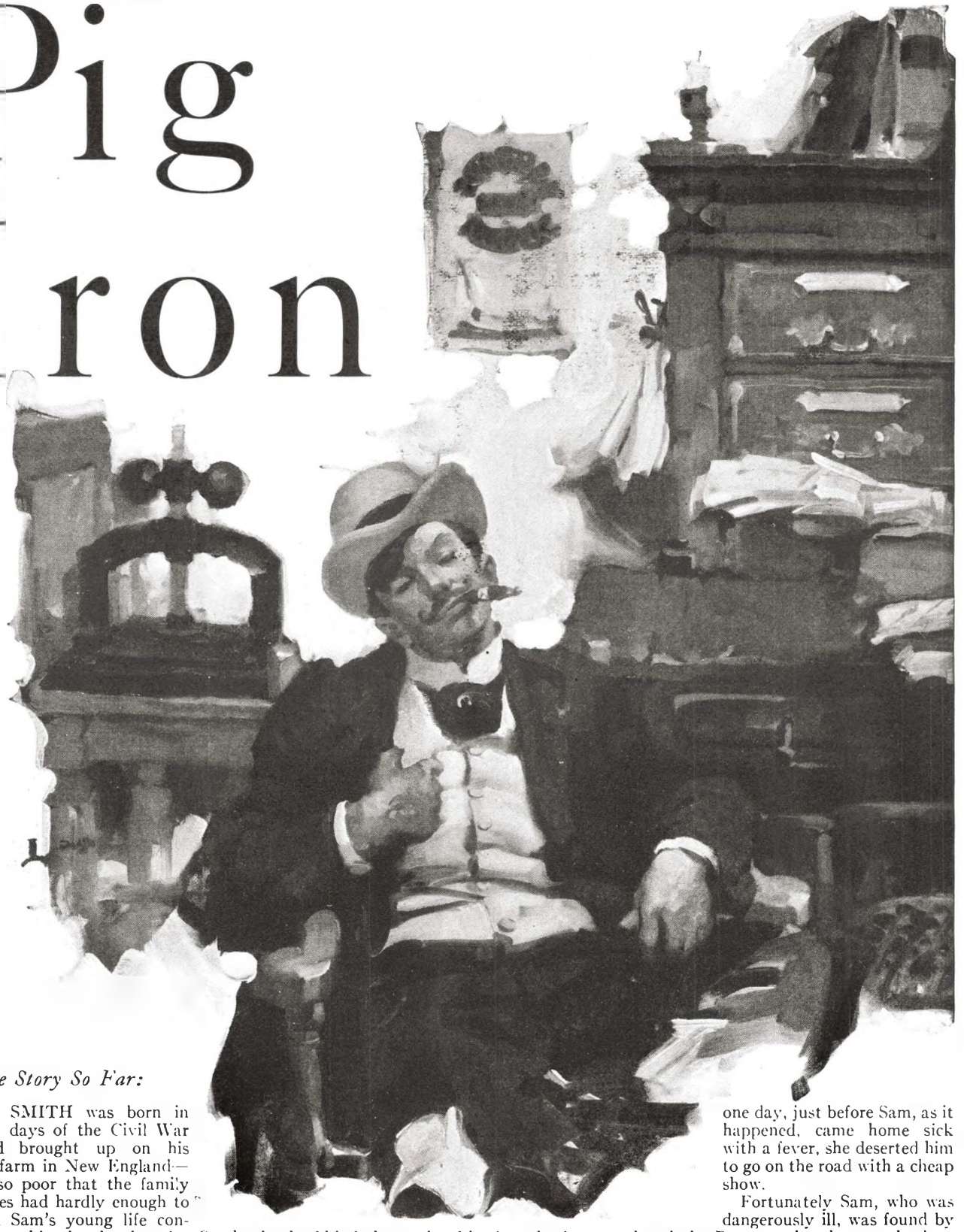
Courtesy Strand Magazine

Not only does the act of painting divert, rest and stimulate the mind—it also expands and develops the power of observation in the realms both of nature and of art. Until I began to try to paint, I had no idea how much the landscape has to show. All its coloring became more vivid, more significant, more distinguishable. I found myself instinctively as I walked noting the tint of a leaf, the reflection in a pool, the dreamy purple shades of mountains, the exquisite lacery of winter branches, the silhouettes of far horizons.

Painting is a companion with whom one may hope to walk a great part of life's journey. One by one the more vigorous sports and exacting games fall away. But painting is a friend who makes no undue demands, excites to no exhausting pursuits, keeps faithful pace even with feeble steps, and holds her canvas as a screen between us and the envious eyes of time or the surly advance of decrepitude.

Happy are the painters, for they shall not be lonely. Light and color, peace and hope will keep them company to the end, or almost to the end, of the day.

Pig Iron



The Story So Far:

SAM SMITH was born in the days of the Civil War and brought up on his father's farm in New England—a farm so poor that the family sometimes had hardly enough to eat, and Sam's young life consisted of nothing but hard work. On the death of his father and mother he determined to get away, and came to New York, an uncouth young man, but fired with ambition to succeed. He lived with his uncle, Cyrus Smith, a successful merchant, and got a job in the wholesale hardware house of Hartshone & Faber.

Sam's country ways soon sloughed off among the young men who were his new friends. They took him to theaters and midnight dancing places; and it was at one of the latter that he met Evelyn, a habitué with a tragic history that tore at Sam's heart. With youthful impetuosity, he fell in love with her.

They could not marry because Evelyn had a husband who had deserted her; but they decided they must share life together until they could. So they got a room down-town and set up housekeeping. Yet in spite of their love for one another, they could not make a success of the venture. Their poverty, which only sharpened Sam's idealism, was too much f. - Evelyn, and one day, just before Sam, as it happened, came home sick with a fever, she deserted him to go on the road with a cheap show.

Fortunately Sam, who was dangerously ill, was found by friends and taken to a hospital. Recuperating, he went back to the home of his sanctimonious Uncle Cyrus and Aunt Sarah, to be tended by the latter and her niece, Ruth. Ruth was a quiet girl whom Sam had always liked. To his intense surprise, she now betrayed the fact that she loved him; but Sam thought, since Evelyn's desertion, that he would never love anyone again.

When he was able to go to work, he started in with Hartshone & Faber again, this time as a salesman. By developing a virgin rural field in New England, starting with his brother-in-law Phineas Holliday, who had several stores, he did extraordinarily well, traveling about the country on a bicycle to get his orders.

At this time jealousy took a hand in his affair with Ruth. Aunt Sarah succeeded in throwing at her head a wealthy young man named Stanford Marsh whom Sam heartily disliked. He now found that he really loved Ruth, and though she and Marsh were engaged, Sam succeeded in making her declare her love for

An Exceptional Novel

By Charles G. Norris

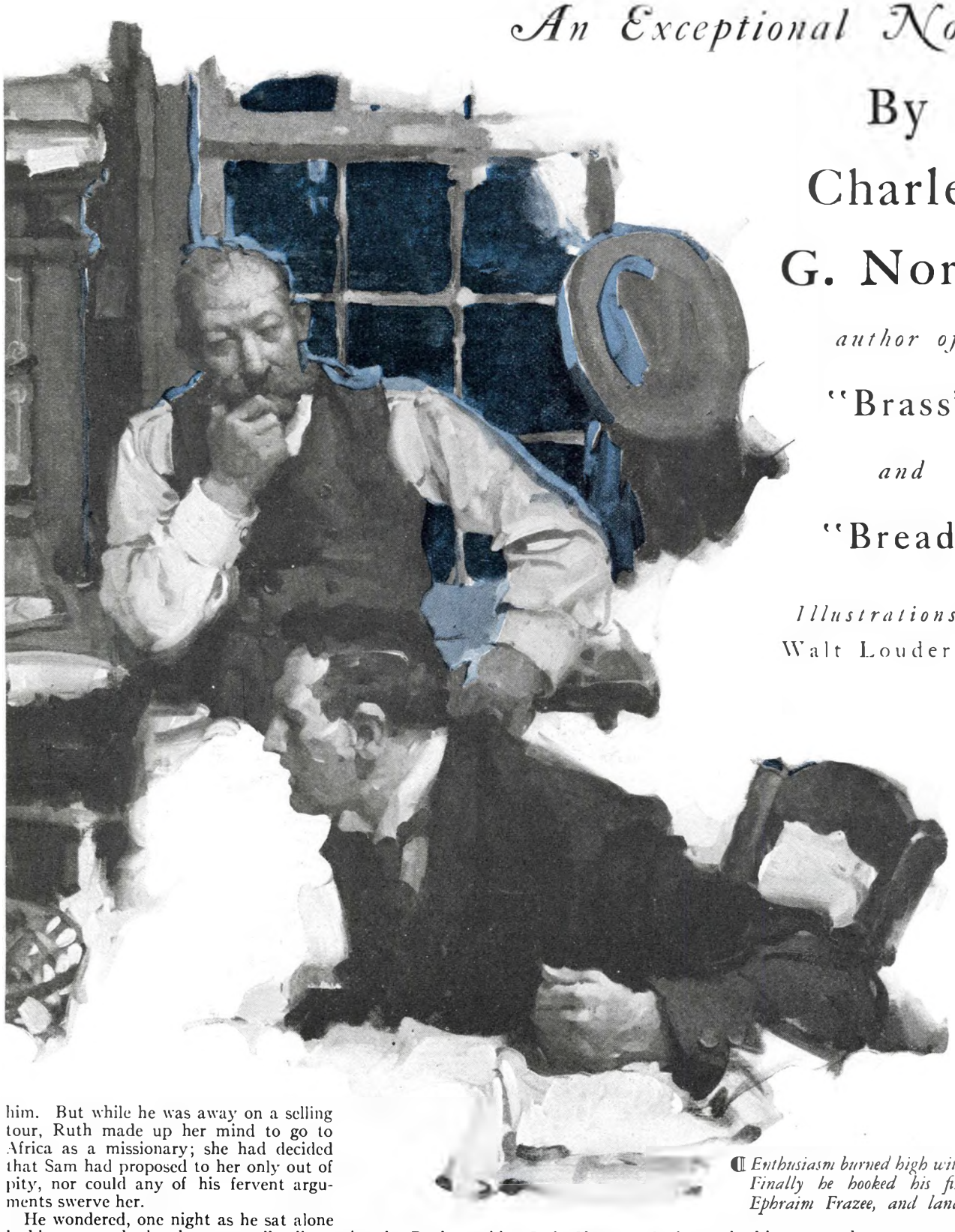
author of

"Brass"

and

"Bread"

Illustrations by
Walt Louderback



¶ *Enthusiasm burned high within Sam. Finally he hooked his fish, little Ephraim Frazee, and landed him.*

him. But while he was away on a selling tour, Ruth made up her mind to go to Africa as a missionary; she had decided that Sam had proposed to her only out of pity, nor could any of his fervent arguments swerve her.

He wondered, one night as he sat alone in his room, whether he was really disappointed. Ruth would interfere with the great career he had mapped out for himself. And then he realized that to win her he had but to press his plea with kisses. She was just coming into the house with his aunt and uncle. Sam started up to meet her. Then some subconscious urging bade him hesitate. He hurried back to his room. He pressed his hand against his forehead—it was wet. His chance for Ruth was forever gone.

IN THE summer of 1803 at the Chicago World's Fair, Sam, pausing a moment in a ramble through the Midway Plaisance, noticed a man with his back toward him whose air and carriage had a strangely familiar note. He was accompanied by a woman. Sam circled about him to obtain a better look and found his impression correct; the man *was* Jack Cheney. Jack caught his eye at the same moment and immediately his face broke into a smile of recognition. They pushed toward each other through the crowd and warmly shook hands.

"Well-l—if it isn't old Sam Smith!"

"Jack! How are you, Jack?"

They grinned awkwardly at one another after the manner of men who have not met for a long time, pumping forearms.

"What you doing round here?"

"Taking in the sights like everybody else. Big show, isn't it?"

"Bet your life. Where you keeping yourself now?"

"Back in Canton. Doing very well there. And you?"

"Oh, New York. Guess I'll never live any other place; New York suits me all right. I only got here day before yesterday—had some business to attend to. Good excuse—huh? I'm here just for a couple of days; going back tomorrow."

After Christmas dinner at the Fabers' again Sam was bored. But Paula, the daughter, was a lovely sight at her harp, and he enjoyed watching her.

Sam's eyes took in Jack's companion—a small, pretty girl.

"I'd like to have you meet my wife, Sam. This is an old friend of mine, my dear. You've heard me speak of Sam Smith?"

"Why, I didn't know you were married. Jack."

"*Just* married," his friend laughed, coloring.

"We're honeymooning," the girl confessed.

"Well, is that so?" Sam said, embarrassed. "Well, is that so? Well—congratulations."

"*You're* not married?" Jack asked.

"Me? No; nothing like that. Too darned busy to think about a wife. Have my hands full as it is."

"What you doing? Still with the same old hardware outfit? Hartsheen and something, isn't it?"

"Yep—still selling screws and nails. I've been traveling for them a couple of years now. You look a lot older, seems to me, Jack. How long's it been since you got back?"

"Three years. Let me see; yes, it's three years. Guess it's been five since I saw you. I tried to get hold of you when I came

home. Went back to your office but they said you were out of town."

"I'm on the road most of the time. Where's Matt?"

"He's in New York; doing splendidly there; has a fine reputation already. I'll send you his address."

"Great! I'd like to see Matt again. Suppose you know about poor old Baldwin Wright? Rotten, wasn't it?"

"Yes, I heard about it." Cheney shook his head frowning. "Poor old boy! I was really very fond of him."

"Taylor Evans's caught on lately—hasn't he?" Sam observed.

"I should say so! His book made quite a hit."

Jack's wife kept glancing from one face to the other as they talked, eager to be included in their conversation.

"Is that 'Tarnished Wings'? It's a grand book! Oh, I just adored it!"

"He deserved all the praise he received. He was nearly two years writing it, and he worked hard, too. I thought he made a mighty interesting story out of it."

Questions, news, bits of gossip that interested both, trembled on the men's lips. The presence of the woman restrained them. Both wondered how they might see each other alone.

"Where you stopping?" Sam asked.

"At the Annex."

"I'm over at the Palmer House. Wish we could get together. Can't you and—and Mrs. Cheney come and have dinner with me tonight? There's a great show here, 'The Girl I Left Behind Me'; I saw it in New York last winter, but I could stand it again *easy*."

Bride and groom exchanged glances.

"Well—*you* dine with us——" Jack began.

"All right—and I'll tend to the seats."

THE evening was not a success. Throughout the dinner and between the acts of the play, the men talked across the young wife, who turned her pretty head from one speaker's face to the other's, making ineffectual attempts to break into their conversation. Sam had an uneasy feeling he ought to pay more attention to her, but the talk with Jack engrossed him. He would have given a lot to have had an hour or two alone with him.

Among other topics both were eager to discuss Baldwin Wright's tragedy.

"Adrian Lane was at the bottom of it," Sam informed his friend; "he came back from Paris a couple of years ago and expected to create a sensation. His voice *had* improved; he could sing really very beautifully, but not quite so beautifully as he thought. Finally Mr. Wright arranged a concert for him. My uncle, aunt and myself went, but the house wasn't more than half full, his notices in the papers were very meager, and nothing came of it."

"Taylor wrote me it fell very flat," Jack said.

"After that everybody urged Adrian to try comic opera, but he wouldn't consider it; he wouldn't even consent to a church position. Both, he said, were beneath him. Finally he dug up some kind of a French show, grew very much excited about it, and said he'd agree to play the lead in it if the rights could be secured. It had to be translated and adapted, you know. Poor old Baldwin Wright was finally roped in on it and promised to put up the money. I haven't an idea how much he let himself in for.

"I wasn't in New York at the time but I was told it was distinctly off color, and the good old elders of Doctor McIntosh's church promptly learned that Baldwin Wright was back of it. There was an awful rumpus, my uncle tells me, and they promptly kicked Mr. Wright out of the church. Then the show petered out, but not before Adrian had become mixed up with one of the ladies in the cast. She was French, I believe, or of French extraction, and she had a husband. One night the husband took a pot-shot at Adrian, and the next day Adrian and his lady skipped off to Paris. Of course, Mr. Wright gave them the money.

"Just about that time the church officials began investigating the church books, and there's no question but that Mr. Wright had been helping himself more or less liberally. They claimed he had been dipping his hands into the church funds for years, but I don't see how that could be possible. However, they had the goods on him, all right. They caught him at Havre—he went after Adrian, you know—and nabbed him as he came down the gangplank. It was on the way back he jumped overboard. They stopped the vessel, I'm told, but it was at night and they never found him."

"I was always very fond of Mr. Wright," Jack said with feeling, "and I always felt sorry for him."

"It's just as well he took things into his own hands. It would have killed him to face trial, and those hard-shells down in Doctor McIntosh's church would have shown him no mercy."

"What happened to Adrian?"

"Nothing as far as I know. He's still in Paris; singing, I guess."

"And Vin Morrisey?"

"Headed for South Africa, last I heard."

"And Ritter?"

"Practising law, I presume. Haven't seen or heard of him in years."

"And your pretty cousin? Ruth's her name, isn't it?"

"She's a missionary. Went to Africa about three years ago. My uncle and aunt hear from her regularly. She seems to enjoy her work."

"Oh, if you two men are going to keep on talking about folk I never heard of, I'm going home!" Mrs. Cheney smiled reproachfully at them.

"Sorry, sweetie," Jack said immediately; "it *is* rather stupid for you." He drew her hand through his arm and began to pat it affectionately. "Come on, Sam, let's discuss the play."

Two years on the road had made a marked difference in Sam, of which no one was more conscious than himself. He smiled whenever he remembered the kind of surly, suspicious, crude young fellow he had been when first he came to New York. He dressed well now, though never foppishly or even smartly. His suits were always dark, his cravats subdued, the cut of his clothes conservative. In weight he was considerably heavier, his figure had become rather thickset; he was stocky and solid, the ungainly, hard leanness of youth had given place to a mature compactness.

Particularly his face had strengthened, his jaw had grown squarer, his eyebrows thicker, his mouth more set; a certain degree of dignity enveloped him; he walked with a firm march; his shoulders had lost none of their squareness nor his chest its depth; his skin had taken on a healthy, light coppery smoothness. Women admired him, but except for an occasional affair where, in an idle hour, a chance acquaintance amused him, he was not interested in the other sex. He dressed and deported himself entirely to please men, always with the idea that here or there a favorable impression or a friendly relationship might some day be of use.

Hardware absorbed him, business matters alone interested him, he read practically only what concerned trade, studied stock quotations, and was ever ready to discuss the market and business conditions with smoking-car acquaintances.

After his visit to the World's Fair at Chicago, he returned to New York with a disturbing but none the less certain conviction that the hard times of which everyone had been speaking and the newspapers talking for the past year had become a serious menace, and that the country as a whole was facing a crisis.

Both Mr. Hartshone and Mr. Faber, he knew, were worried. Things were not going right; orders were not coming in; it became harder and harder to make collections. On all sides, men were telling of this failure and that, and under their breaths were beginning to whisper the word that filled all with terror: *panic*. It was in the air, it was all about; Sam saw it written upon men's haggard faces; every instinct told him it was at hand.

He had a talk with Mr. Faber when he reached the office, and his fears for his own firm found ample confirmation in the serious look with which the man listened to him.

"Come oop to der house tonight, vill you, Schmidt, and let's go into dis? Ve can have a leedle qu-viet confab dere vhere nopody vill interroopt us."

SAM had not visited the Faber home since the day he had gone there, a red-handed, brawny stock-room boy, to help move furniture. He arrived promptly at eight o'clock and was shown into the parlor, where he waited a few minutes until Mr. Faber abruptly opened the tall mahogany door that connected with the dining-room and hurried toward him, napkin in hand.

"Peg your pardon, Schmidt; der girl never said you vas vaiting. My vife happened to ask who rang der bell and den she told us. Come in and join us at der table; ve vere chust having our coffee."

Sam found the family seated about the square dining-room table. He only dimly remembered them, but Mrs. Faber at once fitted herself into his recollections: white-haired, with a fair, fresh skin, rather majestic in manner, handsomely gowned, her knuckly, veined hands heavy with rings. Nearest the door was the boy, Eugene, who rose and shook hands with young awkwardness. He was about nineteen, Sam judged—thin, pale, with shadowed, restless black eyes, dark, curling hair, and a small rounded nose that unmistakably proclaimed his Semitic blood.

Opposite to him sat his sister, and a glance showed that the little Paula of the long ringlets who had stared solemnly at him while he worked, had grown into a very beautiful, a remarkable-looking girl. The contour of her face was unusual, triangular in shape; she had small, high cheek-bones, a straight, small, fragile nose, red lips and fine, expressive eyes. Her hair was thick, decidedly black, and she wore it piled high at the back of her head. Her coloring too was extraordinary—Oriental in tone—the bloom on her cheeks like that on soft, sun-ripened fruit. Her neck was long, white and round, and when she turned her head, the movement suggested a swan, or a long-stemmed rose twisting in the wind. A lovely creature, Sam decided, and thoroughly conscious of the fact.

He found the atmosphere of the Faber household delightfully warming and friendly. Mrs. Faber was a gracious, charming woman; she knew how to put (*Continued on page 115*)

By J. C. Gilbert

At 12 My Boy is Self-Supporting

He Has $350 in the bank and a Prosperous and Growing Business

IF I were to die today or become incapacitated and unable to work my family would still be able to carry on unaided, living in the manner to which they have become accustomed. This would be possible because my boy, Jimmie, aged twelve, would see to that.

It sounds absurd, doesn't it? But it is true. With a little aid and assistance he has established a mail-order business in his own name that is earning him a sum sufficient to keep him in clothing and food and enabling him to lay up money for his future. In short, he is able to care for himself by his own efforts.

In the early months of 1924 I was taken sick with a bad cold and remained home for two days. As I lay in my bed I had plenty of time to think of what would become of my wife and little ones should I die.

Jimmie, my eldest boy, was playing with his wagon on the street in front of our home in Wayne, a suburb of Detroit, Michigan. His happy laughter and glad cries came floating up to my bedroom window and I thought of the short time ago when he was born and of how rapidly he had grown. What would he be when he grew up? Could he take care of himself?

My mind ran on in this manner for several hours and I determined that upon my recovery I would set about finding something that would occupy his mind and train his thoughts for a useful future. Finally I decided that a mail-order business, properly conducted, would teach him business methods and ethics and be remunerative to a certain extent—and at the same time keep him more or less at home.

We talked the matter over. He had been taught the use of the touch system of typewriting so that part was easily dispensed with. We were both interested in outdoor life so we decided that he should start selling sporting-goods to boy scouts.

At the beginning of vacation time I advanced him $50, charging him six percent interest on the money borrowed. With the $50 he bought a box of Creagh Osborn Marching compasses from a Boston firm who had secured the last compasses of this type from the government. He paid $32.50 a box. The boxes contained fifty compasses each. He knew they would sell well, for we had purchased some for our own use at an army goods store in Detroit. With the remainder of the money he bought trench mirrors from a Cincinnati firm which underbid a Philadelphia firm on the same article.

I taught him how to obtain low bids from various concerns so as to take advantage of the market prices on the goods. I wrote up an advertising circular on the compasses which he copied and had printed at the local job shop. From then on I did nothing but advise him when called upon.

He obtained a copy of Ayers' Newspaper Directory and addressed the Scout Executive of the Boy Scouts of America in every town in the State of Ohio that boasted of a newspaper. With money he obtained from selling compasses in our town he bought envelops, paid the jobman for printing circulars, paid postage on the circulars, folded them and did all the mailing.

Soon the money-orders and checks came rolling in at the rate of $20 to $26 a day. He was a busy and a happy boy. When a letter with a check or money-order came addressed to him he opened the letter and indorsed the check immediately, marking on the face of the letter, "Received $2.00 or $4.00." as the case might be. He then packed a compass and addressed it to the customer, enclosing a form letter thanking him for the order and containing instructions for operating the compass. The letter was pasted on the parcel-post package. He guaranteed all his compasses to be perfect or money would be refunded. No books were kept other than the letters, which were filed in a file under the name of the individual and under the state covered.

The money was banked in his own account. Business prospered amazingly. He paid the interest on the $50 promptly and figured the interest himself. And he surprised me by demanding a receipt of some sort showing that he had paid in full.

I loaned him an additional $25 on a note and he covered the states of Indiana, Illinois and Pennsylvania with orders, this time taking the names of the towns from the U. S. Official Postal Guide, thus covering every crossroads hamlet in the country that supported a post-office.

He prospered. He paid back the note before it was due and Shylock-like insisted on having me charge him only for the period from date of note to day of payment. He was learning fast. He was also a busy boy. It was vacation time and there were from six to ten orders every day, some for several compasses each. Occasionally one would be damaged in transit and he was required to write an apologetic letter and to replace the damaged instrument with first-class goods at his own expense. This taught him honesty.

HE SOLD, in two years, fifteen boxes of compasses containing fifty instruments each or a total of 750 compasses. He still has some on hand and is selling them each day. His bank-account grew and he added to his stock in trade a stop-watch, a high-grade eight-power binocular, a sun-watch and a microscope.

He watches the business map of the United States sent out monthly by the United States Chamber of Commerce in connection with their magazine, "The Nation's Business." He covers the states showing white on the map with his circulars. By way of experiment he flooded one state which indicated black or bad business and lost $7 in postage. He failed to receive a single order. That taught him caution. In fact it frightened him so that he refused to do any more business at all for a month. I let him do as he wished and when the white began to show in Texas he circularized the counties in the white area and justified his action by reaping orders.

Jimmie is a business man through and through at twelve. I have no fear of his drifting away from home. I shall see that his business does not absorb too much of his time, but will keep it down to the extent of his capacity to handle it properly.

Your boy soon grows away from the little lad stage and enters into the adolescent age. Then it is hard to bend the twig that has had so little training. Get your boy interested in something that will take his time from the companionship of evil associates. If he does not care for business, interest him in some hobby. Join him in this hobby, even though you do not care for it particularly. It will pay in the long run.

By H. M. Tomlinson

Does Old Mat *of the Jungle*

SENANG is foreign. As foreign as a queer smell we don't know. As foreign as a first sight of coconut-palms. As foreign as improper religious rites against which our godly parents have warned us.

Senang is a Malay village, with a name which means content, or peace of mind, as near as a Malay dictionary will render the word. No tourist has ever seen it, nor ever will. The journey to it is not a joke. It is at the back of a native state of Malaya, near the Siamese border, and is lost amid abrupt hills covered with the forest of Genesis, hidden within a maze of turbulent rivers. A tiger sometimes strolls among its huts at night. Peafowl mewl in the woods at dawn. Malaria, which is much worse than tigers, is another phantom presence. There was nothing in Senang, so far as I could see that first evening, that man should desire it.

The gloom of an equatorial forest is over Senang at dawn and sunset. It has no newspaper, no water-supply, no temple, no drainage, no priest, no shop, no clocks, no telegraph, no doctor, no post-office, no vehicle—you must walk, and walk—no police-station, no soldiers, no representative in any senate or parliament, and no government but its traditional and inviolable code; it has a Sultan far away. It has no crime and no poor. Its people are faithful but easy-going Mohammedans; yet in matters of life and death, when there is birth, marriage, or sickness, they go to the gods of the grove, as did their forefathers before the true word came out of Mecca. Mohammed is all very well in his way, but something has to be done when a baby is ill.

You know how one is attracted to the sea; yet how, on the first day out at dawn, when the light is bleak and the air is chill, one's bold spirit falters before the aspect of a world which plainly is not our world. Nothing to do with us. No good arguing with that. Well, Senang was not my world. It was very different. All its symbols were wrong. And night was at hand.

I don't mean that I crawled apprehensively into Senang; it was fatigue set my pace. When the Datto of the hamlet, the head man, eyed me—and he eyed me with cool and disconcerting gaze, dark and smiling—I hope I did not disgrace my Anglo-Saxon heritage. The little man was in a colored *sarong* or skirt and a pleasing jacket, and he wore a black velvet hat. He was a figure worthy of respect, and I stood up to him with the conscious but modest pride of a trousered one who represented a more prosperous, energetic and successful race.

I used on him what Malay I had, and he was very patient with me. He stood listening with his hand resting on the handle of his *parang*, that broad blade of his suitable for either swift killing or for cutting the forest jungle, but I addressed him as though the fact that I was cut off by many long leagues of tropical wilderness from all that my own people were doing in the busy cities of the world, that I was helpless, homeless and ignorant in an alien place, did not affect me in the least. Some naked children stood near, intent with curiosity. Some women passed like ghosts, and pretended they were unaware that I stood there.

The Datto motioned me to follow him, and we went towards a great rickety barn on high stilts, under which you could have walked by stooping, though several buffalo were resting under the house, and buffalo are black and ugly brutes, and hate white men; and I climbed a ladder of rough timber to the veranda. We entered a vast hollow of shadows.

A mat was given me and I lay down, in a *sarong* like the rest, to sleep on the floor of bamboos. The chief and his cronies crouched by a brass oil lamp, gossiping in low tones. For a time their droning voices were only part of the shadows of the place, were part of the deep silence, of the smell of durian shards under the floor, and the grotesque horns, antlers, and weapons which hung on the partitions. Was all this a dream? That droning belonged to a world into which I had stumbled, but into which I could not really enter. I was not a part of it. Those six brown masks looking at each other in the feeble glim of the lamp droned on; and at last their voices were more than a monotonous sound like that of a thin flow of unseen water. A few reasonable words emerged.

They talked of tobacco, rice, women, the forest and the fruit-trees. I suppose you would have heard talk like theirs, only louder and with more emphasis, in any village of England or America; but these Malays spoke quietly, and as if they would be surprised by nothing in this world. They were as well-mannered as nobles.

When the morning came I had no doubts left. I could see I was free to stay in Senang for good, if I wished. It seemed to me that I was looking at morning for the first time in my life. I could see what morning is. It is not a call to a resumption of anxiety. It is an expansion of light. My thoughts were like the palms and foliage about Senang, which saw the day. What a good place this earth is! Yet how often are we so sure of that?

We people of a superior culture have no time to find out where we are; time clutches us and hurries us past everything. But in Senang things are going nowhere, because they have escaped from the nuisance of time, and are tranquil far beyond it. You are left in peace. The great palms over the huts were in complete repose. The buffalo evidently resented nothing in the world but me. A few men and women were about, but they were moving like people who could postpone anything they had to do, and go somewhere else. They behaved, in fact, like people who

Know *More* Than I?

were used to freedom. They did not have to talk about freedom, or fight for it. They had it, as they had children and a home.

The forest surrounded us, as though Senang were a sunny security, an island in the midst of the dark and unplumbed deeps of an ocean of trees. What did those villagers want with theology and philosophy, when they had that profound and mysterious presence about them? Well, the forest and the things dwelling in it contributed mainly, in fact, to their theology and their philosophy. They never went alone into the jungle. The *pontianak* had been heard there; and the less said about that beautiful specter, which a man might mistake for a wanton woman, the better.

THE people of Senang do not merely believe there are were-tigers, evil men who take the shape of tigers; they know it. They can prove it, with evidence and logic in which it would puzzle a lawyer to find a flaw. The elders of Senang know all about it, and though my skepticism has been fortified by the science of Rome and Athens, when these Malays talked of their forest and of what may happen to anyone who offends there, however innocently, I must confess that I stood in its silence afterwards and looked at its brooding trees in a slightly different attitude of mind.

Suppose these Malays knew, not only what I did not—there is nothing in that—but something the very nature of which was outside my understanding? It was easily possible. They were not fools. They were superior in their manners and their bearing to those who hurry through the streets of Western civilization. They knew their worth, and expected another gentleman to recognize it. They were quiet, humorous and shrewd. They gave me a startling thought! What if these people had really solved the problem of life successfully, and we have not?

That they knew more of the earth, our common mother, was evident. Compared with me, old Mat, who tucked up his *sarong* into a loin-cloth, took his *parang* and went with me day after day into the woods, and perhaps did not speak a word all day, was like the Ancient Mariner in his experience and knowledge compared to the innocent wedding guest. And understand, it was not that he knew what I did not. The trouble is that I could not learn. He had some faculty which I have lost, which all we people of an industrial civilization have lost. And we can never recover that faculty any more. We have bartered it for the things we possess, for our factories and workshops and wealth, and we can never get it back again. We have lost contact, and he has kept it.

Is that a little loss? There is no possible way of estimating it. Can we tell how far it affects our whole interpretation of life—our religion, our philosophy, our science, our art? We do not know, and what is more we cannot find out. Old Mat, the Malay, whose wealth is his wife and children, his home of bamboos by the river, his patch of rice and his fishing-net, naked in the woods but for his loin-cloth, could afford to regard me, as he sometimes did, with a wistful and humorous smile, as though I were a stupid and wilful child.

And I had the fancy that he could so regard the lot of us, with all our intricate industries and august institutions; because he has, with his knowledge of life, secured from life what we have not, a tranquillity of mind which is as regular as his morning rice, and a freedom from anxiety which only the unknown powers may break; and he gets it all so easily that he has the fun of it with no more hard labor in the year than would give one of us the square meals for seven days. So I ask therefore: What is wisdom? The answer to that has an ugly implication, for Mat, on that answer, becomes the civilized man, and I become the barbarian.

Our positions were thus reversed in the jungle. Mat knew something there which you do not learn at Oxford or Harvard; what is worse, we are not aware that we educated people are thus mentally and spiritually deficient. He guessed that something was in the sky and in the forest beyond attainment by human knowledge; just as we know it when we listen to a Beethoven sonata. For the rest, that mute, still and daunting confusion of the jungle was an open book to him. Could we ever learn that book?

I tried to pick up some of his tricks, and then found that they were not tricks. He had a perception which none of us possesses. That perception was not of the eye, of the ear, of the nose, of touch; nor of all those senses together. It was all of them, but with something added. At times, for instance, he would do a plainly unreasonable thing. He would cut off in a direction which was against his own logic; he would read a sign in a way that was the opposite of his lesson to me. But he was right again.

He will live long and see his children marry, with the sure knowledge that they will enjoy life in his way. They will live long in the land. Mat's people will outstay the Empire builders, for their calm knowledge and temper will be deeper and so more enduring than that of the fretful meddlers, the organizers who want to arrange things for everybody, to apportion and systematize the world; yet whose own affairs so easily go to pieces at a touch from unkind fate.

When I left Senang the smiles of my Malay friends, which were kindly and regretful, appeared to me to have a touch of irony. "Why was I going?" Now, how could I explain that? Could I have given them a reasonable reason?

The Black

By James Oliver Curwood

¶ *"It is time for Mlle. St. Denis to return, Monsieur," Captain Robineau said . . . Bigot held back his fury. He was beaten—and by Robineau!*

The Story So Far:

IN 1754, when France and England were fighting along the Canadian border but before an actual declaration of war, François Bigot, Intendant of New France, profligate and secret traitor, first laid eyes on Anne St. Denis and coveted her. But Anne loved young David Rock, who had been brought up with her in the distant forest seigneury of her father. David was a true son of the forests, whose best friend was one Peter Joel, the Black Hunter—a mysterious border figure who had rescued David and his mother from an Indian massacre, and devoted his life to warning French and English settlers alike of Indian raids.

To destroy Anne's love for David, and make her his own, Bigot worked out a devilish plan. He first gained Anne's confidence by inviting David to Quebec, giving him a lieutenancy and military training under Captain Robineau, and exalting him with special personal favors. Then he subtly suggested that the Black Hunter was in reality an English spy whose influence was poisoning David with treason. He made himself appear in Anne's eyes a saintly patriot who had David's interests deep at heart. His plan was at the right moment to "plant" a circumstantial case of treason against David, and then disgrace and punish him publicly—and Anne would be brought to despise the man she had loved.

Being a consummate actor, he succeeded admirably. Even David's denunciation of Bigot, whom he saw through and despised, did not open Anne's eyes, and only widened the breach between them. Anne broke with her best friend, the lovely Nancy Lotbinière, who took David's side; as did also Peter Gagnon, David's boyhood comrade. Peter was a duel-loving idler who, however, went away to the forests to make a man of himself when he found that Nancy loved him. With him he took Carbanac, a fugitive from justice who had been wronged by one of Bigot's friends, and publicly whipped at Bigot's order.

At last came the moment when Bigot in his palace apartment told Anne that David was almost hopelessly involved in treason, but that he would save him if it were humanly possible by sending him away to the forests on a military mission. David departed. Weeks passed—weeks of mental and spiritual torment for Anne. Then one night, in bed in her convent school, her blood was chilled by hearing the watchman's cry: "A traitor has been caught!"

She knew it was David. She must go to Bigot and try to save him. Hastily she rose and dressed, just as Sister Esther came to take her to the Palace at Bigot's request—on an urgent matter of State, the message said.

As they drove through the silent streets, Anne heard again that terrible cry: "A traitor has been caught! Death to the traitor—and God save the King!"

IN HIS apartment Bigot waited. With him was Vaudreuil, Governor of New France. Beyond them, about to depart through a door, was Brassard Deschenaux, the secretary, who looked as though he had not been in bed that night, and whose crafty countenance glowed with an almost feline satisfaction at things happening or about to happen in his master's affairs.

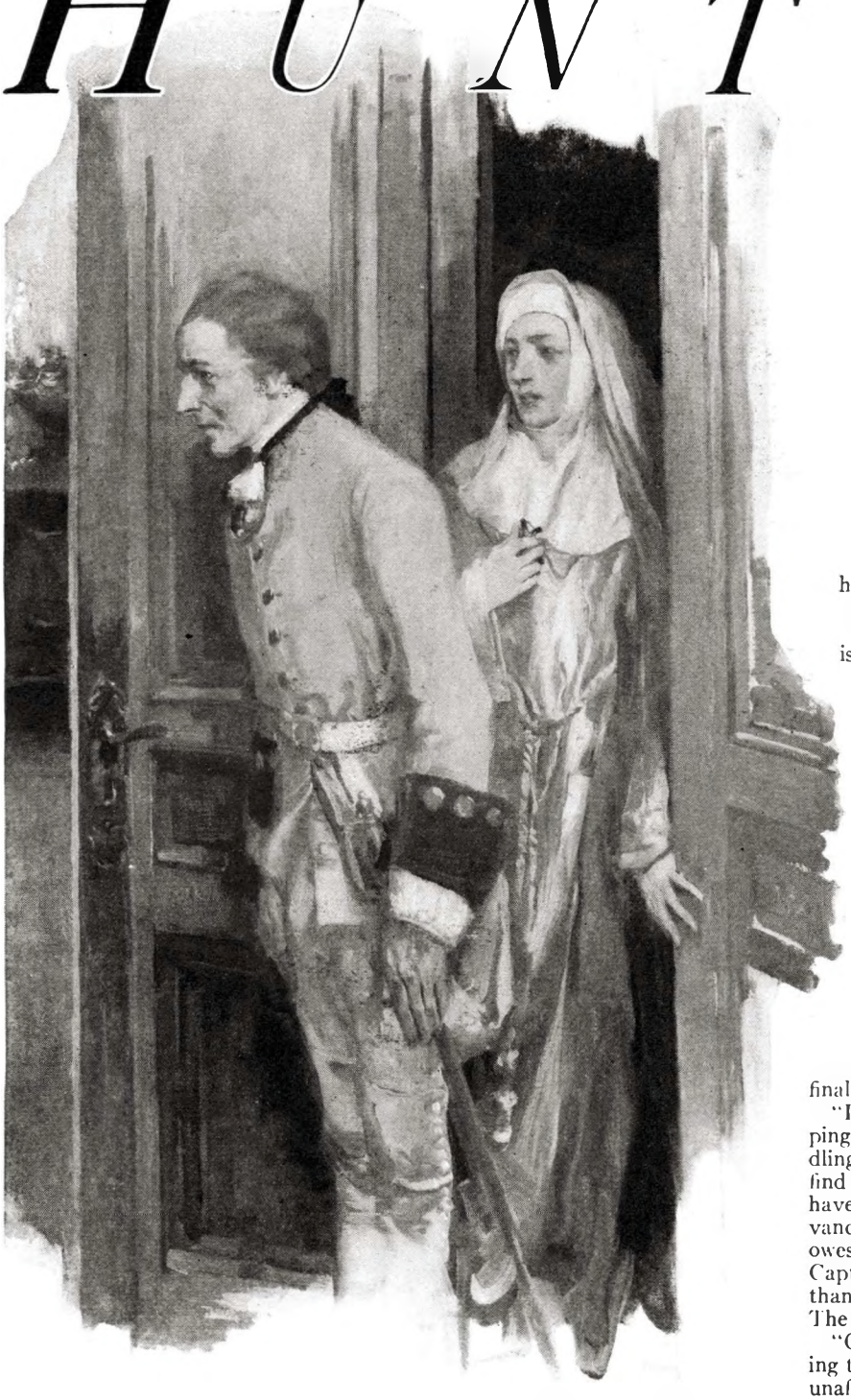
Vaudreuil, silkier and smoother than ever, his woman's wig glowing in the candle-glow, wore no appearance of having been disturbed in his rest or of having come through a cold and ugly night at this unusual hour of three o'clock in the morning to keep an appointment. As a matter of fact he had slept in one of the Intendant's chambers.

The governorship had gone well with him. His egoism had increased. His innumerable conceits had multiplied. He was puffed up more than in the days of promise and believed himself to be the greatest man that had ever represented the King in the western world. His dreams were filled with visions of

HUNTER

A Romance of Old Quebec

Illustrations by
Arthur E. Becher



Fontainebleau and Versailles, and Bigot had petted and nursed these visions and a hundred other weaknesses until the Governor of New France was his tool body and soul without knowing it, and even the destiny of the military power of the Canadas lay in the hollow of Bigot's hand.

It was Bigot, the super-artist, who alone bore the marks of travail and distress. With a woman's cleverness Deschenaux had helped to finish the work a few minutes before. His clothes were crumpled, his hair untidy, his face made pallid and lined by Deschenaux's delicate skill. His appearance was that of one who had gone through mental agonies and who had not slept for a long time.

He was ready for Anne.

Even Vaudreuil had been amazed at first. Now the Governor was twisting about his fingers one of the curls taken from an English woman's head. His short stature had seemed to grow taller and to swell larger at the words of praise which the King's Intendant had just bestowed upon him.

"I told you this is what would come to pass," he said placidly. "Is our little lady on her way?"

"She is coming," said Bigot.

"Then nothing more can be asked. The game is as good as finished. I have brought you a beautiful dove, François."

"Almost too beautiful to be true," said Bigot. Then he laughed and his dark eyes glowed with a fire of passion. "I am a fool for saying that, Vaudreuil. But I shall not tell you what I have asked La Pompadour to do for you until the last great hour comes. Tonight and tomorrow you have your biggest part to play. And after that, very soon, you may have to attend to Captain Robineau."

For the first time since entering the room Vaudreuil's face clouded..

"He would dare——"

"I think—he might," interrupted Bigot. "The thing has been wearing on him for a long time. When he sees what finally comes of it all he may prefer to——"

"Die like a gentleman," nodded Vaudreuil, dropping the curl to fall into the other habit of twiddling his thumbs over a fat stomach. "We shall find little difficulty in satisfying him, François. I have in mind Captain Jean Talon. I have advanced him another ten thousand francs and he owes us a duel whenever we ask for it. He hates Captain Robineau and would like nothing better than to put a bullet through his heart in a fight. The affair can be brought about very quickly."

"Good Lord, what a brain you have for defeating the unexpected," exclaimed Bigot, this time in unaffected admiration. "Occasionally you make me afraid of you, Vaudreuil. Yes, if Robineau rouses my suspicion much more I shall give you the word! One shot is all that devil of a Talon would require with which to ease Robineau's conscience forever!"

He walked with Vaudreuil to the door through which Deschenaux had passed, accompanied him a few steps beyond it, and then returned alone. Anne, when she came, would appear through another door.

It had been a busy night and one of sleeplessness for him. But he was not tired. Since ten o'clock every nerve in his body had been at its highest tension. Of all his dreams and passions and ambitions this which was now arriving at fulfilment was his greatest. In a few minutes more the supreme drama of his life—his epic love-drama—would be enacted in this room, with Anne facing him alone. Once more he knew that he must fight to maintain himself a god in Anne's eyes. Even then there was a chance that his victory and her surrender might come a few hours before he had planned it. But against this thought he tried to harden himself, crowding it back so that Anne would see no sign of it in his face.

As the hour of his triumph approached his meditations possessed him pleasantly, and he paced slowly back and forth over the deep and faintly perfumed rugs of the room. A touch of humor curved his lips as his mind leaped over the sea to La Pompadour, the King's mistress and his own best friend. With a quizzical smile he wondered if the magnificent Louis would jerk his head from his body if he knew just how much had passed between himself and the beautiful favorite, and with a wryer look he meditated upon La Pompadour's feelings if the truth of his passion for Anne St. Denis should ever become known to her.

His affairs with Catherine and Charlotte, so tragic in their endings, and his amours with Madame de Pean and a score of others had entertained and amused La Pompadour, whose wide knowledge of life made her understand that men must have their little pleasures; but this that was happening between himself and Anne would, he knew — if the whole truth became known — cost him both power and favors, if not his head. The others he had adored for a time because of their beauty; he had given them up easily after a certain length of play, as La Pompadour would have him do — but his passion for Anne had become a fixed and indestructible thing in his life, and this the King's mistress would resent even to the point of his destruction.

Only in rumors long afterward did Quebec know what happened in Bigot's palace

So not for an instant had there come into his mind, even in the most favorable moments, a thought of marrying Anne. The idea in itself was so preposterous that it made him grimace. He had not married Catherine, yet she had been helplessly a part of him until she killed herself. The others, even those encumbered with husbands, had remained his chattels until the humor came upon him to drop them. Anne St. Denis would be bound to him more closely than Catherine had ever been when his hour for forging the connecting link between them came. Possibly in some time to come, if La Pompadour should die or her influence over the King wither with her fading beauty . . .

But this was as far as his mind traveled toward a vision of marriage with Anne.

There came a quick and excited rapping at the door through which Vaudreuil and the secretary had disappeared into the lower halls of justice and of state. The interruption snapped Bigot back into action. The moment had arrived and the knocking at the door was the signal for the curtain to rise. Anne St. Denis had reached the Palace and was coming up by way of the private stair and passage!

Bigot threw open the door. De Pean stood there, while two of the huge guards from below thrust in ahead of them the shivering figure of a man whose big, round face was white with fear. He was the watchman of Upper Town—the man who had widely and loudly cried out the news that a traitor had been found. Bigot drew back into the room and the men advanced with their prisoner and stood before him. De Pean's eyes had shot to another door—the door through which Anne would come.

Even as he looked a *tap, tap, tap* came at that door. Bigot, with his ears keyed for the sound, heard but gave no evidence of it. In a voice which trembled with subdued fury, an inimitable pretense of anger which he appeared to be holding in leash with an almost godlike effort, he loosed the quiet but terrible condemnation of his tongue upon the cowering watchman and whoever else was responsible for advertising to the city that a traitor had been caught. Without turning, Bigot knew that Deschenaux had

that day. When Anne and Robineau had finished, David's vengeance had been paid in full.

opened the other door and had quietly thrust Anne within. He knew she was standing there now, with the door closed again behind her, and that with white face and swiftly beating heart she was listening to his words.

His voice rose, filled with the tremble of his anger and his despair. "Take him away, de Pean," he said at last, "and mark me well the man who has betrayed my commands by giving to the watchmen the news of our prisoner. He shall be punished, even if the informer is the Governor himself and my own hand must be called upon to administer it. Go!"

The guards led their prisoner out. De Pean followed. The door closed. Bigot, looking after them, seemed stricken the instant they were gone. His shoulders drooped and he bowed his head. "God help me now!" he sighed.

He heard soft steps behind him but did not turn until a voice came.

"Monsieur!"

Then he faced Anne.

Even she in her whiteness, which was almost deathlike, scarcely presented a more terrible picture of suspense and agony than did Bigot himself. He seemed shocked into speechlessness by her unexpected presence. From under her hood Anne's great eyes looked at him. He could hear something beating, his watch—or Anne's heart.

As if words could not come to him he held out his hands toward her. Anne did not appear to see them. Her eyes did not leave his own.

"It is—David?"

Her voice was a dry whisper. It made Bigot think of the dryness of the corn-husks he had helped David gather. He wet his own lips and nodded. "Yes, it is David."

Anne swayed a little. Her face could go no whiter. But her eyes seemed to grow darker until the flame in them was almost madness. Then she caught herself and was steady. Bigot's hand was on her arm. He led her to a chair and seated her, and with gentle hands loosened her hood and drew it back from her head. He did not touch her more than that, but his eyes blazed behind her. Suffering in a beautiful creature, when that creature was a woman, always stirred him to ecstatic depths. As a Caligula he would have given himself untold pleasure in that way.

He stood a little behind her.

"Have I done right in sending for you?" he asked.

Anne was looking straight ahead. She did not move or answer, but Bigot saw her hands trembling and twitching in her lap. Her nerves were gone. She was broken—broken as he had intended that she should be.

So he bent lower, and said: "Spies of the military council caught him two days ago. I did not know until tonight. He was taken red-handed on his way to emissaries of the English. In his coat were plans of Quebec's defenses, maps and drawings and every detail of our strength, together with instructions to the commandants at Fort Edward and Fort William Henry telling them of the way up the Richelieu, and of the fighting men between."

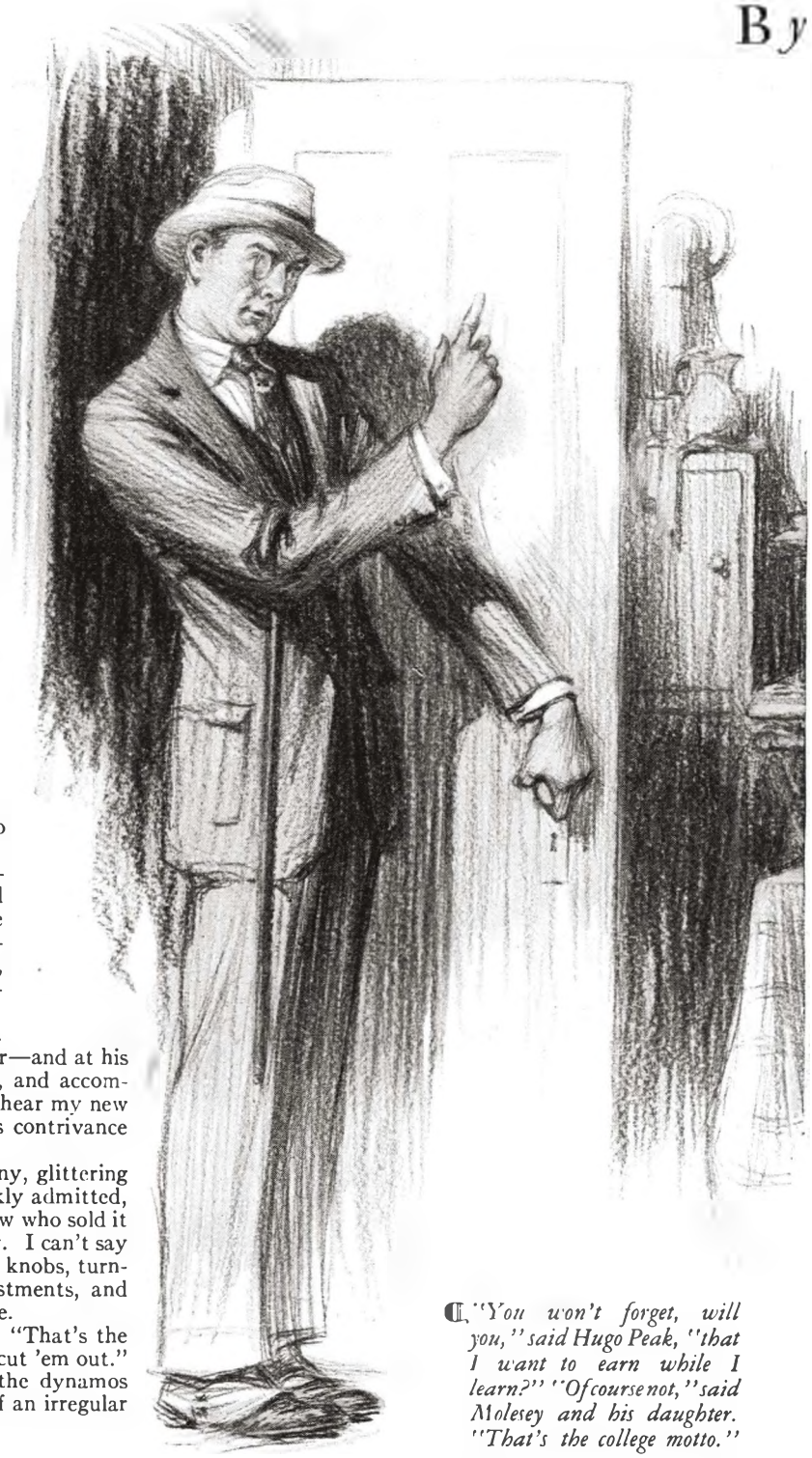
If he had whispered a scurrilous thing to her she could not have sprung to her feet more quickly, facing him with dilated nostrils and eyes that struck him like twin flashes of lightning.

"There—*you lie!*" she cried, and her hands clenched as if to beat at him. "They all lie when they say David is a traitor, and you—*you*—most of all—when you say *(Continued on page 169)*

So THIS *is* *London* Humor!

Earn While You *Learn*

By



¶ *"You won't forget, will you," said Hugo Peak, "that I want to earn while I learn?" "Of course not," said Molesey and his daughter. "That's the college motto."*

"AND now," said Hugo Peak, bounding up again, "I'll get you Paris."

I had come out early from an intolerable public dinner, of a literary and charitable nature, for which some misguided sense of *esprit de corps* had led me to purchase a ticket, intending to turn into the Port Club, smoke a little, toy with a few magazines and then pass on peacefully and happily to bed.

On the steps, though, I had run into young Mr. Peak—emerging, so he told me, from a lonely dinner—and at his pressing invitation I once more changed my plans, and accompanied him across the Park to his flat. "You shall hear my new radio set," he said; and it was with this ingenious contrivance that he proceeded to entertain me.

The thing was the last word in polished mahogany, glittering vulcanite and shining nickel, and, as its owner frankly admitted, it was quite as complicated as it looked. "The fellow who sold it me," he said proudly, "used to get Chicago regularly. I can't say I've ever done that, but——" He began twiddling knobs, turning handles and making other experimental adjustments, and presently the loud-speaker began to hum and gurgle.

"Hear anything?" he asked. And, as I nodded: "That's the dynamos in the power-station across the road. I'll cut 'em out."

He did something to one of the controls, and the dynamos became louder than ever, with the super-addition of an irregular crackling sound.

"Morse," he informed me. "Understand it?"

"No," I said.

"Nor do I," he said. "Jolly useful invention, though. I'll cut it out."

This time he changed one of the coils. And now there were three distinct noises. The dynamos, the spark-station and a man (or possibly a woman) playing the banjo.

"Aberdeen," said young Mr. Peak. "Hear it?"

"Yes," I said. "But why——"

"Dash!" he interrupted, for the banjo suddenly ceased, its place being taken by a violent howling.

"Infernal oscillators," said young Mr. Peak. "Ought to be shot. Just a second, now, while I get my reaction going."

More twiddling, accompanied by still louder catcalling, and presently we were back at the dynamos again.

"Bit woolly tonight," my host observed. "However—— Oh, hullo; there's Bournemouth. Steady!"

This time he let it alone, and we were treated to the end of an orchestral suite, with dynamo obbligato. I might have appreciated its merits better, if Hugo Peak hadn't sung an irrelevant counter-melody and beaten time with his foot.

"And now," he said, bounding up again, "I'll get you Paris."

As preparation for this feat, the demonstrator removed his dinner jacket and clipped a pair of telephones over his ears. He then set to work with an entirely new collection of coils, a screw-driver and some fragments of wire on what appeared to be a complete reorganization of the works. Once or twice vivid sparks shot from unexpected parts of the apparatus, but save for occasional murmurs from those unwearying dynamos, there was persistent silence.

"The only trouble about this set," said Hugo Peak, over his shoulder, "is that it's too dashed selective. You see——"

And here, to our mutual surprise, the loud-speaker suddenly cleared its throat and began to talk.

"—am happy to inform you," it remarked, "that the situation is now k-k-k grrh-ah."

"Paris!" said Hugo Peak triumphantly. "Hear it?"

"It can't be," I expostulated. "The fellow was speaking English."

"What?"

"Take those things off your head, and you'll hear."

Rather reluctantly, I thought, my host followed my suggestion.

Denis Mackail

Illustration by
T. D. Skidmore

"—servants of the public," added the loud speaker, "in the best and highest sense. Custodians of the truth. Men with whom I am proud to be associated. In short, the journalists of this country."

There was a spluttering roar of applause, and young Mr. Peak stared at me with his jaw dropping. "Old Biggles!" he gasped. "I'd know him anywhere. Here—where's the program?"

He dived quickly for the evening paper.

"Here it is!" he exclaimed. "'London. Speeches at the Literary Pensions Fund Dinner. Including the Right Honorable Lord Biggleswade.' The old rattlesnake!"

There was a last, defiant moan from the dynamos, as he flew at the instrument and switched it off. But I made no movement to stop him. I had certainly not escaped from that dinner in order to have it following me into my friend's flat. And as for my friend himself——

"Why, what's the matter?" I asked, startled by the sudden gloom in his aspect.

"The old dromedary," he muttered. "'Custodians of the truth,' indeed! And just as I was trying to forget."

"Tell me," I insinuated gently.

Plunging despondently back into his dinner jacket, young Mr. Peak at once resumed the story of his life.

After that Debrett affair the other day (he said) I don't mind telling you I felt a bit desperate. Not that Sally didn't take it like an absolute angel. She's a girl in a million, you know, and she blamed herself a lot more than she blamed me. But what really bothered me was this. I'd had shot after shot trying to dodge her father's idiotic conditions, but—though I hated admitting it—it did really seem as though there weren't going to be any short cuts.

Talk of old What's-his-name serving seven years for Thingummy's daughter, why, he was on velvet compared with me. I guess any fool can look after a lot of sheep—besides, it's the dog that does all the real work—but when it comes to tackling paid journalism, that's another pair of shoes altogether. The competition. The professional jealousy. The hidebound stick-in-the-mud fellows who call themselves editors!

And yet I could see that Sally agreed with me. "I'm afraid you're right," she said, "and, honestly, Hugo, it's the only way to get father to give in. You know what he's like," she said.

"Don't I just!" I said. "And how on earth he ever managed to have a daughter like you——"

But she shut me up then. She's awfully loyal, Sally is—whatever she may be thinking underneath.

"Besides," she said, "it's silly to talk as if it would take seven years. Why, look at these schools of journalism that advertise in the papers. They guarantee to get you a job in three months."

"I dare say," I said. But there's something about that word "school" that always gives me the horrors; and, you know, even three months is a bit more than a joke, when you're engaged to a girl like Sally.

However, the idea was simmering in my brain, as it were, and the very next morning—being on the lookout now, as you might say—I spotted an advertisement that really seemed the absolute goods. In one of old Biggles's papers, too—the old ostrich!

"Earn While You Learn," it said. "Imperial College of Literature, Putney, S.W. 15. Stories, articles, plays, poetry and all branches of authorship taught by correspondence. Under the direction of Experienced Journalist of high standing. New Term just commencing. Write for Prospectus, or send MS. for free criticism."

Good enough, wouldn't you have said? A dashed sight better, what's more, than a guaranteed job at the end of three months. Besides, I didn't want any guaranteed job. All I wanted was to tell old Biggles I'd done what he said, snap my fingers in his face, and get busy with the bans. "Earn while you learn"; yes, there was some sense in that.

But I wasn't going to write for any particulars, or waste time in turning out a manuscript. No, no. I knew a quicker way than that. I dug the full address out of the directory, legged it round to the garage, and at half-past ten the same morning I was scooting over Putney Bridge. "Because," I said to myself, "if they can do all that for you by correspondence, then what can't they do if they teach you direct?"

I'm bound to say, if you put it to me, that the Imperial College wasn't quite the sort of place I'd expected. To tell the honest truth, it was just a little two-story house in a long street. Quite respectable, you know, but still hardly my idea of a college. However, you wouldn't need much in the way of premises if everything was done by post, and anyway there I was, and I'd better go through with it. I switched off my engine and banged

on the knocker, and presently an old fellow with a beard and slippers came shuffling along and opened the door.

"Excuse me," I said, "but is this the Imperial College of Literature?"

"That's right," he said, blinking at me.

"Oh," I said, still a little surprised to find I hadn't made a mistake. "Could I have a word with the principal?"

He blinked at me again, and then he said:

"I'm the principal."

"Oh," I said. "Well, could I have a word with you?"

"What about?" he said.

"Re your ad.," I said—making it snappy like that, to show the kind of fellow I was.

"Come in," he said. He took me through into a kind of sitting-room, with a table covered with papers and a gas-stove and some bottles. "Temporary premises," he said, waving his hand. "We're moving shortly."

"Ah," I said—rather relieved, if you see what I mean.

"Take a seat," he went on.

"Thanks," I said, "Mr.—er——"

"Molesey," he said.

I told him my name, too, and he wrote it down.

"You want to join my course?" he asked.

"Well," I said, "yes and then again no, if you get what I'm aiming at. I want to earn while I learn, but I'm no dashed use at correspondence. Never have been."

"No?" he said.

"No," I said. "And so I wondered if you could manage a little personal tuition. The fact is," I explained, "that—ah——"

But the old fellow wasn't listening. He'd got up again and was looking out of the window.

"That your car?" he asked suddenly.

"My sports model, you mean? Yes."

He nodded his head. "Got much time to spare?" he asked.

"Well," I said again, "yes, and on the other hand no. There's rather a special reason why I want to earn something at once, but I can make it a whole-time job, if that's what you mean."

"And what line," he asked, "were you thinking of taking up? Anything special?"

"I'd leave it entirely to you," I said.

"Ah," he said. He walked round the little room and scratched his head. "Now, journalism," he went on. "There's a fine profession. I was twenty years in Fleet Street myself. Big prizes to be won by the right men. Always plenty of room at the top."

"Oh, absolutely," I said. But—I don't know how it was—there was something about the way he talked that reminded me a little too much of old Biggles. Well, you heard him on the radio just now. Somehow or other I didn't think I *would* make it journalism this time. And I said so.

"Well, fiction, then," suggested Mr. Molesey. "There's a wonderful market. I've had pupils under me whose names are household words now all over the world."

"Good Lord," I said. "Are they really?"

"Men and women who owe everything to my system," he said. "Though," he added suddenly, "as a matter of fact that department is run by Miss Molesey at present."

"Your sister?" I asked.

"No," he said. "My daughter."

And before I could stop him, he'd gone to the door and was bellowing "Katy!" at the top of his voice.

THERE was an answering scream from somewhere up-stairs, and then a young woman came bouncing into the room. I say "young woman" advisedly, because I know what you authors start imagining whenever a fellow says "girl." Something with blue eyes and yellow hair and youthful contours, and all that sort of flapdoodle. Miss Katy Molesey wasn't the least like that. Short of having a beard, she was the living image of her father—small, stout, loud-voiced and red in the face. She wore the same brand of spectacles, too. Oh, jolly enough in a way, but no siren—believe me.

"Here's Mr. Peak," said old Molesey. "He wants to take a special course in fiction-writing. Personal tuition, you know."

Miss Molesey looked at me out of her black little eyes, and nodded her head. "Yes, dad," she said. "Have you told him our terms?"

"I was about to do so," said old Molesey, and he turned back to me. "The terms," he explained, "are five guineas' registration fee, five guineas for enrolment—including matriculation charges—ten guineas for the special diploma course, and five guineas for individual instruction."

"Oh, yes," I said, trying to add it all up.

"And," said Miss Molesey, "fifty percent on what you earn by writing during the next five years."

"You can pay cash," said old Molesey, "or in instalments. The latter method is slightly more expensive."

"You will probably prefer the former," added Miss Molesey.

And she'd guessed right there. I didn't want to be worried with a lot of little payments. All I wanted was to get down to work and get through with it, and as I had my check-book in my pocket, we settled the business there and then. I gave Molesey my check for twenty-five guineas, and he gave me a celluloid button with the college monogram on it. He seemed to think I might like to wear it. Sort of academic dress, don't you know; but as a matter of fact that sort of thing's not really quite my style. If you see what I mean.

So I shoved it in my pocket, and we shook hands all round, and it was fixed that I should come back again at eleven o'clock the next morning. "You won't forget, will you," I said, "that I want to earn while I learn?"

"Of course not," they said together. "That's the college motto."

I'D LIKE you to understand, old man, (resumed Hugo Peak, with a slight air of embarrassment) that I wasn't really aiming to compete with pro's like yourself. I mean to say, I'm the last fellow in the world to try and cut in on another fellow's job—especially when I've really got all the cash I want. Whatever I am, I'm no scab; and if you think I was acting like one in any kind of way, then you must blame old Biggles. Old Biggles and the Molesey family; because it was entirely their idea that I should take the course in fiction. You do see that, don't you?

Well, I'm glad you do. I very nearly called you up at the time to ask if you minded my breaking loose in your market, but as I had no sort of intention of going on with it—once I'd cleared my first check—I felt perhaps it would be troubling you for too little. And as a matter of fact—— Well, we're coming to that in a minute.

I rolled up punctually at eleven A.M. the next morning, and met old Molesey just going out. "Here we are," I said cheerily. "Keen as mustard and all ready to kick off."

"Splendid," he said. "You'll find my little girl in the study." And he opened the sitting-room door and shoved me in.

Miss Molesey was looking, if possible, more repulsive than ever. But I didn't mind that. After all, I'd come there to work, and if I'd got to have private lessons from a woman, then it was just as well that there should be nothing to stop my concentrating on the job. Of course Sally's absolutely the last kind of girl to make trouble over anything of that sort. We've been friends all our lives, and she knows I'd never look at anyone else. But still—as I said before—it *was* sort of comforting to feel that if she could have seen me there with Miss Molesey, she couldn't possibly have misunderstood my motives. There's not much to be said for plain women as a general rule, but every now and then you get a glimmering of why they exist.

It was lucky, too, in a way, because right at the beginning of that first lesson Miss Molesey started talking about love.

"You can take it from me, Mr. Peak," she said, "that there's only one class of story that's a safe seller right round the year and all over the country. Mystery stories are all very well, if you've got the knack. Historical stuff may come off, if you can afford to wait till you're known. But the biggest demand of all, and the steadiest, is for the old fashioned love-story in an up-to-date setting."

"Oh, yes," I said, drinking it all in.

"You see," she explained, "it's the women readers who keep the popular magazines going. If you doubt that, just look at the advertisements. And the women readers have got no use for detectives or humor. All they want is love."

"Quite," I said. It was a bit difficult to believe, when you looked at Miss Molesey. But on the other hand there was no suggestion that she was talking about herself.

"That's the first thing to remember," she said. "And the second thing is that you mustn't ever try to be original. You've got to bear in mind that magazine editors are busy men, and that if they can see what a story's like by reading the first paragraph, then they'll always prefer that story to the one where they've got to plow through to the end. And the readers are just the same."

"I see," I said.

"There's only one more point," Miss Molesey continued, "but it's a very important one. Don't ever make the mistake of thinking that people like reading about millionaires or duchesses. They don't."


Good, hot Vegetable Soup-
how delicious !
Fifteen different vegetables! The choicest that grow!
Beef broth with its appetizing flavor and tonic invigoration!
Substantial cereals that yield so much strength-giving food!
Savory herbs and tempting seasoning blended in by the deft hands of French chefs!
And you get all of these thirty-two ingredients in one hearty and delicious soup—Campbell's Vegetable!
Can you imagine a more inviting soup when your appetite is keen and your taste is eager for a delightful flavor?
It is a wonderful luncheon or supper dish—so nourishing and so attractive. And it's a big help toward satisfying a hungry family at dinner!
21 kinds
12 cents a can
Campbell's
CONDENSED
EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE INTERNATIONALE 1900
VEGETABLE
SOUP
CAMPBELL SOUP COMPANY
CAMDEN, N.J., U.S.A.

I must have looked a bit surprised at this, because she started explaining what she meant.

"I'm not saying," she went on, "that you can do without millionaires or duchesses altogether. They're a great help, very often, if you know the right way to use them. But the average woman reader—whose money you're after—wants to read a story where she can see herself in the principal part. And it's far more pleasure to her to imagine she's being made love to by a man with a big jaw than to imagine she's got fifteen servants and a couple of country houses. The editors know that, and they'll always pick their stuff accordingly. Have you got all that?"

"Yes, but just a moment," I said. "It's awfully kind of you to tell me all this and it's most frightfully helpful, but I'm dashed if I know what the average woman reader is like."

"You don't need to," said Miss Molesey. "You find that out by reading other people's stories in the magazines."

"But, good heavens," I said, "you don't mean to say she's as bad as all that!"

Miss Molesey gave a tight little smile. "Of course not," she said. "But it's your job to make her think she is."

It hardly sounded right to me. But, after all I hadn't got to spend the rest of my life—like some of you fellows—in corrupting middle-class homes. If I could deliver the goods just once, that was absolutely all I wanted.

"I follow you," I said politely. "And what do we do next?"

Miss Molesey went across the room, and came back with a sheet of type-script.

"Here's a standard plot," she said, "that we send out to all our correspondence pupils. You've got to expand it to five thousand words, and make certain there's a strong punch in the last line. If you can do that—and keep it in short sentences all the way through—then I can probably sell it while you're finishing the course. It's a story I've sold hundreds of times in the last few years."

That sounded promising, didn't it? But as I wasn't a correspondence pupil, I thought I might just raise one point.

"You don't think anyone's getting at all tired of it, do you?" I asked.

Miss Molesey looked a little offended. "Haven't I warned you," she said, "that originality is absolutely fatal? Of course, if you don't want to sell your work——"

"No, no," I said. "I beg your pardon. Er—how much do you think it would fetch?"

"In your name?" she asked.

"Yes," I said. "Of course."

"From two to three guineas," she said.

"And I'd get half?"

"No," she said. "The college always makes a charge of five guineas for placing its pupils' work. I ought to have mentioned that."

There seemed to be a catch here somewhere.

"Then how do I earn while I learn?" I asked.

"You can't run before you walk," she said. "You'd probably get a better price next time."

"More than five guineas, you mean?"

"Certainly," she said.

I tried to think it over, but it was impossible to do all the arithmetic that was needed. It was clear enough, though, that I shouldn't be any nearer foiling old Biggles if I resigned from the college and let it keep all my entrance money. It seemed better to go ahead.

"I follow you," I said. "Let's have a look at the plot."

She handed the sheet of paper over, and I began to read it. At first sight it looked like a bit out of a geometry. All A and B, and X and Y. I couldn't take hold of it at all.

"Just a moment," I said, scowling down at it. "Who's this A who keeps on butting in?"

"Your heroine," said Miss Molesey. "She works in B's office, and he's in love with her."

"Why?" I asked.

"No, B," she said.

"I mean, why's B in love with A?"

"You've got to plant that," said Miss Molesey.

"'Plant'?"

"Yes. Tell the readers, without telling A."

I let it pass. I just knew I should never understand. "Then who's X?" I asked.

"A's sister," said Miss Molesey. "Pretty girl, but weak character. Goes to cabarets with Y."

"Who's he?" I asked.

"He's a client of B's firm," said Miss Molesey. "Good-looking, but weak character."

"Not really?"

"So that A is worried about her little sister."

"Little?" I said. "You never told me she was little."

"Of course she's little," said Miss Molesey.

"A child, do you mean?"

"No, no," said Miss Molesey. "Just little. Like me, you know."

I was sure she'd said this to try to help, but as a matter of fact it had just the opposite effect. I simply couldn't imagine Miss Molesey going to cabarets with a good-looking man of weak character. It made the whole story seem ridiculous.

Not that it had much sense in it, anyway. This girl X stole some money, and A told B that *she'd* done it, and he pretended to believe her; but he didn't really, because he was in love with her. And then somehow or other they were all at a cabaret, and B knocked Y down, and then they were back at the office and B dictated a letter to A. It was a proposal, don't you know, and she was such a darned fool she couldn't see it was meant for herself. So he had to tell her, and that was the end. The whole thing struck me as absolute drivel.

However, there it all was. I knew perfectly well I couldn't think of anything better myself, so I said I'd have a shot at it.

"Right," she said. "Don't forget it's five thousand words we want. And you'd better bring it along with you tomorrow morning."

I jolly nearly fainted. "Tomorrow morning?" I gasped.

"Yes," she said—all cool and collected. "Then we'll go through it together, and you'll be ready to try something more advanced."

"Oh," I said. "Yes. Quite. Thanks very much." And that, as the saying goes, was the end of the first lesson.

Well (continued Hugo Peak, sitting down again after a short interlude with a siphon and a bottle of whisky), if old Biggles could have seen the way I sweated at that infernal rubbish all that afternoon and evening, I think even his stony heart would have shown signs of melting. For seven hours I never left my table over there. I missed my tea altogether and I had my dinner on a tray without moving from my chair. I just wrote and scratched out, and wrote and scratched out, until the whole room was full of bits of paper. I tell you, it was shattering.

And then—perhaps you've found the same thing sometimes—quite suddenly it all seemed to go with a rush. My hand was so stiff I could hardly hold the pen, but in spite of this the words kept spouting out as if I'd been a medium in a trance. Good stuff, too; I never had any doubt about that. And just as the clock struck ten I got A and B into a regular strangle-hold, put in three dots for luck, and left them at it. I'd finished. I was half blind, my head was absolutely splitting and both my hands were covered with ink, but I'd done the trick. And then I rolled straight into bed and slept like ten dead men at a lantern-lecture. I was absolutely all in.

The next morning I parked the old bus outside the College on the stroke of eleven.

"Good morning, Miss Molesey," I said, breezing into the office. "Here we are again."

"Have you done it?" she asked.

"Rather," I said.

"Good," she said, and I gave her the story.

"I haven't thought of a title yet," I explained, "but——"

And then I stopped, for suddenly she looked up at me in a way that fetched me up with an absolute jerk.

"What's the matter?" I said.

"Is this all?" she asked.

"All?" I said. "Yes, of course it's all."

"But you've done less than four hundred words," she said.

"Gosh!" I said. I seemed to feel the room all spinning round. "Do you mean that?"

I tell you, old son, I could have sat down and sobbed. After all the work I'd put into the confounded thing to hear that I'd done less than a tenth of what she wanted. "Good Lord!" I said. "How perfectly frightful!"

And then, I'm bound to say, Miss Molesey was awfully decent. "Never mind, Mr. Peak," she said. "We'll see if we can't spin it out a bit."

"You mean, you'll help me?" I faltered.

"Of course," she said.

"May Heaven reward you, Miss Molesey," I said, "for I never can."

"Oh, nonsense, Mr. Peak," she said, quite kindly. "Now, then; let's start with the final scene. The place where B dictates the letter."

"He isn't called B any longer," I explained. "I called him 'Hilary Forsyth.'"

"That's all right," she said. "And what did you call A?"

"Sylvia Frinton."

"I don't care for that," she said. "I think we'll call her 'Margery.'"

"Anything you like," I said.

"Ready?" said Miss Molesey. "Now, then; take this down." And she began to dictate.

"'My own darling little Margery,'" she said. "'I wonder if you will be surprised at what I am going to say. I love you, my dear little girl; I love you with all the love of which a strong man is capable. Though we have known each other such a short time——'"

Well, anyway, it all went tripping along like that. Sickening stuff. Made me hot all over. But the goods. Oh, yes; I could see it was the goods. "I know so well that I can make you happy in our wee home," it ended up. "Always your devoted, H."

"'H'?" I said. "I thought he was B."

"For Hilary," she explained.

"Oh, right," I said, and I chalked it down.

"That's fine," said Miss Molesey. "Now we'll go back to the beginning."

By lunch time we'd got it up to well over two thousand words, and I arranged to come back again the next morning. Miss Molesey said I could leave the manuscript with her.

"I'm most awfully obliged to you," I said. "You don't realize what this may mean to me."

"Perhaps I do," she said, looking almost human for a moment. And then I nipped back into the car and forgot all about her. You see, I was taking Sally out to a matinée.

At this indeterminate point in his narrative young Mr. Peak paused.

"But that's not the end, is it?" I asked.

"If only it had been," he muttered. And then: "Can't you see what that fiendish woman had done?"

"'Fiendish'?" I echoed, in some surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Her second name was Margaret," replied Hugo Peak. "I had old Molesey and his solicitor round here at half past nine the next morning. Half past nine, if you please! While I was singing happily in my bath. It cost me three hundred and seventy-five pounds to buy back that unmentionable letter. Do you understand now?"

I did. But I could only nod at him, in sympathetic horror.

"Stung," added Hugo Peak bitterly. "And, thanks to old Biggles, by a man who'd been twenty years in Fleet Street. 'Custodians of the truth,' he called them. My sacred boot!"

Suddenly he switched on the mammoth receiving-set. But the literary dinner was over. The room was filled with the syncopated strains of dance-music.

And at these healing sounds I saw a faint smile spread over my unlucky friend's features. He took three or four sliding steps, clasping an imaginary partner in his arms. "After all," he said, magnanimously, "the old brute *is* her father."

I gathered, and I think correctly, that he was referring to the Right Honorable Lord Biggleswade.

Would you walk across the room to save 3¢?

Smell the naptha in Fels-Naptha!

Many Women

get the *extra* help of Fels-Naptha in this easy, simple way:

They chip Fels-Naptha directly into the washing machine, or dissolve it in hot water, as they prefer. Chipping is so easy! Lots of women use just an ordinary kitchen knife. It only takes about 50 seconds. No fuss. No bother. No waste. It dissolves quickly, and works up into a rich, creamy suds, ready to start its cleansing work.

And for the little effort of chipping, you are more than repaid with the *extra* help of dirt-loosening naptha and splendid soap combined.

Try Fels-Naptha next time you use your washing machine. You will be surprised and more than pleased!

Of course you would! Any thrifty housewife would consider it a worth while saving.

With no more effort—and with scarcely any more time, you can easily chip a golden bar of Fels-Naptha into your washing machine.

By doing this you not only save money, but you get the benefit of naptha—that safe, gentle dirt-loosener and splendid soap *combined*. That's why you get ***extra* washing help** in Fels-Naptha you cannot get with soap alone, no matter what its shape or form—color or price.

Fels-Naptha loosens dirt more quickly, more easily. It saves wear-and-tear in washing. It saves time and work.

With naptha and splendid soap working hand-in-hand, helping each other; with the perfect teamwork between Fels-Naptha and the washing machine; with the saving of soap-money and clothes-money—isn't it worth the few seconds it takes to chip Fels-Naptha into your washing machine?

Your washline tells the story of this *extra* help. Clothes of snowy whiteness—of spring-like freshness—of a sweet, thorough, wholesome cleanliness that you actually can *see* and *feel*.

No wonder so many thousands of women—after trying this and that form of soap in their washing machines, say—"Nothing can take the place of Fels-Naptha!"

THE GOLDEN BAR WITH THE CLEAN NAPTHA ODOR

Rustling for Cupid *by Peter B. Kyne* (Continued from page 71)

always marry into families without blots on their escutcheons."

The old man nodded his approval. The Mulfords were that sort, too. "If I were in your place I'd stick by the traditions of my tribe, Miss Sybil," he says. "Apparently this love-affair hasn't gone so far you both won't recover from it."

"I'd give up my school and go home, but I can't," wails Sybil May. "I've signed a three-year contract and a contract is a contract. Oh, Mr. Mulford, this is terrible! I simply cannot tell Brad the reason I am going to refuse him. It would break his heart."

"You won't have to tell him, Miss Sybil." Old Man Mulford is as wise as a treeful of owls. "When he went to school here in Deming he had to lick every boy in it because they taunted him with the illicit activities of his father. Grown men who do not like the old man throw it up to him from time to time; his mother knows of the stories that are circulated, but she hopes Brad doesn't, and he can't let her know he knows. You just write the boy a kindly little note and he'll understand and leave you alone. He's not the kind to pester a woman. He's got a manly pride."

So Sybil May wiped her pretty eyes and pulled herself together.

Three months later she comes in to see Old Man Mulford again. It seems a relative of hers has cashed in back home and Sybil May has a legacy of ten thousand dollars comin' to her shortly. She has a notion that as long as she's stuck in our country for the next two and a half years she'd like to invest that money in some yearlings and see them grow into money. She's been informed that the range is free and all she has to do is to brand her cattle, turn 'em loose and forget them until round-up time, when she can hire two or three riders to work with the other outfits and cut out her cattle and ship them. It occurs to her as most likely that Mr. Mulford can buy some cattle for her cheaper and better than anybody else, and will he be bothered with her little business worries?

Now, of late, old Man Mulford has been doin' a lot of scheming, in which I figure prominently. I reckon I told you about how he got me out of an orphan asylum when I'm a little shaver, to keep him company while his own boy is in school back East. Well, I'm old Man Mulford's boy, although he ain't never formally adopted me, and I'm the manager of his Double M ranch. He thinks a lot of me and it occurs to him that me and Sybil May had ought to hit it off together. The old man is sure set on a match between us, now that he knows Brad Blatchford has been definitely disposed of.

Well, the old fox immediately decides to put Sybil May in the cattle business. He's too busy to attend to it himself, but he'll have his foster-son, Jeb Tully, manager of the Double M Ranch, tend to the matter for her. Sybil May tells him he's just too sweet for anything and rides along back to Sycamore Creek as merry as a grig.

As she neglects to mention Brad Blatchford's name, the old man jumps to the conclusion that Brad has sung his swan-song and that there can't be any harm done if I horn in and try my luck. However, realizin' that match-makers do their best and always get a hundred and fifty percent the worst of it, Old Man Mulford totally fails to give me any hint of what's in his mind.

The result is that I get a letter from my foster-parent directing me to ride over to Sycamore Creek and discuss with Miss Sybil May Hamilton, the school-teacher there, the details of a cattle trade she's fixin' to get into, with his aid and approval. After discussin' the matter and advisin' with her I am to come in to Deming for a conference with him.

So I ride over to Sycamore Creek. Not knowin' what nester Sybil May boards with I head straight for her school, figurin' to present myself when school lets out about three o'clock. I met the lady as she comes out of school with the children, and I'm free to state that if I hadn't got off my horse to approach her I'd most certainly have fallen off—the shock was that great.

I present my letter of introduction from Old Man Mulford and after readin' it Sybil May gives me a swift once over. I'm appalled to think I'm lookin' far from my best. I'm ridin' a fair horse but I could have ridden one of the old man's Fairy Gold thoroughbreds if I'd known what I was going to see. Also, I could have had a better outfit on the horse and I might have shaved before starting. In fact, I'm so disappointed at myself and so embarrassed I have a job openin' the discussion—seein' which she takes said job off my hands and as we walk up the road together, me leadin' my horse, I mentally cuss them Sycamore Creek nesters for buildin' their schoolhouse so close to the house where Sybil May boards.

Before we part, I've promised that girl I'll buy her better cattle for less money than anybody else can; also I've promised that my riders would look after her critters, brand them and earmark them for nothing, round them up in the fall, ship them sell them and collect the money for her. This proposition delights Sybil May no little.

I don't mind admitting that by the time Sybil May and I conclude our business conference my life is completely wrecked. As I ride homeward I'm aware that from now on it's going to be mighty hard for me to keep my mind on Old Man Mulford's cows; already my thoughts are occupied entirely with Sybil May's—and she hasn't got any as yet! To make a long story quicker I decide to deal myself a hand and sit in on the game, so, after buyin' her cattle and deliverin' them, I reckoned she'd ought to have about a third more than she had paid cash for. So I ride into Deming and induce Old Man Mulford to loan her the money to buy them, she to give him a chattel mortgage on the cows as security.

The old man wants to know how come I've worked up such an active interest in Sybil May's financial future, and I tell him promptly I'm out to make her Mrs. Tully or know the reason why. After that there ain't any more argument. Sybil May gets the money and I get the additional cows for her; after that all she has to do is wait for her investment to grow into a nice profit.

However, I never saw a business deal so slick and smooth that I couldn't find a burr in it if I looked close. It occurs to me that Sybil May needs a nice saddle-horse, so I send one over to her—one of the finest thoroughbreds on the ranch. On the day we unloaded those steers at Deming and started the drive out to the range, I sent one of the boys ahead to tell her we were comin' and the day we'd arrive so she could ride out and view her newly acquired property.

Sure enough she come—and at sight of her six of the top riders of the Double M went crazy. After that whenever I'd ride over to a dance at Sycamore Creek I always had a lot of company I wasn't hankerin' for.

Old Man Mulford had tipped me off by this time to Brad Blatchford, but as Brad never showed up at Sycamore Creek while I was there I figured him out for keeps and accordingly one afternoon, when Sybil May lets out school, she finds me waitin' to walk with her. On the way home I pop the question, and my proposition not meetin' with the spontaneous enthusiasm I had hoped for, I'm some crestfallen as I ride back to the Double M. It seems Sybil May hadn't suspected this tender passion of mine; she admired me and respected me as a good friend and neighbor and she hates to hurt me and hopes it wouldn't make any difference, but really she isn't in love with me—yet. Perhaps in the years to come—but there I stop her!

"Until I get to feelin' sorry for myself I don't want the woman I love to be annoyed feelin' sorry for me," I says. "A handsomer man has the inside of the track on me and I know it. I'd figured him out of it, but until he is I'll be grateful for the same treatment you accord all of us cow waddies."

Sybil May stops and looks at me mighty earnestly. "What do you know about him, Jeb?" she says very low.

She's called me by my first name for the first time and that sort of gets me excited, but I manage to say he's my friend and I like him and trust him, but wouldn't trust his old man farther than I could throw an old English sheep-dog by the tail—which the said breed of canine sports no caudal bud whatever. Sybil May looked up at me with shinin' eyes.

"You're a dear," she said. "You'll always be my friend, won't you?"

I nodded—and dog my cats if she didn't stand on her tiptoes an' give me a little kiss. I was right embarrassed.

Well, sir, my enthusiasm for Sycamore Creek goes into the sere and yellow leaf, as the poet says, for well-nigh a month. About then Old Man Mulford drives out to the ranch to spend a week with me and incidentally he asks me what luck I'm havin'. I tell him and his face drops until it's as long as an elephant's. After a while he sighs and says:

"Well, I wish Brad would do one of two things—leave New Mexico or get caught red-handed stealin' cattle. That boy's sure interferin' in my plans for your future."

A couple of days later the old man and I ride over to look at a herd of pure-bred Herefords I have in a little irrigated valley I've fenced in for them. Come noon we pull into a little grove of cottonwoods for a rest.

The horses are standin' quiet, head down, half asleep in the shade and the old man and I are stretched out in the grass when we hear the bawl of a calf either frightened or hurt. Whatever's harassin' that calf, it ain't takin' place more than thirty yards distant, so Old Man Mulford and I get up and peer through the thick cottonwoods to see what's up. What we see makes us stand quiet where we were an' say nothing.

Right out in a little open space in front of us Hank Blatchford has his rope around the hindquarters of a six-months'-old calf. His horse is holdin' the critter stretched and the old man has dismounted and is walkin' leisurely toward the calf with a brandin'-knife in one hand and a brandin'-iron in the other. He puts his iron on the calf, earmarks him and casts him loose—all to the signal delight of that calf's mother, who's pirootin' around tryin' to get up enough courage to assault Hank. The instant the calf is loose him and his mother trots off.

"Did you notice anything, son?" whispers old Man Mulford to me, as Hank coils his rope and ties it on his pommel. "Your eyes are a heap keener than mine—but I thought——"

"I saw the Double M brand on that cow. It stuck out as big as a roundhouse."

"Do you reckon Hank saw our brand or did he make a natural mistake?"

"No, sir," I says, "Hank just didn't give a hang. He found an unbranded runnin' with a Double M cow, so he claimed it as his own."

"Which I think I'm now justified in claimin' Hank as my own," says the old man, and reached for his artillery. "I've laid for that skunk a quarter of a century and now a just God has delivered him into my hands. 'Tain't no homicide to bust a rustler, Jeb!"

I knocked his gun down. "Wait a minute, pop," I says. "Maybe we'll get enough for a mess. Here comes Brad Blatchford over the hill. This may be a family affair for all we know and if it is and you cut down on the old man, Brad'll have to be reckoned with and I happen to know he most generally hits what he shoots at. Brad would fall to me—and I don't want him."

"The hell you don't!" says old Man Mulford. "If they're workin' this game together you've got to take him on. You ain't afraid of him, are you?"

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"No, sir, an' you know I'm not," I says, "but I'd rather Brad Blatchford got killed by somebody else. It wouldn't look just right to Sybil May."

The old man's eyebrows went up. "You're right. I forgot that angle of the proposition. Forgive my hasty tongue, son. Well, we'll get the drop on them, tie 'em up with their own ropes and deliver them to the proper authorities. Also we'll round up that Double M calf and his mother for corroborative evidence."

"I'd rather not mix up with Brad Blatchford," I protests. "Whatever I do will look wrong to Sybil May. Besides, we haven't seen Brad brandin' any Double M calves, and until we do——"

I stopped talkin'. The Double M cow with her calf was crossin' over the low hill to the north as Brad Blatchford rode over the crest headed south. I reckon he'd been attracted by the bawlin' of the calf. He takes one swift look at them, then whirls his horse and gazes down into the little canyon, just in time to see old Hank take to his saddle on the run. Bendin' low on the other side of his horse so Brad can't recognize him, he gives his pony the spurs and flew; without an instant's hesitation Brad Blatchford pulled his gun and fires. But the range is too long, I reckon; anyhow old Hank don't stop—if anything he goes faster; so Brad takes out after him.

Down the hillside he comes with raised pistol, and as he tears past the cottonwood Old Man Mulford and I jump out into the open and looked after the pursuit. "They haven't recognized each other," pants old Man Mulford. "Good Lord, the boy's honest! He's true to the code of the range—kill a rustler wherever you find him even if you catch him stealin' another man's critter! Quick, son! Mount up and we'll follow. God has His own queer ways of dealin' out justice."

We lit out after Brad and his skunk of a father as tight as the horses could foot it. Hank's horse was outrunnin' Brad's. The old man kept dodgin' in and out among the cottonwoods along the bottom of the canyon; we could get occasional glimpses of him and half a dozen pistol bullets droned over us as Hank fired back at his son and missed. I knew the chase wouldn't last long, however. Just as soon as Hank should emerge into the open—and he had to do that in another hundred yards—I knew Brad would get his rifle out of the boot, pull up for a second and drop his father's horse.

Brad did. Old Hank and his horse came down like a shower of autumn leaves as Brad fires, but Hank must have been expectin' it, for he fell clear and lit runnin'. Brad fanned the gravel around his heels, but it was only a dozen jumps to an arroyo and the way the old man popped into it I judged he wasn't badly hurt and would be as full of fight as a badger. Evidently Brad judged as much too, for he sat his horse considerin' the best method of attack and we rode up and greeted him.

"Hello, Mr. Mulford," says Brad. "My Judas priest, you're just in time to help me. I surprised a rustler back there a spell, just after he'd run his iron on a Double M calf. I've got him cornered now down in the arroyo yonder. Mr. Mulford, you stay here and see that he don't try doublin' back on foot. Jeb, you ride over on the hillside to the right and I'll take that bare hillside on the left. Then we'll close in on him."

"Hold your hosses a minute, son," says Old Man Mulford. "Did you, by any chance, recognize that rustler?"

"No, sir."

"I thought, Brad, I saw you remark the brand on the calf."

Brad Blatchford's face went red as a sunset. It was pitiful to look at the boy. "Yes, sir," he says, "I remarked it. Somebody run the Blatchford iron on your calf, Mr. Mulford. I've always heard my father's cattle morals weren't above suspicion, but I never had any proof until now. I've watched him, too. But I saw something today that means I've got to get to the bottom of things or get killed tryin'. If my father hires the sort of rider that run his iron on a neighbor's cattle, I'm goin' to kill that rider and then have a show-down with my father."

"I always knew you were honest," says Old Man Mulford. "In fact I told that schoolteacher over to Sycamore Creek you were, but there's been so much talk I reckon she was afraid to risk you, Brad, until she knew she could honor and respect you for sure."

"There's no time to discuss that, sir," says Brad. "Come on and help me get that rustler."

"I told you to hold your hosses," roars Old Man Mulford. "I reckon that was my calf that got branded, wasn't it? This is my party."

"And I reckon it was the Blatchford iron that branded him, wasn't it? This is *my* party and if you two don't care to accept my invitation I'll pull it off all by myself."

"Now, listen to me, Brad. It ain't up to you to kill that rustler, and it ain't up to Jeb here. It's up to me. I've been after that skunk half a lifetime and now I'm goin' to get him—if so be you haven't any objection after I tell you who he is. Brad, that *hombre* you're after is your own father!"

Poor Brad's eyes opened wide in horror and amazement; then his chin commenced to quiver pitiful-like. He wasn't a weaklin'; but the blow was mighty hard to bear without bendin' and pretty soon he bent. He just leaned over on his horse's neck and cried like a child. With his eagle glance on the arroyo Old Man Mulford waited until Brad could pull himself together again.

"Well, son," he says as gentle as a woman, "goin' to let me have my way?"

Brad quivered all over a minute; then he got his voice under control. "My mother raised me to be a man of honor," he says. "My father has smirched her honor and mine, and I reckon that as the only man in the Blatchford family it's up to me to keep our honor clean. Mr. Mulford, sir, I'm obliged to you, but this is a family matter and you mustn't interfere in it."

"You mean you're goin' to kill your own father?" yells Old Man Mulford. "Brad, if he was ten thousand cow-thieves I'll not permit it. Think of your mother. Think of the disgrace."

"I haven't thought of much except the disgrace since I was knee-high to a hop-toad, sir. From today on no man in this territory is goin' to throw my sire's record up to me and get away with it." He reloads his six-shooter.

"Brad," says Old Man Mulford as plaintive as a sick kitten, "I wouldn't be as honest and honorable as you for a king's ransom. Put up that gun. *Put it up, I tell you!*"

Brad looks up into the barrel of the old man's gun.

"You go to hell! You're bluffin'," says Brad, and sunk the rowels home. He was off like a shot out of a gun.

"Rope him, Jeb!" yells the old man.

I had my twine out in a pig's whisper and as the old man and I were ridin' Fairy Gold thoroughbreds and Brad was mounted on a cold-blooded cow-pony, it wasn't no trick at all to hang on his tail. At thirty feet I dropped my loop over Brad, pinnin' his arms to his sides, while Old Man Mulford rode in and hazed Brad's horse in circles until he quit runnin'. All the time Brad was screamin' and cryin' and cursin' us to let him go so's he could make his honor clean.

"This is my party, I tell you," says Old Man Mulford. "Jeb, you hold this Hotspur tight whilst I ride down an' argue with the prisoner at the bar."

"Lemme go," says Brad to me. "Dad'll kill him as sure as death an' taxes. Dad just can't afford to be took."

"Well, he's going to be took, son," says Old Man Mulford. "And he won't kill nobody. He's got a streak of yellow in him as wide as the stripe on a nigger cavalryman's trousers. Jeb, you quit your worryin' an' fidgetin'. If he beefs me you can take a hand, but not until. With you two boys after the same girl I'm goin' to give you both a fair field."

Sometimes I think that God only made one Old Man Mulford an' then broke the mold. The old warrior rode away at a runnin' walk and presently there's a splatter of pistol fire down at the arroyo; pretty soon Old Man Mulford rides back with blood wellin' out of his shoulder and Hank Blatchford footin' it ahead of him, with his right arm hangin' broken at his side.

"Don't worry, Jeb," Old Man Mulford says to me. "He pinked me high up. Busted my collar-bone, most likely, but he didn't reach my lung. Reckon I'm not too old to sprout a new collar-bone. Take that rope off'n Brad and secure his guns while we hold court. Hank, you're a rustler. You've always been a rustler. Deny it and I'll bend my gun over your sinful head."

So Hank didn't deny it, provin' he was guilty. "It is the sentence of this court," says the old man, "that you turn over every dog-goned acre of land, every cow you have, your brand and your *caballada* to your son Bradley Blatchford, to be held by him in fee forever and no back talk about it either. Out of the proceeds of his newly acquired business Brad will pay you a hundred and fifty dollars a month for whisky and eatin' tobacco, and hereafter you'll just set on a bench over to the Swastika headquarters an' for relaxation an' mental development you can spit at a crack. To sum the situation up, you're out of the cattle business an' out for keeps. Do I make my meanin' clear?"

"You do," says old Hank, like a sheep-killin' dog, his head hangin'.

"Brad," says Old Man Mulford, "you're a witness to the fact that as you an' your honorable parent are ridin' along peaceably, some enemy cut down on you from ambush an' busted your paw's arm. As for me, everybody knows I'm too old to be ridin' disrespectful horses, so it's no wonder I got a broken collar-bone. Brad, you behave yourself now. You an' Hank go back to that little clump of cottonwoods an' set there until Jeb can find a stray hereabouts to fit that saddle of your father's. Then you ride back to the Double M and tell the ridin' boss I've loaned you my buckboard to take your depleted parent home. *Adios*, Hank. Brad, my boy! Until we meet again!"

Brad rode over in between me an' the old man. "That's a Solomon decision, Mr. Mulford," he says. "I don't get nowhere by it. Sybil May's still to be reckoned with. The issue, so far as she is concerned—so far as anybody is concerned—remains unchanged."

Old Man Mulford give him a funny look. "As the monkey remarked, Brad, when he chucked the kitten down the well, 'that remains to be seen!' Come on, Jeb. Let's drift!"

"As a man grows older," Old Man Mulford remarked as we two rode away, "he grows kindlier. Personally, I'm of the opinion that old Hank hasn't branded one of his neighbors' calves in years. He could afford to be moral. I figure he found himself out here on the range all alone and was tempted beyond his strength and overwhelmed."

"Charity covers a multitude of sins, pop," I says, "but the fact remains that we didn't see any brandin' fire, did we? Old Hank has methods all his own and I have a notion we'll solve the mystery when we investigate his horse."

We did. Hank carried a short iron in a specially constructed leather case strapped to his saddle, and when we pulled up alongside the wounded horse this iron, still hot, was burnin' a hole in the case! I put the horse out of his misery and removed the saddle and bridle. Strapped to the back of the cantle on one side so securely it wouldn't budge was a pair of leather saddle-bags.

One of these bags contained a canteen filled with signal oil and the other a wide, flat tin lamp with a big circular wick capable of supportin' a flame that would heat an iron even quicker than a wood-fire. Signal oil will not go out very readily in a high wind and it

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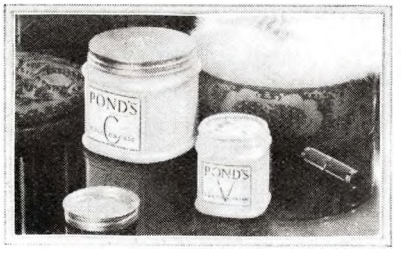

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doesn't smoke. All Hank had to do was get out his lamp, light it and be ready for brandin' in five minutes, with no fire to tip off a distant observer to what he was up to.

"There goes all my sweet Christian thoughts a-glimmerin'," sighs Old Man Mulford. "If we had the courage to do our full duty by Hank Blatchford we'd ride back to that patch of cottonwoods and hang him. However, that *would* be tipping it off to the world in general and to Sybil May Hamilton in particular that Brad's father *was* a cow-thief, after all. Confound the women! They're always interferin' in a man's business. Now, on the other hand, if we hanged Hank that'd leave you a clear field with Sybil May."

"Not to mention involvin' us in serious litigation," I reminded him.

"Oh, I've got a number of good friends on the grand jury, Jeb."

"We'll spare them the use of their influence, pop. As for Sybil May, I reckon I'd be deficient in manly decency if I failed to ride over to Sycamore Creek and relate to her the details of this affair, just as we witnessed it. I figure it'd bring her a heap of comfort."

"It might—and then again it mightn't, Jeb. While she'd be happy to have the more intimate stigma removed from Brad, there'd be enough social odor still left clingin' to him, as the heir to a principality founded on theft, to make her firmer than ever in her resolve not to marry the boy. Son, whatever you do, you're wrong. That girl is too prominent in blue blood."

"Then she ought to be thoroughbred enough to stand it and I'm goin' to risk tellin' her."

Old Man Mulford didn't have anything to offer to that decision, so I left him and after roamin' around the range half an hour I caught a horse, saddled him, took more or less of the conceit out of him and rode him back to the cottonwoods, leadin' my own horse. Brad was busy tyin' up his father's busted arm with a strip of his own shirt tail, and old Hank was snivelin' just the way he might be expected to.

"Much obliged, I'm sure, Jeb," says Brad, as he saw me tie the horse to a cottonwood. He finished his job on Hank's arm and walked over to me. "Thanks for all of your kindness," he says, very husky. "It's mighty clean and square of you and Mr. Mulford to agree to keep this affair a secret. It makes losing Sybil May to you a heap easier. Since somebody had to displace me, I'm glad that somebody had to be you," and he gave me his hand.

"Whoa, boy! Back up!" I protested. "Sybil May's the one person I aim to tell all about this unhappy incident. When she has credible proof that you're an honest man, most probably she writes you an invitation to come over to Sycamore Creek."

"I forbid it," he says. "You're no friend of mine if you do it. Come to think, I can stand the loss of anything except my honor and personal pride, and I'll lose what little I have of that if the Blatchford dirty linen is washed in Sybil May's presence. You've got a fair field, Jeb. Go in and win. You got my moral support."

Well, a month later Old Man Mulford drove back to his bank in Deming and nobody was ever the wiser as to what took place during his absence. One thing I could bank on. The riders at the Double M would hold the boss's secrets as long and as hard as they'd hold the boss's cattle in a sand-storm.

However, Hank's riders weren't that loyal, and presently a whisper goes out over the land to the effect that somebody has busted old Hank's right arm, nobody knows who that somebody is and Old Hank won't tell. Brad brings Hank home, but Brad won't tell, so of course, since nobody can straighten out all this mystery for the general public, the general public promptly proceeds to straighten it out for itself.

Folks in a cow country aren't half bad at makin' deductions, so it ain't no time until words goes out that Hank Blatchford gets caught brandin' a critter that don't belong to him; and when the deeds to all the Blatchford land and the Swastika brand are recorded at the county-seat in favor of his son, Bradley Blatchford, gossip is most certainly rife. Pretty soon some gossip allows he has it on confidential but indisputable authority that young Brad finds his father out rustlin', beefs him before he recognizes him and then, realizin' his golden opportunity, blackmails the old man out of everything and retires him years before his time.

Opinion is about divided now as to whether Brad's justified in this action, or is just naturally as good a highwayman as his father and has heretofore failed to put over a job only because he was particular and lacked the opportunity to put over one worth while. There's them that avows openly that the public interest would be served if a mob rode out to the Swastika and hanged 'em both.

I'm pretty busy for about two months on the calf round-up, but with that job finished I ride over to Sycamore Creek to make a neighborly inquiry as to the state of Sybil May's health.

Well, sir, she's lookin' right peaked, and upon my remarkin' she's sort of reminiscent of a dry year, she bursts into tears. Right from the start of those tears I figure she's been wantin' to have a good cry for quite a spell, so I don't say a word until she'd finished. Then:

"Miss Sybil, don't you believe a word of all this gossip about Brad Blatchford. I happen to be one of two responsible citizens who know for a fact it isn't so and that Brad Blatchford is the proprietor of so much old-fashioned honor he's liable to get round-shouldered carryin' it around with him. You take my word for it. Brad's a gentleman and a scholar."

"Well, that's good testimony—coming from you, Jeb," she says, smiling through her tears. "Who's the other witness?"

"Old Man Mulford, my foster-father, Miss Sybil. Brad's taken the Blatchford account at the Bank of Deming over to Old Man Mulford's bank, and the account's very welcome, which it wouldn't be if Old Man Mulford didn't know Brad Blatchford as well as I do."

"But all this terrible talk about him blackmailing his own father, and shooting him——"

"He didn't do it. Somebody else shot his father and I was with Brad at the time and heard the shootin'. Brad's father turned everything over to him of his own free will and Mr. Mulford and I were present when he did it, or at least promised to do it."

"Then he did it under duress. Can you deny that?"

"I have no means of knowin' what Hank's private feelings was at the time," I evaded.

"No, but you're a tolerable good guesser." She gave me her little brown hand. "Still, I'm grateful to you for telling me about Brad."

"I think it would cheer the boy up if you was to write him a note invitin' him over to hear your class recite on the last day of school," I suggest.

"I have no doubt you're a good cowman, Jeb, but in educational matters you're a dunce. If Brad Blatchford takes a notion to see me he won't require any invitation."

"Well, I have no doubt you're a world-beater in educational matters, Miss Sybil," I shot back at her, "but in the matter of cowmen you're a dunce."

"That makes us quits, Jeb. What was it you wanted to see me about?"

"I had a notion I might succeed in getting you out of my head during the calf round-up," I says, "but seein' as how I failed miserably, I've rode over to ask your hand again in marriage. I'm sure bogged to my hocks in love for you."

"Men are so glib," says Sybil May. "How do I know you're telling me the truth?"

"Why, dog my cats, Sybil May," I says, "there ain't a thing in the world I wouldn't do for you, provided it was honorable."

"You have just admitted that you know the inside of the Blatchford matter. In fact, I gather that you were a witness to it. Will you tell me exactly what happened?"

"I will not!"

"Then you do not love me. I thought so."

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· PAIGE ·

"I told you I'd do anything for you that wasn't dishonorable."

"But that isn't dishonorable. How can it possibly be a dishonorable thing to prove Brad an honorable man?"

"I can't betray his confidence. He doesn't want you to know anything about it and he told me so."

Sybil May's brown eyes popped wide open. "I wonder why."

"Well, to prove how much I love you, I'll tell you why. He's too much of a man to ask you to favor him by feelin' sorry for him. He's afraid you might feel sorry to the point of marryin' him, and he loves you too much to have you take that risk."

"He's an old-fashioned idiot," says Sybil May fiercely. "I could slap the man, so I could."

"Invite him over to be slapped. He'll come."

"If he wants to see me bad enough he'll come uninvited, but don't you tell him so. Promise?"

"I'll not, Sybil May. I'll not be roped and hog-tied by any woman. Are you going to marry me, Sybil May?"

"No!"

"That's definite enough, at any rate. I'd hate to be kept danglin'. Well, *adios*, Sybil May. I'll be back after the beef round-up to see if you've changed your mind any. If you can't wait, just write me in care of the Double M ranch."

I heard her laughin' softly as I rode away. Straight for the Swastika I rode.

I went in to the ranch office and set down and told Brad all about my visit to Sybil May. He hears me in silence.

"Which I haven't a Chinaman's chance to win her, Brad," I says, "so the best I can do is to prove that the Lord loves a cheerful loser. I got a notion you could do worse things than ride over to Sycamore Creek. You could make believe you was lookin' around to buy hay from some of those nesters. You might meet her accidentally on her way home from school!"

"If she was a woman any mere man could fool I'd try your dumb plan, Jeb. As matters stand I'm obliged to you, but you might as well know once and for all that the next time I see Sybil May she'll be ridin' right up to these headquarters for the sole purpose of lettin' me feast my eyes on her."

I rode home feelin' that my sympathies was about equally divided between Sybil May, Brad and Jeb Tully. On the first of the month when I drove in to Deming to get money for the pay-roll, I told Old Man Mulford all about it and asked his advice.

"You mind your own business, son," he advises me. "Didn't I tell you that whatever you did you were bound to be wrong? This here is a job that calls for the wisdom that comes with the years."

"Meanin' you, I suppose."

"Well, a young pup like you might go further an' fare worse." Then he commenced talkin' business.

We were pretty busy that summer puttin' up hay and when the hayin' was done the beef round-up was callin'. Under instructions from Old Man Mulford the Double M outfit gathered all of Sybil May's critters, and when we got down to Deming with the drive I had the boys cut her brand out and hold them off to one side. In the fullness of time we loaded them into cars, and after the checker had checked them off as they went up the chute, I counted the cattle in each car. Our figures coordinated exactly, but there was something wrong. Sybil May had ninety-eight head of cattle more than I'd bought for her the year before! So the ridin' boss and I went prowlin' along the sides of all these cars, peekin' through the boards and verifyin' the brand on every critter aboard—and when we got through there we were!

So I shipped the whole trainload and wired our Kansas City broker to check every animal carefully for the Hamilton brand. I'd designed that brand myself and felt no little pride in it, said brand consisting of a heart with

"I was continually depressed, morbid, lost weight, suffered from insomnia and constipation—in fact was desperate. To augment my misery, my body became covered with eruptions. Medicines drained my system—but to no avail. A friend recommended Yeast. I was skeptical. But I persisted. Then, wonder of wonders, my eruptions disappeared, my appetite increased—I became myself again. Two cakes of Fleischmann's Yeast a day—dissolved in 'malted milk'—had performed the miracle."

ALEXANDER H. SCHULLMAN,
Pittsburgh, Pa.

"During the spring of 1924 I suffered through loss of sleep, nervousness—general run-down condition; for six continuous weeks I endured boil after boil on neck and back. Kind people recommended Yeast, but it took a well-known physician to convince me that 'there must be something to it.' Before I had finished one week's treatment of two yeast cakes a day, I felt a change in my system. Every boil disappeared, my skin cleared, my strength increased. I feel different and look it."

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This food tones up the entire system—aids digestion—clears the skin—banishes constipation.

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Rich in vitality, energy . . .
They conquered their ills—
found again the energy of
youth . . . *with one Fresh Food*

NOT a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense—Fleischmann's Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion — clear the skin — banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active. And day by day it releases new stores of energy.

Eat two or three cakes regularly every day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices or milk—or just plain *For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before breakfast and at bedtime.* Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today!

And let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Health Research Dept. K-37, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.

"I was afflicted with chronic constipation for sixteen years. My attention was drawn to a lecture given by a doctor who spoke on Constipation and advised as a cure Fleischmann's Yeast together with other proper foods. I did not believe that those small cakes could help my case any. But on my way home, I went into a grocery and asked for Yeast. After I had taken the Yeast for a period of three weeks, my condition improved remarkably. My outward appearance had a decided change for the better, and I still continue to take my Fleischmann's Yeast."

ALEXANDRA GAIMS, New York City

an arrow through it. The day after that trainload of cattle arrived in Kansas City I received a wire showin' that the cattle had checked out exactly as they had checked in and that every cow sported Cupid's iron.

I went over to the bank and dropped in on Old Man Mulford with my worries. The old man reckoned he'd have to take the matter up personally with Sybil May; if she'd been buyin' more cattle and speculatin' on the market without notifyin' her backer and adviser he wants to know about it. So we drive over to Sycamore Creek one Saturday morning. We meet Sybil May out on the prairie on horseback alone, and I hail her.

"Young woman," says Old Man Mulford in the stern, sad tones he would have used to an abscondin' cashier, "altogether you have invested in one thousand feeder steers. When Jeb here undertook delivery of them for you he counted one thousand feeder steers into the cars, and his ridin' boss counted one thousand feeder steers out of the cars on arrival at Deming, less two dead en route. After fattenin' your feeders and shippin' them out to Kansas City Jeb and the ridin' boss count ten hundred an' ninety-six head with your brand, and the recheck at the stock-yards confirms this. Have you bought ninety-eight head of cattle without my knowledge and consent—as your banker and backer?"

"Why, of course not!" says Sybil May.

"Well, your herd has increased by ninety-eight head."

"There's a natural increase, isn't there?" says Sybil May.

"It isn't customary with feeder steers, Miss Sybil. Folks that brand calves from a steer herd mostly gets indicted. Now, you come out from behind those innocent eyes and tell me where you got those excess steers."

"I don't know, Mr. Mulford." Sybil May's eyes are openin' with apprehension.

"It's got to be explained," says Old Man Mulford in his most frigid accents. "This looks very suspicious. It's open to only one interpretation."

"You mean——" Sybil May never finished the sentence. She's too amazed, too angry, but her eyes certainly flashes fire at Old Man Mulford. "How dare you?" she says.

"Me, I dare anything," says the old warrior. "Us cattlemen must protect ourselves, and as President of the Cattlemen's Protective Association it becomes my duty to report this case to the proper authorities for investigation."

"But I wouldn't steal cattle," says Sybil May, beginning to weep.

Old Man Mulford nudges me to keep quiet. "Well, you might hire some professional to do it for you," he suggests.

"I don't see how you could have the heart to accuse me of such a terrible deed," wails Sybil May.

"Oh, I don't know why you should consider yourself so pure and holy! Now look here, young lady. You've come out to our country posin' as a blue-stocking. Do you mean to tell me there hasn't been a single black sheep in your family?"

"I am not the keeper of the morals of my family," she blazed back at him. "I only know I am not a cow-thief."

"Well, you'll get credit for bein' one just the same," the old man says grimly. "There's other folks in this country whose lives from my point of view reflect a heap of credit on God's judgment in makin' man after His own image and likeness—but nevertheless they're damned by their relatives' general reputation. Now, I've looked you up and I happen to know you've got one close relative you're far from proud of——"

Sybil May raises her little hands imploringly. "Please, please, Mr. Mulford, don't mention his name!" she wailed. "Oh, Mr. Mulford, you mustn't disgrace me! I came out here, where nobody knew me, to escape the disgrace of that bank affair——"

"Oh, well, we'll forget it, Sybil May! You can't help it when a near relative goes crooked. But what I want to know is why in blazes you, practically in the same boat with Brad Blatchford and, like him, under suspicion—grave suspicion, I might say—of accumulatin' cattle in mysterious ways, have the crust and hypocrisy to think yourself so high and mighty?"

He stares at her hard as flint for maybe a minute; then his face softens and he says: "Well, I don't suppose there's anything to be gained by reportin' you to the Cattlemen's Protective Association, and I'll not, if you give me your word of honor, now that you're out of the cattle business, you'll stay out."

"I curse the day I ever went into it," sobs Sybil May.

"While I'd admire to hear a lady curse, that is a delight I must forego," says Old Man Mulford. "The incident is forgotten. Good day, Miss Sybil."

A few days later I drive him back to Deming and almost the first person we meet when we go to the hotel bar to wash the alkali out of our throats is Brad Blatchford, looking as cheerful as four of a kind! Without a word he walks up and hands Old Man Mulford his check for a thousand dollars.

"You win, Mr. Mulford," says Brad. "You certainly are wise in the ways of women. Sybil May rides over to the Swastika on Sunday to call on my mother. Remember, you said she'd do it within thirty days and I bet you a thousand dollars she wouldn't. Well, we're goin' to be married next month."

"You're a fool for luck, Brad," says the old man, and tore up the check. "I can't accept your money, son. That'd be like takin' candy from a child. It wouldn't have been sporty for me to really take advantage of your youth and lack of knowledge of women—me with my years and experience."

"But you'll come to the weddin'?" says Brad, after fightin' half an hour with the old man to take his check.

"If I'm invited, Brad."

"You'll be invited all right, Mr. Mulford. Jeb, how about you? Will you come, too?"

"If I'm invited," I says. "I imagine I will be, and if so and you'll be requirin' the services of a best man, count on me if you can't get anybody else."

Brad shakes hands, happier'n a fool, and the old man and I drive over to the bank.

"Which I'll never be invited to that weddin'," says the old man, "and that's some deprivation. However, I figured on that when I laid out my plan of campaign. I wish you'd have won her, Jeb, but when I realized you could never be anything except the family friend, I made up my mind I'd marry that girl to Brad Blatchford or die tryin'. For your information, I instructed the Double M ridin' boss to run that Cupid iron on a hundred head of Blatchford yearlings just before the round-up at brandin' time. Of course I told him not to tell you, because you're young yet, Jeb, and curious, while your foster-father is old and ripe with experience. I figured to make that blue-blooded young woman realize what charity is. She wanted Brad, but she was afraid, so I made her out to be an object of similar suspicion—an' it set her thinkin'. A weddin' is the result."

"But how did you find out about her crooked relative?"

"Sho, boy," says the Old Man, "I didn't find out at all. I just guessed. I never knew a family yet that didn't have a family skeleton and the more blue-blooded and aristocratic they are the more liable they are to have a throwback to a horse-thief an estor. I played the law of averages and won."

"Nevertheless," I says, "you've tarnished your reputation for honesty by turnin' rustler."

"Well, I'll admit I'm responsible for runnin' that Sybil May Hamilton iron on the Blatchford calves, but what of it? Didn't old Hank steal the ancestors of those calves? And if I arranged to have a thousand dollars' worth of Brad Blatchford's cattle stolen, I refused to take the thousand-dollar bet I'd won from him, didn't I? And won't it all come back into the family anyhow? Boy, I'm no cow-thief. I just been a-rustlin' for Cupid."

How *Better* Buick Design Reduces Owner Care

Buick covers its spark plugs with a steel cover so they cannot get wet and short circuit. Other elements of the Buick ignition system, likewise, are guarded against the trouble that rain or sleet brings to many cars.

Buick uses the most expensive type of dry plate *multiple disc* clutch, thereby avoiding clutch trouble and frequent adjustment.

Buick provides automatic lubrication for the universal joint. This important unit cannot go dry and wear out. It is lubricated from the transmission.

Buick oil pump design provides positive lubrication to every part of the engine, even in zero weather.

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Buick provides a "Triple Seal" (air cleaner, oil filter, gasoline filter) to protect the Buick Valve-in-Head engine from the wear and trouble caused by dirt and grit.

And *Buick* is the only car that has the "Sealed Chassis," with every operating part inside an iron or steel housing to keep dirt out and lubrication in.

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Buick has made good with the American public by its absolute dependability.

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Ideal FLORIDA HOMES *at* CORAL GABLES

AT THE end of a day, when you turn homeward, do you grow eager for the first glimpse of your own home? Does it offer you peace and beauty? Does it decorate your life with color, enrich it with pleasure and delight? . . . It should. And in Coral Gables, it does!

FOR Coral Gables is definitely and carefully planned for those who want the best that life has to offer, not only in their homes, but in their mental and social existence. Who want a home that will gather new grace each year, and that will increase not only in interest, but in actual value.

A City Plan Under Which All Property Values Are Advancing

Under the plan that controls every aspect of Coral Gables, a garage becomes a thing of beauty and dignity. A warehouse acquires the subtle proportions of a Spanish villa. A business block reflects good taste and a real regard for decoration in every least detail. And the homes! . . . more than a thousand already built. And another thousand now planned. Each combining with its neighbors to create the most beautiful city that was ever designed. Each placed among enchanting gardens in a city that is a brilliant garden in itself.

For this is the only tropical section in America. And the red-tiled Spanish homes fit perfectly into their backgrounds of palm and hibiscus, of poinciana and palmetto. No other type of architecture is permissible. No one can buy property next to you and erect a Victorian horror or a wooden chateau. Devaluation of property through undesirable building is made impossible.

Take Advantage of the Tremendous Upward Surge in Values

No matter whether you buy one plot or a dozen, no matter whether you build a $10,000 home or a magnificent estate, you cannot escape your share in the prosperity that is transforming Miami.

Permanence, security, rising values—these are the logical results of a city plan that includes the new Miami-Biltmore Hotel, a $15,000,000 university and innumerable other projects on which more than fifty millions of dollars have already been spent. And yet Coral Gables is only beginning! Can you wonder that any piece of property inside its limits is considered a sound investment? Can you wonder that investors in the future of Miami and its environs are even now reaping rich rewards?

The Coupon Brings You Rex Beach's Dramatic Story—Free

REX BEACH has written a book about the miracle of Coral Gables. Send for it. Better still, come and see for yourself. Let us tell you about the special trains and steamships that we run at frequent intervals to Coral Gables. If you should take one of these trips, and should buy property at Coral Gables, the cost of your transportation will be refunded upon your return. Sign and mail the coupon—*now!*

Your Opportunity

Coral Gables property has been steadily rising in value. Some of it has shown a 100 per cent increase *every year.*

Yet building plots in Coral Gables may now be secured by a moderate initial payment. These plots, for homes or businesses, are offered in a wide range of prices, which include all improvements such as streets, street lighting, electricity and water. Twenty-five per cent is required in cash, the balance will be distributed in convenient payments over a period of three years.

The Facts About Coral Gables

Coral Gables is a city, adjoining the city of Miami itself. It is incorporated, with a commission form of government. It is highly restricted. It occupies about 10,000 acres of high, well-drained land. It is four years old. It has 150 miles of wide paved streets and boulevards. It has seven hotels completed or under construction. It has 45 miles of white-way lighting and 50 miles of intersectional street lighting. It has 6½ miles of beach frontage. Two golf courses are now completed, two more are building. A theatre, two country clubs, a military academy, public schools, and the College for Young Women of the Sisters of Saint Joseph are now in actual use. More than one thousand homes have already been erected, another thousand now under construction. More than fifty million dollars have been expended in development work. Additional plans call for at least twice that amount. One hundred million dollars worth of property has already been bought in Coral Gables.

Mr. John McEntee Bowman is now building the ten-million-dollar hotel, country club and bathing casino in Coral Gables to be known as the Miami-Biltmore Group. The Miami-Biltmore Hotel opened in January, 1926. Coral Gables will also contain these buildings and improvements, all of which will be completed within a few years:

The $15,000,000 University of Miami, which will be the most beautiful and complete institution in the entire South, the $500,000 Mahi Temple of the Mystic Shrine, a $1,000,000 University High School, a $150,000 Railway Station, a Stadium, a Conservatory of Music, magnificent new entrances and plazas, public buildings, and other remarkable projects.

CORAL GABLES CORPORATION CM-73
Administration Building
Coral Gables, Miami, Florida

Please send me Rex Beach's story on the miracle of Coral Gables. I understand that this places me under no obligation.

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CORAL GABLES
Miami Riviera
40 Miles of Water Front
GEORGE E. MERRICK
Charles J. Chapman

I Tramped Back to Health *by Jack O'Donnell* (Continued from page 64)

boarding trains, stuffed a few handkerchiefs, a jack knife, a comb and an extra necktie in my pockets, slipped quietly from the house after supper, as the evening meal was called, took a last look at the house, patted my dog good-by, and made my way to the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad yards.

I said no farewells, knowing that if my plans became known they would be blocked. I planned to write from some distant city later.

My first night on the road was spent in a box car. When I climbed into it as the train started rolling westward it was empty. I stood by the open door for a long time watching the lights of the little Ohio town gradually fade from view. There was a lump in my throat and a feeling of utter loneliness in my heart. The lump gradually subsided but the loneliness lingered for many, many days.

It must have been midnight when I lay down to sleep. The October air was crisp and cold and I experienced much difficulty in sleeping more than short spells before awakening shivering with cold. I had yet to learn that the way to keep warm under such circumstances is to wrap one's coat around one's head and shoulders. That's a hobo trick which later proved a great comfort while I was tramping my way to health.

When finally I fell into a deep sleep, rocked to complete unconsciousness in the lap of the thundering freight-train, other Knights of the Road came to share my mobile boudoir. There they were—six of the seediest-looking tramps I ever met, stretched out in two rows, coats wrapped around their heads—when I awakened. Babes never slept more peacefully than this half-dozen box-car tourists. My first impulse was to creep to the door and run. But that was out of the question. The throttle of the engine ahead must have been wide open. We were rolling along through wooded, gorgeously tinted country at a rate of speed calculated to discourage even more experienced tramps than I from "hitting the grit."

Although cramped and stiff from sleeping on the cold hard floor, I managed to get on my feet and walk noiselessly to the other end of the swaying car. There I waited for my fellow travelers to awaken.

While I stood there watching them I wondered how far I had traveled from Norwalk. If the train had kept up for the last nine or ten hours the pace it was now going, it must be at least two hundred miles farther west, I figured. Two hundred miles closer to health!

But I didn't know much about freight-trains in those days. During that long night it had traveled only sixty miles, I discovered a few minutes later when it slowed down and came to a stop in East Toledo. Although disappointed, I was glad to get out of the car before my companions of the night awakened.

After washing up and combing my hair in a railroad men's restaurant, I spent for breakfast a quarter of the dollar and ten cents I had with me when I left home. It was a good, substantial breakfast of wheat cakes and sirup, hot sausage and eggs, toast and coffee. I recall it distinctly now, twenty-three years later, because every bite of it tasted delicious, a new sensation to me who had never enjoyed a good appetite.

After breakfast I walked along the tracks, westward across the Miami River into Toledo. The crisp morning air was good and the sunshine bathed away some of my loneliness. It was during this walk of several miles that my psychology underwent its first subtle change. I had been living in an atmosphere shadowed with wrong thoughts—unhealthy thoughts. Heretofore I had started each day with admonitions hanging over my head—warnings to "be careful not to overheat yourself," reminders that I was not strong.

Now I swung along with my face to the west, with a song of hope singing in my heart. The fact that I was on my way, that every step I took, every mile I rode brought me nearer to health buoyed me up as doctors and pills and emulsions had ever failed to do. I imagined I could feel new, warm blood tingling through my veins. I was on the road to freedom!

I ate my supper that night in another box car on another train and when I went to sleep I had no cause to fear being "frisked." My last dime had been invested in food. Yet I did not worry about the morrow. Already I was beginning to feel self-reliant. I was beginning to prove to myself that I wasn't the weakling the people back home had labeled me.

It was still dark when I was awakened next morning by some one clubbing the bottom of my feet. I opened my eyes to see a brakeman with a lantern in one hand and a brake club in the other standing over me.

"What are you ridin' on?" he snapped when I looked up at him.

The question puzzled me. In my innocence of railroad vernacular I did not know that he was asking if I carried a union card—almost any union card was equivalent to a pass in those days—or if I had any money to give him.

I mumbled something which he evidently interpreted as an admission that I was without card or money, for he again tapped the soles of my shoes and shouted, "Unload! Unload!"

I unloaded. Going to the station I found it was deserted. In the distance were a few scattered farmhouses about which were signs of activity. Farther west along the tracks I saw two men and a boy of about my own age. Watching, I saw them leave the road-bed and enter a clump of low shrubbery.

Discovering the path they had taken, I followed it through the brush for about fifty feet. Then I came into the first "jungle" or hobo camp I had ever seen. Scattered about were boxes, tin cans, old papers and rocks highly polished by the patched breeches of the unending procession of tramps who had passed that way. In the center of this disordered household was an improvised stove built of stones. Under the stones a cheerful fire blazed. On top of them rested a blackened and badly dented coffee-pot of the boarding-house size. A wide circle of ashes testified to many similar fires in the past. In the months to come I was destined to see and participate in many jungle feasts but none ever impressed me as this, my first.

"Hello, bo!" I was greeted. "Come in but don't slam the door."

Reassured by this bit of pleasantry I advanced close to the fire and warmed my hands.

"Grab your cups, gents! Dinner is now bein' served in the baggage coach ahead," announced the man presiding over the coffee-pot.

That night was my first in a jungle. My bed was the bosom of the earth, my mattress and pillow crisp, dry leaves. The smell of the earth was sweet, the rustling leaves a soothing lullaby. As I lay on my back gazing up at the clear autumn sky doctors and medicines and dire predictions seemed a long, long way off. I felt a new strength which perhaps was not really mine.

In the next two months I learned a lot about life on the open road. I learned the language of its strange, migratory people. I became expert in boarding moving trains. I rode the rods and the tops of passenger trains. I served my apprenticeship in jungle kitchens, learning the mystery of mulligans. I slept in haystacks, under sidewalks, in barns. I learned how to hitch my belt under the air pipe on top of a passenger train and sleep without danger of rolling off. I learned to breathe deeply.

For money with which to buy the plain, wholesome food for jungle feasts I worked when necessity drove me to it. I chopped wood, cleaned windows, picked apples.

My flabby muscles grew hard. My appetite became prodigious. Day after day my arms and legs took on weight, my chest grew more expansive. The sun and wind tinted my skin with a healthy, brownish glow.

At Julesburg, Colorado, a junction on the Union Pacific Railroad over which I was traveling, I met and talked with a man who had won the same sort of fight I was making. It so happened that on that particular night a large number of tramps, hoboes and "blanket-stiffs" had congregated at the little railroad town. Emboldened by our numbers we defied John Law when he came and told us to put out our fire.

As very often happens, whisky had found its way into the camp and everything indicated that we were in for a Bacchanalian revel. On the fire there was a mulligan stew which had been "building" for three days—some one had a guitar, and above the husky-voiced cursing and yelling could be heard the favorite song of vagabondia:

Old Jay Gould said before he died,
I'll fix trains so bums can't ride,
And if they ride they'll ride the rod
And trust their lives to the hands of God.

The din was too great for ordinary conversation so I asked my new-found friend to walk with me. Away from the roisterers I asked him a number of questions about his quest for health.

He listened sympathetically while I told him of my own handicap and when I had finished halted and delivered this advice:

"Stick to the open air and sunshine. To hell with work and pride and all that rubbish. Eat in the open, sleep in the open, and if you have to work, work in the open. Don't stop in Colorado or California or any other place. Keep moving. Keep tramping. Live in the open. Eat the jungle fare. Live in the open!"

That was in early December. In the next twelve months I roamed east, west, north and south, hoboes and tramps for my companions, friends and guides, eating plain wholesome food and sleeping in the open even when bed and board were thrown in with a job as a bell-hop that I got down in New Mexico.

For one solid year I lazed in the sun or slept under the stars, or in barns, haystacks, box cars, under sidewalks or among the sand-dunes and sage-brush of the Southwest.

I was down in Texas on the first anniversary of my departure from home. I remember writing to my mother that I had gained *thirty-eight* pounds.

It was November, thirteen months after I had taken to the road, that I crossed the Arizona-California border and landed in Needles, California.

I stayed in Needles a year and nine months, doing manual labor as a machinist's helper in the Santa Fé shops. I swung a sledge-hammer when told to. I worked on the business end of a screw-jack and performed the hundred and one other labors that fall to the lot of a machinist's helper.

I gloried in work after my long year of idleness. I loved to swing a sledge-hammer, as, perhaps, no man ever loved it for $2.50 a day. A year before I had been sentenced to death, but here was I doing a man's work and doing it thoroughly! I was hard as nails. I weighed 143 pounds.

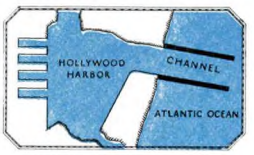
I had beaten the death sentence. I was well! I had tramped my way to health!

Now—twenty-three years later—I grow a bit impatient with the man or woman who placidly accepts a doctor's sentence, especially if he or she is suffering from no worse malady than "lung trouble."

What I did as a kid, without money, anybody with a flivver, or a small income, or a small savings-account or two legs can do. There are few toll-gates on the open road. Air and sunshine are free. Tourists' camps have taken the place, to a great extent, of the jungles of the box-car tourists. And they are more comfortable, what with their hydrants and pine-board tables and bathing facilities.

A flivver, a tent, a little courage and the *will to live* are the real passports to health.

HOLLYWOOD
BY-THE-SEA
in FLORIDA



NOTE—Construction work started last Fall on the above plan for converting Lake Mabel into Hollywood Harbor. It is a gigantic task, requiring many more months of labor before the activity shown in the large picture is realized.

FLORIDA has long needed more fine deep-water harbors for the industrial development of her tremendous and varied resources. Hollywood By-the-Sea, situated about twenty miles north of Miami, is now constructing such a harbor.

New $3,000,000 Hollywood Hotel on the Beach

Through this great new port, when completed, may flow the freight and passenger traffic of the seas, giving to industry and commerce a far wider opportunity in Florida. In addition there are other important improvements in transportation—the further development of Miami's harbor and the extension and double-tracking of railroads. To a land of perpetual summer, unsurpassed as a place to *live*, are now being added the balancing factors of enterprise and achievement.

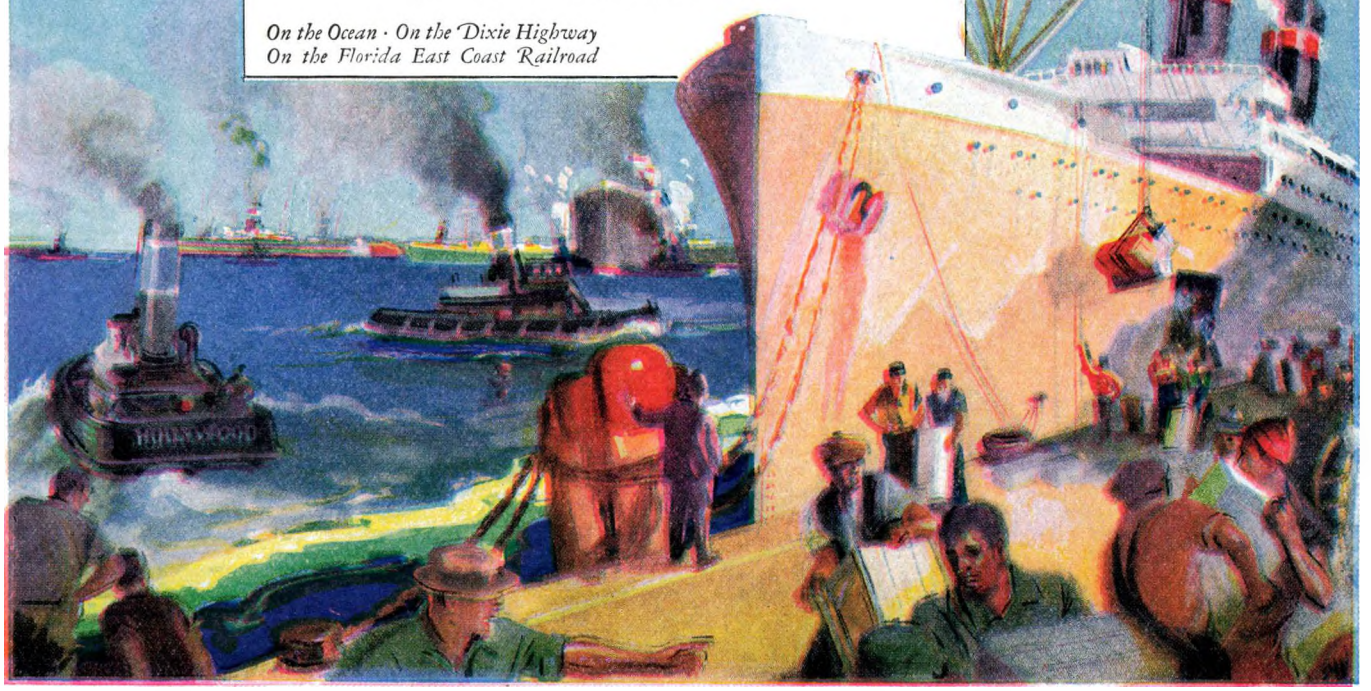
Hollywood harbor is being built at Lake Mabel, near Hollywood By-the-Sea. When completed Hollywood Harbor will have a full 25-foot depth of water in channel, in turning basin, and at the docks. And, as work on Hollywood Harbor goes forward, Hollywood is occupied with the other affairs of a thriving, year-'round city. Homes, shops, business buildings are constantly being added.

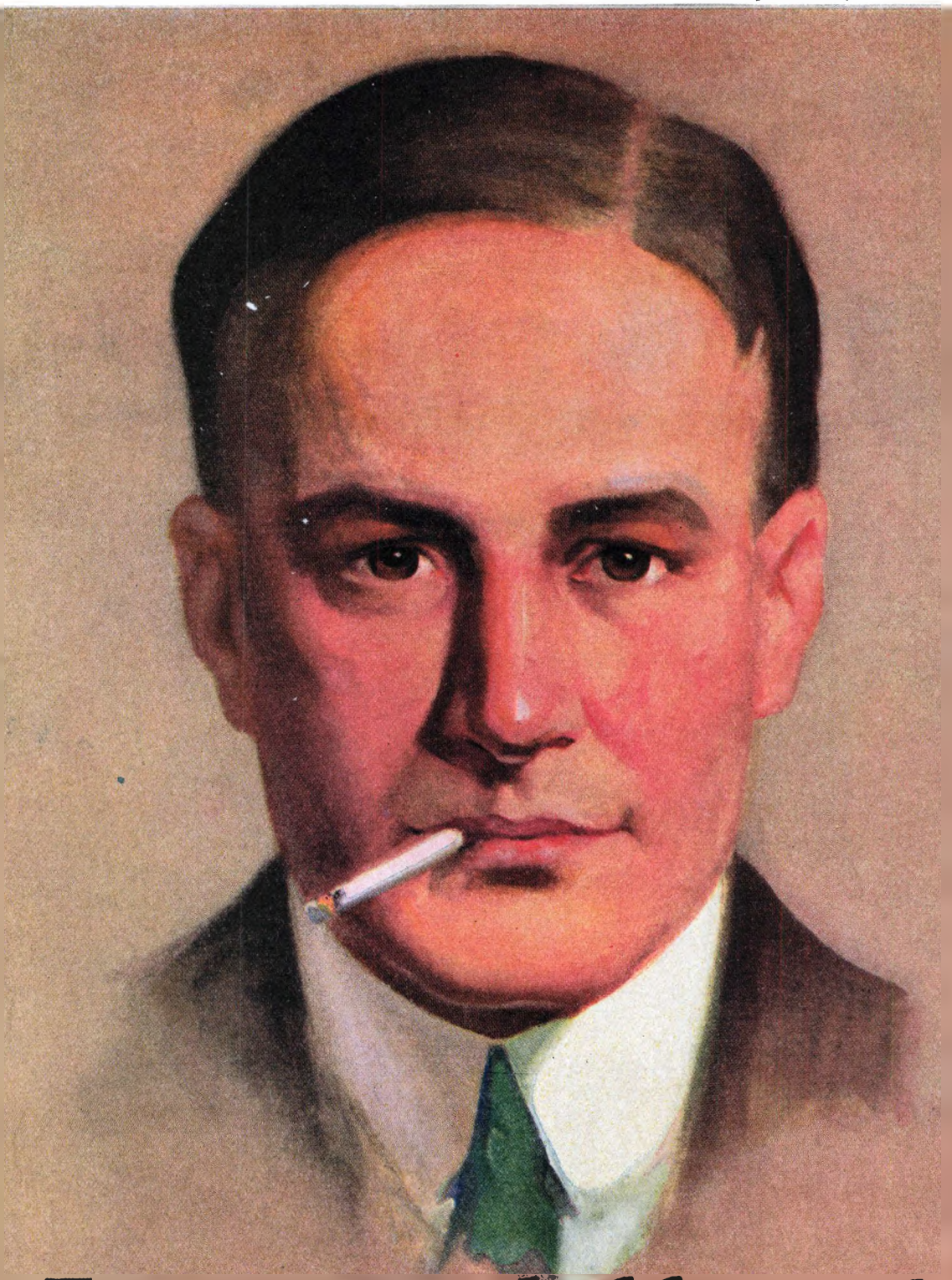
Month after month—the year 'round—Hollywood is busy with its work—and its play. The ocean beach, bathing casino, the lakes, five hotels, clubs, golf course, and paved roads open the way to every form of pleasure and recreation. Visit Hollywood By-the-Sea, when you are in Florida.

HOLLYWOOD RESORT AND INDUSTRIAL BOARD
J. W. YOUNG, *President,* Hollywood *in* Florida

On the Ocean · On the Dixie Highway
On the Florida East Coast Railroad

Future Activity in HOLLYWOOD HARBOR





Exactly as it holds its old smokers, Chesterfield wins its new ones-on taste alone

SUCH · POPULARITY · MUST · BE · DESERVED

LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.

Pig Iron *by Charles G. Norris* (*Continued from page 86*)

her guest at once at his ease. "Papa says you've just come back from the World's Fair," said Paula. "Is it so marvelous as everybody says?"

"Yes, I've been there a couple of times. It's a great show."

"Did you happen to hear Thomas's orchestra? I'd give any thing to hear them play. They say he's got a hundred first and a hundred second violins, and twenty harps!" Eugene's thin white hands twisted nervously when he spoke and his words came with breathless intentness.

"Genie's mad about music," his sister said. "Dare say you can see that," she added with a lift of her eyebrows. "Do you play, or sing?"

"Paula plays der harp und Genie der violin; dey both are preedy goot," said their father with a smile of pride.

Sam expressed the hope that some day they would play for him. "Perhaps you'll let me come again," he said.

"Oh, yes, by all means! We'll arrange it some time."

Paula had a curious way of letting her eyelids flutter shut when she spoke, effectively displaying the long, black, curling lashes, moving her head a trifle at the same time with an undulating motion of her long neck. A child, Sam thought her, just emerging from the schoolgirl age, and too sophisticated at present. Some day she would probably be a very beautiful and gracious woman like her mother, but now he was conscious of disapproval, even antagonism.

They rose and passed into the parlor.

"Well, I'll leave you two men to your business chat," Mrs. Faber said with one of her warming smiles. "And you must come again, Mr. Smith, when you can hear the music."

Paula, who was standing close to her mother, whispered in her ear.

"Sunday afternoon we generally have some young people in," Mrs. Faber said. "If you're free next Sunday, do come and join us."

Sam was conscious the girl was watching him and he suddenly met her glance with a direct look and smile. Her eyes flashed shut in their characteristic fashion, her head twisted in its birdlike way, she flushed and laughed. His eyes followed her in frank admiration as she trailed her mother from the room.

"You have a lovely girl there, Mr. Faber," he observed seriously.

"Paula? Oh, Paula's goot-looking, all right, but she's got a lot of crazy notions. She ought to seddle down. Der c'vicker she gets married der better her mama und I'll be pleased. She needs a husband vid common sense, Schmidt, a feller dat's got a head on him; none of dese moosical chaps or schoolpoys."

During the weeks that marked the close of that year, Sam had become a frequent visitor at the Faber home. He liked the atmosphere he found there; Mrs. Faber particularly delighted him and her husband grew more and more intimately his friend. Paula was the one member of the family whom, Sam had to confess, he did not like. Her beauty, her litheness and grace, her pretty, effective costumes constantly drew his admiring eyes. She presented invariably a lovely picture.

But the girl herself nettled him. She was far too young and inexperienced to act as she did. Only a few months out of school, she yet bore herself with a grand air, and affected the mature manner of a woman twice her age. Sam was ten years her senior, but she was often distinctly condescending toward him, frequently deliberately short. It was clear he did not interest her; he belonged in no sense to the crowd of young people that frequently mobbed the house.

Sam was flattered and touched by the heartiness with which the Fabers adopted him They invited him to concerts, to the theater, to Sunday afternoon teas, to simple home dinners with only the family, and once or twice to more formal affairs when there was "company." As time went on, Sam came to realize that the gracious woman who welcomed him so cordially whenever he appeared, and the man who was his employer and so frequently his host, had conceived for him a genuine affection, and towards both he returned this with enthusiasm.

Christmas Day he was obliged to divide between his uncle and aunt and the Fabers, eating a midday feast of turkey, cranberry sauce and plum pudding with the former, and another similar meal a few hours later with his hospitable friends on the West Side.

At the Fabers' he found a sizable group had gathered. A resplendent tree was decked with glittering gold and silver balls, tinsel, strings of pop-corn and cranberries; and a large bowl of claret punch and hard German cookies were being served. Most of the people present were friends of Paula and Eugene, a laughing, noisy crowd of their intimates, very few of whom Sam knew; a relative, an old friend or two of the family, chatted with Mr. or Mrs. Faber in a corner. Sam was presented here and there, but presently he gravitated to the family friends and relatives.

Paula queened it over all. She looked startlingly beautiful in a slim black lace dress. There was a comb in her black hair today, and tiny turquoise earrings in her ears. The effect was Spanish, too sophisticated, perhaps, but Sam had to admit its success. The girl was extraordinarily vital; she knew her power and made good use of it.

He watched her flashing about the room, laughing, animated, excited, rushing from group to group, and found himself wondering what kind of a woman she would make.

Mr. Faber brought him a glass of punch and carried a second in his other hand. He backed Sam nearer the wall.

"Ve'll have a leedle toast, hey, my poy? Here's to next Christmas, may ve have no vorries by den, may everyt'ing be fine dis coming year and den ven ve smile, ve'll mean it. How's dat? Vell, let's bottoms oop."

As he finished tilting his glass, Mrs. Faber, in the center of the room, began clapping her hands, trying to still the hubbub. When it had quieted, she addressed her guests.

"We have a little Christmas surprise for Mr. Faber, and I think this would be a good time to give it to him so that you all can enjoy it, too."

At her look, Paula crossed to the great gold harp standing in a corner, seated herself and drew the instrument against her shoulder. Eugene took his violin out of the case and began to tune the strings. A murmur of pleased anticipation swept the room. When this had died away, there was a moment's hush, and then brother and sister began to play. It was a long piece—much too long, Sam thought. He watched Eugene's intricate fingering and more particularly the girl's white arms, bare to the elbow where the black lace sleeve ended, moving gracefully across the harp-strings. She made a lovely picture as she sat there, and the effect was lost on no one. The applause when the music ceased was vociferous and prolonged.

Mr. Faber's eyes were wet. He pushed his way toward his son and daughter and kissed them loudly and warmly on either cheek.

"Dat vas bootiful—bootiful!" he cried again and again. "You're popper's own darlings to learn such a nice piece to play for his Christmas. Dey're smart children, don't you t'ink so?" he asked, appealing to the company, who agreed in indulgent laughter.

Shortly after six o'clock the guests of the afternoon began to depart, and presently only those who were to stay for dinner remained. Of these, besides Sam, there was a homely Miss Behlow, a cousin, and an elderly couple, also related in some distant way, whose name he did not catch.

The meal was an elaborate affair of many courses; white wine appeared with the fish and champagne with the turkey. At the end of it, Mr. Faber rose to his feet and proceeded to make a flowery and sentimental speech, but in the midst of it, stirred by his own words, he suddenly burst into tears. Sam intercepted a look from his daughter to her mother —a swift glance of the eye and an elevated brow. It was clear she thought her father affected by the wine. But Sam knew it to be otherwise, knew what heavy thoughts weighed down the man's honest soul, and what fears were rife there.

After dinner there was more music from the harp and violin, and again Sam was bored. But Paula was again a lovely sight as she sat at her gilded harp. He enjoyed watching her.

Mr. Faber pleaded for no more classical music. Please, wouldn't they play something popular? He urged his wife to go to the piano.

"Tillie can play, you know, to beat der band," he confided to Sam in a hoarse whisper. "You chust vait und see. Tillie, give us der Mikado. Aw, go on, Tillie, please der ole man; it's Christmas night."

His wife regarded him a moment with amusement, then smilingly complied. Presently Paula, Eugene and Miss Behlow were all singing, and now and then Mr. Faber broke in with the words in a loud thick voice with no reference whatsoever to the melody.

It was noticeable that now Mr. Faber was justifying Paula's earlier suspicions. He had discovered the punch-bowl in a corner of the room where it had remained from the afternoon's entertainment, had sampled its contents and found it to his liking. Again and again he had unostentatiously dipped a glass into the bowl and emptied it freely. Presently he began waving the glass in the air and when Mrs. Faber's fingers found their way to another familiar melody, he fairly bawled the words and proceeded to act them out.

Presently his wife would play no more, and shook her head at his entreaties. "No more, papa," she said, smiling; "and no more punch, either."

"Vat—no more punch? Vell, von more glass und den ve say c-vits."

"No, no—you've had plenty."

At this point the elderly couple felt the time had arrived for leave-taking; they rose to say good night. After seeing them to the front door, Mr. Faber returned to the drawing-room, his merry mood once more upon him.

"Now ve'll have some games, hey vat? Der ole folks have gone home und now ve can play cut-oops. Let's play plind-man's puff; dat's a fine game."

But his enthusiasm was promptly dashed. His wife announced she was going to bed; Paula and Miss Behlow—who was remaining until the morning with her cousin—signified their intention of doing the same.

Her husband, grumbling, let her and his children depart, while he and Sam settled themselves in easy chairs amid the disordered, fir-tree-scented room, to begin one of their rambling business talks. But first Mr. Faber with a wink had to fill his glass from the punch-bowl again, and when Sam declined to join him, tiptoe out in the direction of the kitchen and return with a bottle of beer for his guest.

They talked long past midnight, progressing from one topic to another, Mr. Faber mildly intoxicated and garrulous, Sam listening and entertained. The man told the long history of his early beginnings: how he had first met John Hartshone in 1870, how he had started in with him as bookkeeper at forty dollars a month, and how, when his uncle had died in Leipzig, he had invested his inheritance in the growing concern and he and Hartshone had established themselves in their present quarters on Canal Street.

From this he digressed to an account of his first meeting with Mrs. Faber. She had been Matilda Mehrtens, the daughter of old Hendrik Mehrtens who made the Mehrtens piano,

was well-to-do and widely known. The girl's family had strongly opposed the match because of Mr. Faber's race.

"My fadder vas a Hebrew," Mr. Faber said; "he vas born in Leipzig, and by golly Mike, he vas a good man und a prosperous von. Vat makes a man a Jew, hey? Religion? I ain'd got any. Vhere he is born? I vas born right here in Noo York and I'm as good an American as anybody dere is here. Vy call me a Jew? I ain'd a Jew because my fadder vas! By golly Mike, it makes me tired . . . Vell, Tillie's folks, dey raised a rumpus; dey didn't vant me for a son-in-law, but ve fooled 'em. Ve ran avay und got married, und der ole man said he vouldn't never give her a cent. Ve didn't care! Ve *loved* each udder und ve *vanted* each udder . . . Say, Sam, vy don't you marry Paula?"

The young man returned the other's earnest look but did not speak; his lips widened with a half-smile.

"I mean it," Mr. Faber went on earnestly. He leaned forward in his chair, elbows on either arm, and wagged a finger. "Say, I've been vanting to talk dis t'ing over vid you for a long time. Vy don't you ask Paula to be your vife? She'd make you a mighty good von und a mightly good-looking von, too.

"Tillie und I'd like to see her get a goot husband, a feller dat's got a brain on him, und is honest und a hard vorker, und has no monkey-doodle pusiness about him. Ve've talked it over und Tillie likes you und I like you. By golly Mike, I'd like to see you marry her! It vould be a mightly fine t'ing all round."

Sam laughed in embarrassment. "Why, she wouldn't *look* at me, Mr. Faber."

"How you mean? Look at you? Vy, of course, she'd look at you! Paula says she likes you fine, only, she says, you don't make no advances."

"Oh, come, Mr. Faber—I know one or two things about girls! Paula isn't the least bit interested in me. She thinks I'm too old."

"Vy, you're crazy! Perhaps you don't fancy her yourself?"

"Who? I? Why, I think Paula's one of the loveliest girls I've ever seen."

"But you don't like her, hey? Is dat it?"

"I—I like her a lot—tremendously. Why, she's—she's—I think Paula's *wonderful!*"

"You know she's got money in her own right? From her grandfadder, ole Hendrik Mehrtens. He left her a nice leedle bit."

"But you're mistaken, Mr. Faber. Paula doesn't care the snap of her fingers for me."

"How do you know? Vy don't you ask her?"

"Why, I never thought. I don't believe I ought to be talking about a wife when business is so rotten."

"Vell, you don't have to get married tomorrow! You can get engaged for a vhile und see how you get along vid von anudder. Sam, my poy—you t'ink it over. It's a great chanst for a smart young feller like you to get a vife like Paula."

It was nearly two when Sam shook hands with his host, bade him good night, and found himself in the street. It was a frosty morning, piercingly cold. He turned his steps homeward and trudged smartly on, his overcoat collar turned up and buttoned about his neck, his hands deep in his pockets.

Marry Paula Faber? That would be a curious fate for him. As he thought of her as a wife, a wave of pride rose up in him. It would be—*tremendous!*—to own such a creature, to be able to introduce her to people and have her pointed out in a crowd as Mrs. Sam Smith. Mrs. Sam Smith! His heart grew big with the thought.

He tried to imagine them married. He could not capture the picture; Paula and himself man and wife, living together in the close intimacy he had known with Evelyn! He never had had any trouble in visualizing Ruth as his wife. But there never had been any mystery about Ruth—simple, devoted, unaffected Ruth! But there *was* mystery about Paula. Good gracious—what mystery! He caught his breath thinking of it. To possess such a woman, to have her as his own! To have her bear his name—to be *his*—to have her belong to *him!* His throat tightened convulsively.

"Good Lord! That would be terrific!" His breath was a plume of white vapor in the night.

Early one morning in January he was talking over a proposed trip through Dayton, Cleveland and Columbus with Haussmann when a boy brought word that Mr. Faber wished to see him in his office immediately. Sam rose, wondering vaguely; Mr. Faber usually rang a bell for the salesmen.

He found his employer seated at his desk with clasped hands, a queer look upon his face. At once Sam grasped something had gone wrong. The man's chin and lips quivered as he spoke.

"John's dead—Hartshone! Dey chust phoned down. He vas in his bed dis morning und dey found him dead."

"I'm sorry," Sam said; "I'm—I'm *mighty* sorry, Mr. Faber."

The man before him broke suddenly. "Golly Mike," he groaned, and he shut his eyes fiercely. "Poor ole John!" Presently he straightened himself and looked up into the other's face. "I vant you to kind of stand py, my poy. Dey"—he indicated the clerks and the office force outside—"dey don't know anyt'ing about it yet. Und I don't know chust vat to do. It's a terrible t'ing to be alone."

"Perhaps you'd better go right up and see Mrs. Hartshone. She'll need you, and I dare say you can be of help. Do what you can for her and then go home. I'll telephone Mrs. Faber and tell her the news and that you're coming. Don't worry about anything down here. We'll shut up for the day and as soon as I can leave, I'll join you."

"By George, it's my birthday, too!" Sam said aloud.

He was lying in bed, staring up at the misshapen fish-like imprint that ever swam upon the plaster above his head. At four o'clock sleep had deserted him. From the first moment of consciousness, thoughts had relentlessly poured through his brain, churning, boiling, seething like a torrent. Now it was nearly six and it was time he was getting up.

He had not begrudged his wakefulness, had been content to lie and think, his gaze fixed upon his familiar totem, his thoughts busy with life, with himself, with the future, and with the great step he was to take that afternoon at four o'clock. At that hour, the Reverend Doctor James Archibald McIntosh would marry him and Paula Faber in the parlor of the bride's home. Her mother, father, brother, a few relatives and friends, Uncle Cyrus and Aunt Sarah would be present; Narcissa and her little girl, Mary, were coming down from Boston and would arrive in the course of the morning.

His birthday and his wedding-day! Twenty-nine and before evening married!

Paula Faber!

How many times he had mentally pronounced her name during the past few months! *Paula Faber!* A wonderful girl. He admired her tremendously, admired the graceful lines of her figure, the exquisite mold in which she was fashioned, the regalness of her carriage, the grace and lightness with which she walked and moved, her aristocracy and fine superiority. He longed to possess her, to have her belong to him, to make her "Mrs. Sam Smith."

Besides, there was the fortune she was bringing him. Twenty-five thousand *was* a fortune, particularly in these hard times, when money —the use of it—could be had only at usury rates. Twenty-five thousand! It meant his start. He'd make it look like twenty-five hundred thousand before he finished. Paula didn't know how lucky she was. She'd be a rich woman, and he'd be a rich man. They'd all be rich . . . Extraordinary, wasn't it? . . . Little Sam Smith of Mendon, Mass.

What an actress Paula was! Behind that dash and imperiousness there was a very satisfactory person, warm and loving, full of charming qualities. He had supposed her cold; he discovered her to be affectionate—and she could be passionate. Yet most of the time she was acting, playing a part, conscious of an audience, real or fancied. She amused him; he was devoted to her.

Until her father had put the thought into his head that Christmas night when they talked so late, it had never occurred to him that she was a girl in whom he might be interested.

Looking back now on the events that had occurred since that singular conversation, it was interesting to trace how portentously they followed one another. The hand of fate had summarily shaped and marshaled them.

First there had been a suddenly awakened interest between himself and the girl. There had sprung at once into being a play of eyes, of smiles, of manner, of word inflections; a game—a fascinating and pulse-quickening game—absorbed them, and each had found it delightful and exciting.

Less than a fortnight of this, and then Mr. Hartshone's sudden death plunged them all into an atmosphere of calamity. Sam had not viewed it so, despite the decorous demeanor he assumed. In his heart of hearts, he rejoiced. To him, it spelled salvation—his own and Mr. Faber's. Just how or why he was so sure of this, he could not have said. Not then, nor now. He had been riding his destiny, felt it, like a horse between his knees. Opportunity had come and he recognized it as his own.

One step at a time, he told himself. Immediately confronting him was the task of finding a buyer for the business and good-will of Hartshone & Faber, of finding one quickly before it closed its doors in bankruptcy. Long hours he had spent with the surviving member of the partnership, poring over the books, assembling assets, totaling resources, summing up liabilities. John Hartshone had not been in his grave twenty-four hours before Sam was trying to sell his estate to the Mammoth Tin Plate Company. Enthusiasm burned high within him, and his selling talk sounded well.

It was little Ephraim Frazee of Bush & Frazee whose eyes snapped as Sam talked. There had followed various meetings, conferences, delays, the interminable pottering of certified accountants. One asset after another had been written off as negligible. Sam had wrangled, argued, given way inch by inch.

But having hooked his fish, Sam eased him, reeled him, played him and finally landed him. Mr. Faber parted with the business that represented to him his life's work, and in return received thirty-five hundred dollars in cash.

When the deal was consummated and the fluttering bit of paper representing his interest in his old concern was handed him, Mr. Faber had studied it with knit brows and a hard-set jaw and then with fingers that trembled a little, laid it back upon the table before him.

"Vell, my poy, you've had your vay, und dere's all dat's left. Dat ain'd much to show at my age! Dere's dis house—dat's in Tillie's name—und here's my life insurance und dat's all. Der new scheme looks all right—put vhere you going to get der money to start oop again so fine und prosperous? Vhere you going to get der money to puy dis nail mill?"

Where indeed was Sam to get it? That immediately had been his next problem.

The Sampson Steel & Wire Company, located at Bayonne, New Jersey, was the nail mill which for some time he had been investigating. The enterprise was a sound one and was making money—a little even during the prevailing difficult times; and the more he familiarized himself with the business, the more satisfied he became that under a new management and with a small investment of new capital, it could be made to pay in even more profitable terms.

The only requisite they needed was money enough. The father was dead and young Mr. Sampson's interest could be purchased for

1925

Firestone's sales were $125,000,000 in 1925—a 47% increase over 1924—rounding out the Company's first quarter century. In 1925 were produced 53,000,000 tires, 3,500,000 cars, 520,000 trucks and 23,000 buses.

1925 saw the Balloon Tire—pioneered and developed by Firestone—become standard equipment on practically every make of car. Firestone Full-Size Gum-Dipped Balloons delivered 71,000 miles on a Detroit taxicab without a tire failure on any of the four wheels—a record performance. They won the International Sweepstakes at Indianapolis, May 30, with a new world's record of 101.13 miles an hour for 500 miles.

Firestone leadership is typified by these outstanding records. They clearly show the value of twenty-five years of concentrated effort upon tire manufacturing exclusively.

1926

Firestone's accomplishments in 1925, great as they have been, are sure to be exceeded in 1926.

The enormous tire output of 1926 will require additional men and machinery, and the exorbitant cost of crude rubber—around $1 per pound as compared with 35 cents per pound a year ago—will require vast increases in working capital.

Firestone—with vision to foresee and provide for these conditions—has expended over $3,500,000 in new plants and equipment and has issued $10,000,000 additional preferred stock.

Motorists should depend more than ever upon Firestone, with its long-established and rigid policy of using only the most improved methods, highest quality of materials, and advanced tire engineering—assuring Most Miles per Dollar.

The Mark of Quality

Firestone

AMERICANS SHOULD PRODUCE THEIR OWN RUBBER . . Harvey Firestone

$50,000—the property, Sam was satisfied, was worth twice that; but he did not propose to venture into this new and untried field without plenty of reserve funds. He believed that Mr. Faber and himself should have behind them as much again as the purchase price.

Mr. Faber, by mortgaging his home and borrowing upon his life insurance, could be counted upon for twenty-five, possibly thirty thousand dollars; Jerry Haines agreed to come in for three thousand more; an additional fifty thousand had to be raised somehow. On a certain day toward the end of February, when he had been discussing ways and means with Mr. Faber, the latter again mentioned his daughter's inheritance.

"Dere's Paula's money, Sam," he had said; "dere's twenty-five t'ousand dat's yours to do vat you like vid should you und she take a fancy to von anudder und get married."

Sam, his fine-pointed pencil poised over his figuring, had fixed the man opposite him with a sharp interrogative glance.

"It's der child's own money left her by her grandfadder. Dat vas ole Hendrik Mehrtens, you remember. Vhen he died he left Paula twenty-five one-t'ousand-dollar government t'ree-percents; dey're like so much gold today."

"Would she sell them? Would she be willing to put her money into this scheme on your assurance it was perfectly sound?"

"Not on my assurance," Mr. Faber had answered quickly. "I'm her fadder. I know, put I vouldn't advise her. Not me—put you—you could do it. If you vas to marry her, it vould be your say-so as to vat she did vid her money."

"Oh, that has nothing to do with it!" Sam spoke with quick impatience.

That was all that had been said about it then, but the subject had crept back into the men's conversation within the next few days.

Since the hour in which Mr. Faber had first broached to him the idea of marrying his daughter, opportunities were provided for the young people to know each other better and better. One day it had come to Sam with a shock that he and Paula were practically engaged. He was being expected to make a definite declaration, and rather awkwardly, with a thumping heart, he had done so one memorable evening, and had carried home with him upon his lips the feel of her small red mouth on his own. Satisfaction, excitement—he had known these emotions that night, and many times since. Whenever he stopped to think, it took his breath away.

And directly, urged by the press of circumstances, the girl's money had been discussed between them. If her fiancé advised it and her father approved—why, of course, she was "more than willing" to turn over to him her bonds and reinvest the proceeds of their sale in the new undertaking. Sam had explained with painstaking detail the merits and demerits of the venture, emphasizing the risk of loss. Paula, twisting her head upon her round white throat, had shaken it at him with a perplexed frown, and assured him that she was entirely satisfied to do anything with her money that he advised.

"But I don't 'advise' it, my dear. I want you to decide the matter for yourself," he had begged.

"If you and papa think it's a good scheme, then, of course, I do too. Please, Sam—I don't understand all those figures."

By the middle of March the purchase of the Sampson property was effected and the new owners incorporated under the name of the Atlas Nail & Wire Co. Mr. Faber was made president, Sam, vice-president and treasurer, Jerry Haines, secretary and superintendent. All agreed to accept minimum salaries at first, or until the new company was a proven success. Sam was satisfied, he told his associates, to leave the operation of the mill—the manufacturing part of the enterprise—entirely to their good judgment; he asked only to be given a free hand in the selling end. He made a place in that department for big Harold Webster, and as an inside office man, hired conscientious Abner Haussmann.

It had been a hard, confusing time getting started; so much had to be done at once. There was not the shadow of a doubt in Sam's mind as to the ultimate success of the undertaking; Mr. Faber with his dubiousness and Jerry Haines with his conservatism amused, often irritated him at times. There was no question about their being able to make nails, and no question about his ability to sell them, and sell them at a profit.

It was the limited capacity of the mill that would hold them back, Sam saw. Quantity meant big profits. Already he was thinking of another plant, perhaps buying a controlling interest in three or four, merging them into one big company. Then he'd be able to show the public how cheaply really good nails could be produced!

And today was his wedding-day! A Friday! He and Paula planned to spend a brief honeymoon of forty-eight hours at Atlantic City, and to be back at Bayonne on Monday morning. It was too long a time to be away, just at present—two whole days from the business—but there was no help for it. It was no way, he thought in disgust, for a man to spend his honeymoon! He knew he'd be thinking about the mill every hour he was at the seashore.

The alarm-clock on the wash-stand suddenly burst into a vibrant whirring. He roused himself with a grunt, and with a quick reach stifled its rattle. The day's program stretched before him, a long, arduous one. There was his marriage, first and foremost.

Then there were pressing matters at the mill that morning which absolutely demanded his attention. At eleven o'clock, back in New York at the Everett House, a very important meeting with Mr. Richard J. Harrison, President of the New Jersey Central, from whom he hoped to obtain some concession in freight rates. At that very hour, Narcissa and her little girl would arrive from Boston. He could not meet them, but he had promised to be home by one o'clock, and then she, his uncle and aunt, and himself, would have a quiet, happy luncheon together. Some time during this frightfully congested day, he must manage to buy his tickets for Atlantic City, and he must remember to wire the hotel for accommodations.

His clothing and the paraphernalia of his evening dress, which he was obliged to take with him, he had partly laid out by seven o'clock. To his dismay, he discovered that cut down as he would, the one suitcase was not sufficient to hold it all; he would have to purchase another.

He gulped down his coffee and caught the eight-o'clock boat that connected with the Bayonne train on the New Jersey side, and was at the mill before nine.

He was a quarter of an hour late for his appointment at the Everett House, and in consequence Mr. Harrison was disposed to be none too gracious. Sam won him to good humor again by telling him of his wedding plans for the day, and all that he was trying to accomplish at the same time. When the two men parted, it was after one; they had had a couple of drinks down-stairs at the bar, and Sam was convinced Mr. Harrison was one of the most intelligent, far-seeing men he had ever met. He hurried on to his uncle's house, light-hearted and jubilant; he had secured the promise of the President of the New Jersey Central for a lower hauling rate than he had dared to hope.

Narcissa, round and buxom, in a brown broadcloth tailor-made suit, greeted him with almost hysterical pleasure. He thought her never better-looking.

"And how are Phineas and Julia?" Sam asked.

"Oh, Phineas is fine, busy, you know, as he always is, making lots of money and rushing round the country. But Ju's not so well. She has a good deal of pain these days and doesn't eat much. She planned to come down with me, you know, but Doctor Moffett wouldn't hear of it."

The luncheon Aunt Sarah had arranged proved a long-drawn-out affair.

"Not a wedding breakfast exactly, Samuel," she explained, reaching across the corner of the table to pat his hand, "but the next best thing to it, and the best your old auntie could provide."

He was grateful, praised each dish as it appeared, but at the end of the meat course, with hesitation but determination, he declared he'd have to be excused. In another moment he was out of the house and half running up the street. There was a biting gusty wind in the pale sunshiny spring afternoon, but Sam was conscious only of an irritating heat. His collar chafed his neck and his best clothes felt binding and uncomfortable. He glanced at his hands and both were grimy. He hid the offending sight by an instinctive fisting.

It would take him a good twenty minutes to get clean and properly dressed. He couldn't go to his wedding looking like a tramp! There wasn't nearly enough time to buy the tickets and return to the house to do all that still had to be done! The tickets would have to wait until he and Paula reached the ferry. Lord! This was no way to get married—hot, flustered, nervous and excited!

He turned back, cut across Sixteenth Street and the last half-block broke into a run. He reached the steps of his uncle's house prepared to take them two at a time. A woman stood hesitating at their foot. He brushed past, jostling her a little in his hurry.

"S m! Oh, Sammy!"

He swung round and looked straight into her eyes. They stared at one another, the woman's face breaking into one of her old wistful smiles, his own remaining unmoved and expressionless. It was Evelyn!

"Don't you know me, Sammy-boy? It's Ev; you know Ev?"

He tried to speak but his throat tightened. She held out her hand timidly, but as he gazed into her pale, pinched face with its wan appeal, its straw-colored brows and lashes, a feeling of anger rose within him.

Here she was—the girl he had loved so deeply, the girl with whom he had lived for nearly a year, the girl with whom he had—had—had—oh, had known and struggled and lived everything! Emotion swept him. His jaw tightened, the blood pounded in his temples.

"Don't you remember me, Sammy-boy? Don't you remember little ole Ev?" There were tears behind the hesitating words.

"Sure," he managed gruffly.

"Well—I——" Her lips quivered as she looked quickly away up the street.

"Wha'd'you want?"

She turned swimming eyes upon him.

"Oh, nothing!" There was an attempt at lightness. "Just happened to get back to New York; thought I'd look you up and see how you was getting along."

"Don't lie," he said, his teeth still shut.

"Why—what should I lie for?" she demanded with quick defiance.

Their gaze did not falter for a long minute. Then her eyes fell and the tears she had held back splashed down her cheeks.

"D-don't—don't—don't, Sammy-boy! Don't be mean to me. I came back to find you."

"What did you leave me for?"

"Yes, ask me that! I've asked it myself a hundred times."

"What you doing now?"

She fumbled for a little ball of handkerchief in the bag she carried, trying to see through filmed eyes.

"You look sick," he said sharply.

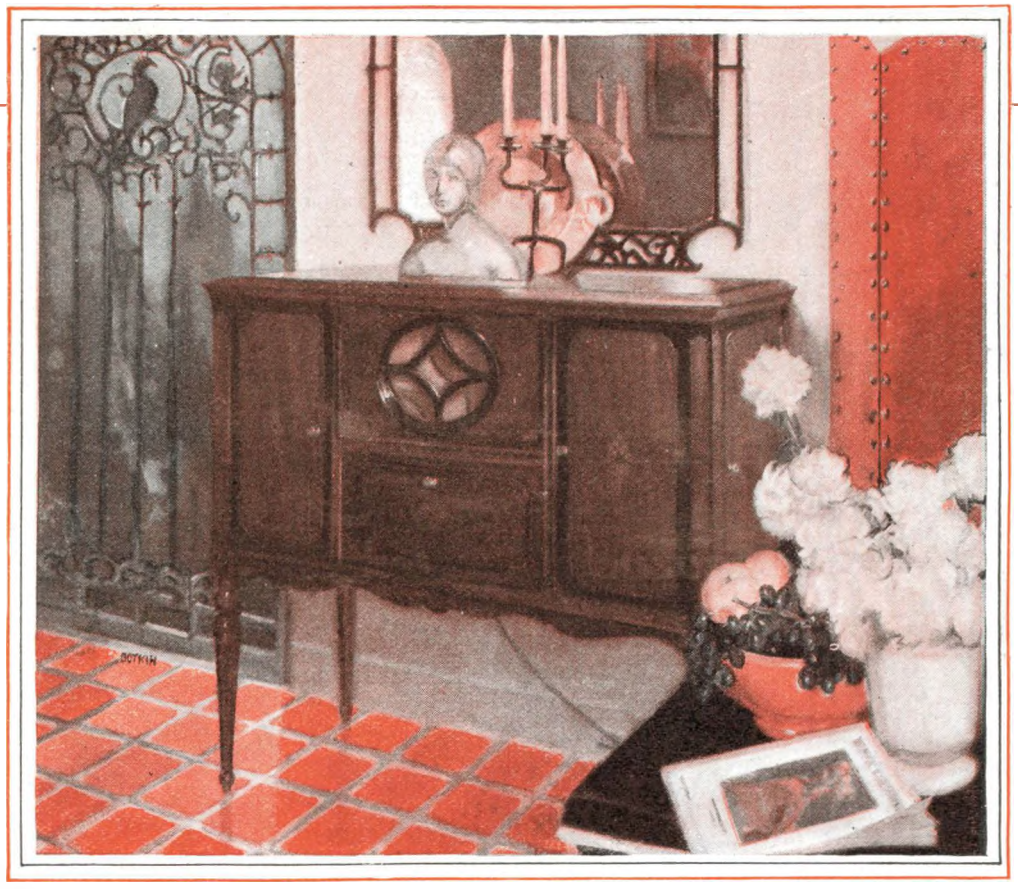
"I ain't very well. Guess it's the T. B." She tapped her chest significantly.

"You mean you have lung trouble?"

She shrugged. Now he saw she was shabby, haggard, drabbled-looking.

"Oh, that's what some of the wise birds say, but I don't believe they know what they're talking about. Don't make no diff'. Guess if I had a good square meal——"

"You're not *hungry?*"



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"Well-l, I've played in a bit of hard luck lately." Sam reached for his wallet. "Oh, I ain't taking it from *you*."

"You got to."

"Well—I ain't. You chase yourself."

"Ev, you do what I tell you!" He seized her hand and closed her fingers about a bill.

"Still the same old bossy Sammy-boy . . ." Suddenly yearning crept into her voice. "I threw my whole life away, Sammy, when I ran away from you. I ain't had a happy moment since. Oh, how good you was to me! You was always square, Sammy, an' you always treated me square. You, I guess, are the only guy I ever knew who wanted nothin' out of me but just me . . . Do you ever go by the old Christopher Street place? I did the other day, and—oh, Sammy—it was somethin' *fierce!* I left some big part of me up there in that room, Sammy, an' I'll never get it back. Goodness, we were happy! What a fool—what a blind, blithering little fool I was!"

His face stiffened, teeth clicked; he scowled at her from under knit brows. "I'm getting married this afternoon, Evelyn," he said slowly, evenly. "I'm getting married in just about half an hour."

She straightened sharply, sniffed, pressed her lips firmly together, winked, glancing up at the face of the house.

"In here?" she asked lightly.

"No; at—at the girl's home."

"Well—I wish you all kinds of luck, Sammy-boy. Lots of it." She held out her hand to him at once, smiling brightly. He took it and she gave it a squeeze. "Good luck," she repeated; "wish you every joy."

She pulled quickly away and hurried up the street. For a moment he stared after her, then suddenly snatched at his watch.

"Good Lord!" he said in disgust. "Half past three!"

"Samuel, wilt thou have this woman to be thy wife, and wilt thou pledge thy troth to her, in all love and honor, in all duty and service, in all faith and tenderness, to live with her and cherish her, according to the ordinance of God, in the holy bond of marriage?"

"I will."

The room was hot, suffocating with furnace heat, an oppressive silence of many watching people filled it. Paula, tall and beautiful, mysterious in white veilings, seemed an alien person—somebody Sam did not know at all. He was being married! An inclination to laugh suddenly caught him.

Doctor McIntosh prompted him kindly.

"I, Samuel, take thee, Paula, to be my wedded wife; and I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be thy loving and faithful husband . . ."

He bungled with the ring and attempted to put it on Paula's wrong finger. She corrected him by poking forward the right one. The glimpse of his own hands shocked him; they were callous, coarse, knuckly, like an animal's paws holding the girl's long, white, exquisite fingers . . . He wished heartily the wretched business was over.

"Let us pray."

As they rose from their knees, the clergyman held out to the bride a leviathan hand, shook hers gently, smiling blandly. Sam looked on awkwardly.

"Kiss me," Paula whispered through moveless lips, lifting her mouth.

At once there broke out a small hubbub. A blow smote the groom's shoulder. It was Mr. Faber; his eyes were glistening.

"My poy, my poy!" he cried gutturally. "Golly Mike, I'm happy. I got a fine son-in-law. I t'ank God."

He passed on to his daughter, flinging his arms roughly about the white loveliness that enveloped her, straining her to him, sobs in his voice.

"My paby, my paby—my leedle own darling paby!"

"Oh, papa—don't! You're mussing me—*dreadfully*."

Mrs. Faber, with radiant eyes, confronted Sam. "My son," she said simply and kissed him on both cheeks.

As Sam was closing the bag he had borrowed from Gene upon his belongings, his father-in-law put his head in through the door.

"Der carriage is all ready, my boy—und so is der bride! She's saying good-by to her mama now."

Sam hurried to their room. She was in her mother's arms; tears were on both their faces.

"Here he is now," Mrs. Faber said. She caught her daughter to her again, shut her eyes tight as she kissed her, then kissed Sam. "Be off with you now," she said unsteadily, "and Heaven bless you both."

There was a scramble, a shout, laughter, shrill cries, a general pushing, a rush through the hall, a shower of rice, and a plunge down the front steps.

In the street, a gathering of small boys and women; Eugene stood holding open the carriage door. With a sinking of the heart, Sam saw that the vehicle was decorated with white satin ribbons. A horrible sign, "We are just married!" dangled from the rear axle. He and Paula made a dash across the sidewalk, and Eugene slammed the door after them.

The carriage jerked, lurched forward. Shouts and cries filled the street. Every instant the vehicle gathered headway and presently was rattling briskly down the street, the din growing fainter and fainter.

"Ooo—Lord!" Sam pushed his hat on the back of his head, brushed his damp forehead with the side of his hand, and ran a finger around the inside of his collar. He was suffering with discomfort. Leaning across the luggage that had slid against his knees, he rapped on the front glass of the carriage. The coachman bent down.

"Drive into a side street and let's get rid of these confounded ribbons," shouted Sam.

The carriage turned at the next corner and stopped half-way down the block. Sam jumped out and with the coachman's aid stripped the vehicle of its telltale banners.

"Who do you suppose was responsible for all this silly nonsense?" He spoke irritably, expecting no answer. "You'd better get out and shake that rice from your dress," he continued, holding out his hand to assist his wife to alight. Then, for the first time, he noticed Paula was crying.

The night air was cold, wet and strong with the smell of the sea. The hotel bus, its seats carpet-lined, lumbered and creaked along the deserted streets. A few bundled figures hurried past dimly lighted windows, and occasional shuttered shops.

"Lord, this is kind of dismal," Sam whispered. He put his hand over his wife's, peering into the night through the blurred glass panes of the bus windows. The other passengers sat muffled and silent, hugging their wraps.

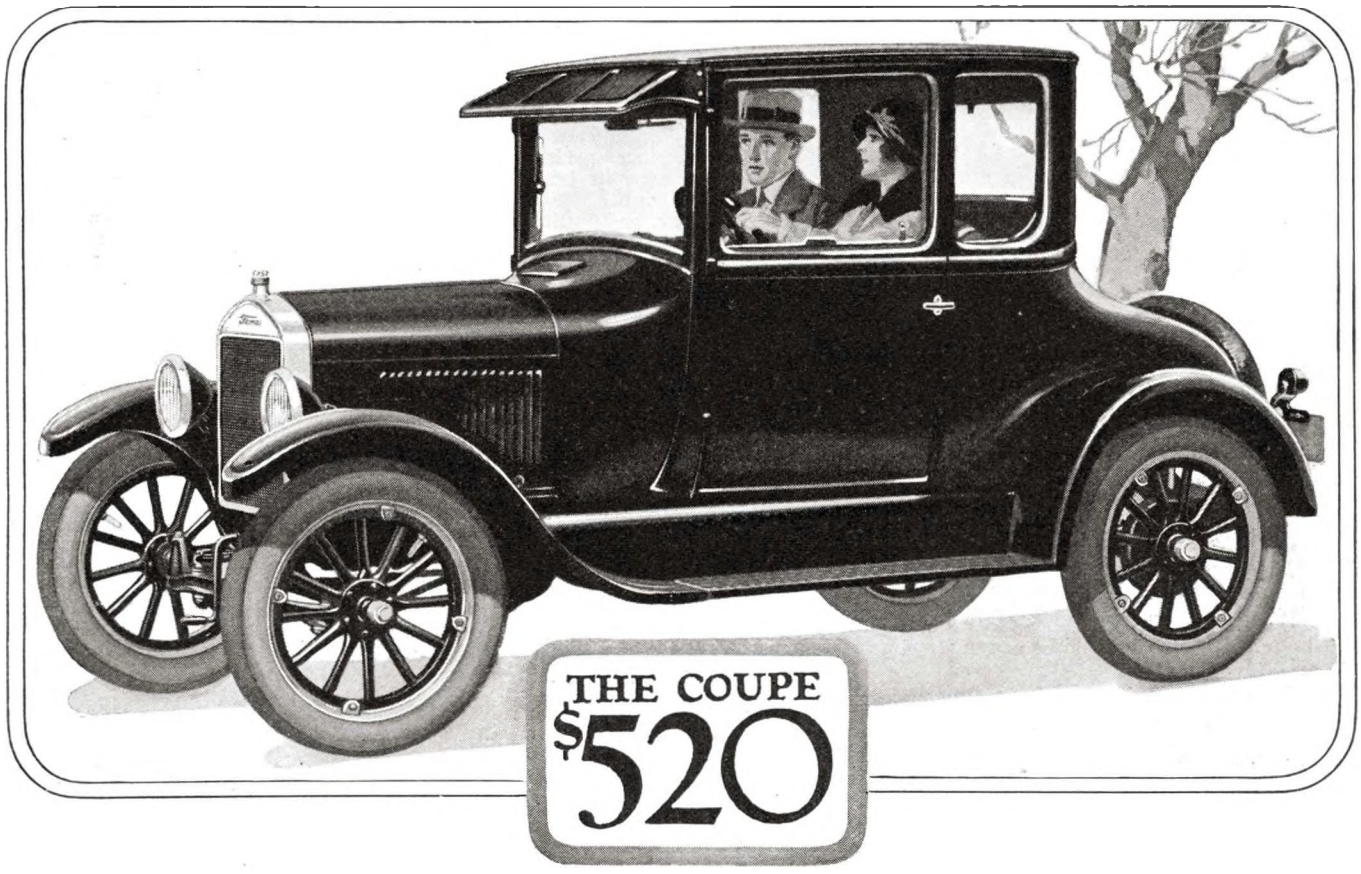
There was plenty of brightness about the great wooden barrack that was their hotel. Sam followed his wife and the laden bell-boy toward the elevator. Heads and eyes of loungers turned in Paula's wake. Her husband's heart swelled. He glanced at her figure preceding him. By George, she *was* a beauty—tall, slim, graceful, superb! A wife in a million, Sam thought; she'd always be admired, envied by women, courted by men. And she was his—*his* wife! Nobody could take her away from him now!

The room was satisfactory under Sam's quick, appraising eye. The bell-boy deposited the bags, loosened straps, pocketed a quarter and departed. Sam helped Paula off with her coat, took charge of her hat and put it on the bare shelf of the wardrobe. Then he turned to his own luggage, unpacked his dress suit and hung it up. Paula was busy with her own things. He commenced whistling carelessly.

"I think they have treated us rather decently," he observed.

"Yes," she answered indifferently.

What had happened to her usual vivacity? She was always so gay, so sparkling. It came



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to him that all day she had been subdued, silent. He glanced at her. She was only a child, after all, a little girl with a little girl's heart, grown up overnight to womanhood. Beautiful, imperious, confident in her bearing though she might be, he suspected that inside just now she was like a frightened bird, a bird caught and imprisoned in a large human hand, held fast, though gently, its heart quaking with terror of the unknown.

He went to her now, and putting his arms about her, drew her to him and kissed her. She stared up at him, her eyes wide.

"You're beautiful, Paula; do you realize how beautiful you are?" He patted her, and touched her cheek again with his lips. "I'm going down-stairs for a cigar," he told her. "I generally like to smoke for a few minutes before I turn in. You can undress and get to bed. I know you're dead tired. It's been a terribly hard day for you—and you need a good long night's sleep. I'll be back in about half an hour."

With an encouraging smile, he departed.

At the news-stand he bought himself a cigar and a copy of the Commercial Advocate, established himself in one of the luxurious leather chairs and opened the paper. At once he turned to the financial column and read the stock-market report. He had great faith in the opinion of the writer of this column.

Both the news items and the opinions he read were encouraging. Things were picking up—they were *bound* to pick up—the pendulum always swung in the opposite direction. It might take time—a year or two—but good times were ahead. A boom in industrials was certainly on the way.

The newspaper slid into his lap, and Sam looked across the lobby with eyes fixed and unseeing, but the eyes of his mind were gazing straight and far into the future, where he saw a vision. Nails, tin, iron, steel—it was to be an age of structural material. Andrew Carnegie down in Pittsburgh was leading the way. That canny Scotchman had foresight and wisdom. Sam needed no better guide. *Money*—that was what he needed! *Money*—that was what he must have! Lend him the money, and he would build a fortune. The day, the hour, was at hand. Now was the time—the psychological moment! Where could he put his hands on fifty thousand dollars—on twenty—on five?

In his intentness, his hands gripped fiercely the arms of his chair, and the joints creaked complainingly. The slight sound roused him. Over the desk the hotel clock met his eye. *Quarter to twelve!* Good Lord! He'd been sitting there in a trance for almost an hour!

He strode across the lobby, leaped up the broad stairs—no time for the elevator—and hurried down the corridor of his floor to his room. Softly turning the knob, he looked in, then entered, shutting the door gently.

As he feared, Paula was asleep, her hair in a thick braided tress like a black snake across the pillow, one bare arm flung out, the lace of her nightgown a tumbled mass of delicate white froth against the lovely warmth of her skin. Her face was matchless in its perfection with its fringe of inky lashes like two small, vivid, black-etched scimitars edging either eyelid, with its nose straight and delicate, its small red mouth—cherry-red the lips were—its warm flush that burned on the high cheek-bones.

Sam stood at the foot of the bed in the dim light of the room gazing down upon the unconscious figure. For some moments he did not move. Then a frown slowly darkened his heavy brow, and his upper lip caught the one beneath. And it was not of the lovely vision that lay before him that he was thinking, but of a thin, pale, pinched face with a wistful smile and glistening blue eyes, and in his ears he heard again a voice:

"Guess if I had a good, square meal . . . Oh, I ain't taking it from *you* . . . Well, I wish you luck, Sammy-boy."

It was June when Sam and Paula went to live in Bayonne by the Kill van Kull. He took her first to La Tourette House, and she admitted the place had charm. The lower end of Bayonne was a beautiful spot in the mid-'nineties. Tallyhoes and other equipages were driven down along the Jersey shore, their occupants enjoyed a gay luncheon at the La Tourette or the Riverside, they watched the boating from the porches of the casino or boat club, and drove home again. The Kill was spotted all day long with tiny white triangles of sails, with rowboats and puffing little tugs and steamers. Beyond its churning tide lay Port Richmond, and the green rolling expanse of Staten Island with one lovely home, surrounded by gardens, lawns and gracious trees, adjoining another.

Sam found out soon after his return from his honeymoon that commuting between the mill and his father-in-law's house took up far too much time. Paula had not been any too cheerful about going to live in the country. She was a pleasure-loving creature; she liked the theaters, and Broadway, and loved having tea with girl friends at the Waldorf, to watch all the world file past through "Peacock Alley." Sam talked very earnestly to her and tried to make her understand his hopes, ambitions, and the ultimate goal at which he was driving. But Paula did not take easily to retrenchment and self-denial, though she honestly wanted to do her part.

Since their marriage Sam had grown intensely fond of his beautiful, brilliant wife. She was a capricious woman, but she possessed, for him, a great deal of charm. Certain little-girl qualities about her never failed to move him. But it was the affectionate side of her nature that stirred him most. Tall though she was, she could curl herself up into his lap, lay her head upon his shoulder, twine her arms about his neck and cover his cheek and chin with shy little pecking kisses that never failed to send his heart knocking against his throat, and bring the prick of hurting, loving tears to his eyes. When Paula was this way with him, he was ready to give her anything in the world, to concede her whatever she might want.

With all her complexity, Paula was a reasonable and a conscientious soul. Again and again he found he could safely trust her sense of rightness and fitness. Thus it had been about the move to Bayonne. She had no desire to live there, in fact she hated the prospect, but she listened to what he had to say, and there had been no need for further urging.

After a night or two at La Tourette, they took up their residence in a boarding-house not far from the factory, which was run by a likable, buxom soul, known to her paying guests and to the neighborhood as "Babe" Baxter. The lady's correct name was Mrs. Lyman Hollister Baxter, and her husband conducted a precarious bucket-shop business in the shadow of Wall Street.

Sam and Paula occupied a front bedroom on the top floor of the Baxter establishment and shared an adjoining bathroom with a couple across the hall. For this accommodation and their meals they paid twelve dollars a week.

It was a satisfaction to Sam to observe his wife's popularity in the motley group of fellow boarders. The gold harp remained at the Faber home, but Paula also played the piano and she was constantly being called upon to try some new song. In this atmosphere, he first had occasion to note her effect on men, her manner with them and their attitude towards her. Paula challenged masculine admiration both consciously and unconsciously. If he and she happened to be alone together and a man appeared or Paula so much as caught a glimpse of one at a distance, instantly a change came over her.

Sam was not jealous. Indeed, Paula gave him no reason for jealousy. At the same time, he did not admire the manner in which she bridled in the presence of men. He considered it neither dignified nor becoming and told her so without hesitation. She did not resent his reproaches. Sitting on his knees, she would pout, and regard him with dark solemn eyes

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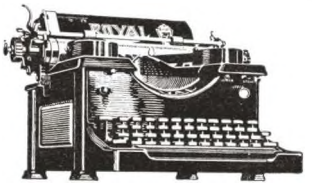

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while he gently admonished her, and then she would fling her arms around his neck, bury her face against his shoulder and whisper into his neck, between disarming kisses, that he was an old dear.

Plodding home along the shore from the factory toward six o'clock in the evening, his mind absorbed with details, details, details, Sam would often catch sight of his wife coming to meet him. She made it a habit to saunter along under the trees at this hour. Sometimes that first glimpse of her would take his breath away: her beauty was dazzling!

Always she wore white—muslin, dotted Swiss, fine linen—long, sweeping garments they were with voluminous skirts that trailed on the ground. These she caught up and carried in one hand, and twirled a yellow parasol in the other, carrying the sunshade jauntily over her shoulder. Around her slender waist was wrapped a broad white satin ribbon, and another encircled her throat. In her belt she usually tucked a yellow rose or two, or a few marigolds. She never wore a hat; her hair, glistening like a black raven's wing, rose high and smooth in a great sweep above her forehead.

People gazed after her as she walked slowly along in the tree shade beside the road. She was aware of the mild sensation she created, but she betrayed no hint of it nor gave heed to one admiring glance.

Sometimes of an evening Sam would catch her watching him critically though kindly, and when his eyes met hers, she would smile and give him an indulgent head shake.

"Hopeless," she would say.

"What d'y' mean?" he would demand.

"Oh, nothing!"

He would insist upon an explanation.

"It's just that you're so—so 'whole cloth and a yard wide,'" she would admit, slipping her arms about his neck.

"I still don't know what you're driving at, my dear."

"Well, you wouldn't," she would say, kissing him in her quick little pecking fashion.

"You're be-uuu-ti-ful!" she would tell him.

"Come on, now," he would remonstrate, "don't talk silly." He would strain her to him, tilting back her head and kissing the soft little depression at the base of her throat, thrilling, as this act always thrilled him, with tingling tremors.

Happy days of love and living these were. They respected and admired one another, they found pleasure in each other's company, they regretted partings and looked forward to reunions; they loved.

It was during this first summer in Bayonne that Sam's sister, Julia, died, and that Ruth came home on her long-deferred vacation. Narcissa wrote him at length the sad details of the former event: an operation, which all the doctors agreed could not possibly be further postponed, had been performed under the most favorable conditions and had seemed entirely successful, but four days following it, Julia had passed into a delirium and rapidly succumbed.

Sam was unable to meet the steamer that brought Ruth back from her long exile, but he and Paula, on the evening of the day she arrived, went over to his uncle's house in New York to greet her. She had not changed; it was surprising how little altered she was. He had supposed the rugged, arduous life she had lived for four years would have left some mark behind it, but when he made some mention of this she laughed in amusement.

"It isn't 'wild' or 'rugged' at all. You haven't an idea how comfortable we are. We live the simplest, the happiest of lives. Nothing ever happens and we just go on from day to day doing our work and helping our poor black friends. Oh, you don't know how thrilling, how interesting it is!"

If she had not changed in the manner Sam expected, there was a change in her, nevertheless. He began to notice it after they had talked a while. He could not find a name for it at first; she had acquired some curious quality of detachment; she appeared to view life, the tumult of events around her, New York's mad gallop, world happenings, her uncle and aunt, Sam himself, with a sort of interested aloofness, as if she found them diverting but in no way affecting her. With this was a calm serenity, an unruffled temper. Sam studied her critically. She was as different from Paula as white from black, and yet how easily he might have married her! It was hard to imagine that old feeling for her which once had swayed him.

Uncle Cyrus and Aunt Sarah were in a flutter of excitement over Ruth's presence. They hung upon her words, their eyes never left her face, and a small rivalry arose between them in waiting upon her. But underneath this happy effusiveness, their nephew detected sadness, and before he and Paula departed, he learned the reason: Ruth was going back; she was to remain in America for three months only, and then she was going back to her work—her "life-work" she called it.

On the way home, Sam told Paula all about his affair with Ruth. He was surprised at the curiosity she displayed. She probed him with questions. Ruth had been really in love with him, had she? He was sure about that? And at first he hadn't particularly cared about her? And then after he found out she cared for *him*, he began to care for *her*—was that it?

"Did you ask her to marry you, Sam?"

"Why, yes—of course, I did. I was very much in earnest."

"And did you kiss her and everything?"

"Well . . . yes. Yes, I kissed her when she left me."

"But she wouldn't marry you?"

"No, she wouldn't marry me."

"Why, do you suppose?"

Sam shrugged. There was a meditative silence.

"Well, that's the funniest thing I ever heard. Imagine! I can't get over it!"

He did not ask what she thought so "funny" about it; he was wondering, as so often during the past months he had found himself wondering, what had become of Evelyn. Somewhere in the city, she was in need, she was hungry, she was friendless.

He was devoting himself with intensity to the affairs of the company.

"Just be as patient as you can with me, Paula, my dear," he kept urging his wife these days. "I've got to see this thing through. You go on over to the city, stay with your father and mother, take 'Trude Behlow to tea at the Waldorf and have as good a time as you can. I have to be at the office tonight and tomorrow night and I don't know how many nights this month. You see, there's so much at stake. There's your father and Jerry Haines—both of 'em have put every cent they owned into this venture on my say-so. Then there's your money. I'm not going to be satisfied till that's all put back into government bonds."

"Oh, please, Sam! Don't talk so foolish. I'm not worrying about my money."

"Maybe not—but I am."

And he was worrying—terribly.

In the desperate struggle for business that was going on all over the country, every manufacturer except those in some form of alliance was underbidding his rivals. The situation the Atlas Nail & Wire Company now found itself facing was literally intolerable; it was possible to manufacture nails at eighty-seven cents a keg only at a loss! If these prices continued, the mill must close down. Sam could see no alleviation in sight unless some sort of agreement between the manufacturers was reached.

Out in Chicago, there was a certain individual, in his own particular line of industry, who was ever attracting more and more nation-wide attention, and this was the president of the Consolidated Mills—John W. Oates. Oates was a big man, Sam believed, by far the most prominent in the nail and wire business; constantly he was hearing interesting facts regarding him, and reading about him in the public press. He conceived for him a large admiration, and felt if there was any one man who could bring about a price agreement between the nail and wire manufacturers, it was Oates. One day in late September without confiding his purpose to anyone, he jumped aboard a Chicago train and the next day landed at the offices of the Consolidated.

He found John W. Oates all he had imagined him: big, powerful, energetic, a gambler, loud-voiced, reckless, illiterate and loose of speech, muscularly fat, with a huge mouth and large teeth covered by a thick red voluminous mustache. Rolling his cigar about between his lips, his feet cocked upon a chair, he listened without an interruption until Sam had finished speaking.

"What's the name of this twopenny outfit you've got down there in New Jersey?" he demanded truculently. Sam told him. "Well, you're too late," Oates bellowed. "The pool's already formed and we're going to put little fellows like you out of business."

Sam did not flinch. His jaw tightened a little as quietly he answered: "Very well. We'll shut down as long as you keep prices low but the minute you raise 'em, we'll start up again and bust you."

Oates roared his amusement. He brought his feet to the floor and his fist with a bang to the desk.

"Well, damn your impudent young soul, then come on in with us!"

"That's what I want to do," Sam replied.

It was his first meeting with John W. Oates and the beginning of their friendship. Oates was a leader, an organizer; Sam found him to be ruthless in his methods, a plunger, extravagant, a bandit in certain transactions, but circumspect to the point of absurdity in others.

The idea of forming a pool had already been conceived by Oates and its organization was practically complete at the time Sam reached Chicago. There had been no intention to exclude the Atlas plant; the success of the undertaking depended upon every manufacturer becoming part of it. Oates' pool consisted of thirty-three nail and wire mills that pledged themselves to abide by the decisions and direction of a governing board composed of one representative from each concern in the combination.

Sam spent a week in Chicago and was constantly in Oates' company. At the end of that time he returned to New York elated and confident. There was a fine taste of accomplishment in his mouth.

When Babe Baxter closed her establishment at the end of October, Sam and Paula moved back to town. They now occupied Paula's old bedroom, and it was close quarters for two. Sam did not enjoy the arrangement. If the Oates pool turned out successfully and prices improved, he was determined to move into more comfortable quarters—perhaps they would be able to rent a house in Bayonne, and furnish it.

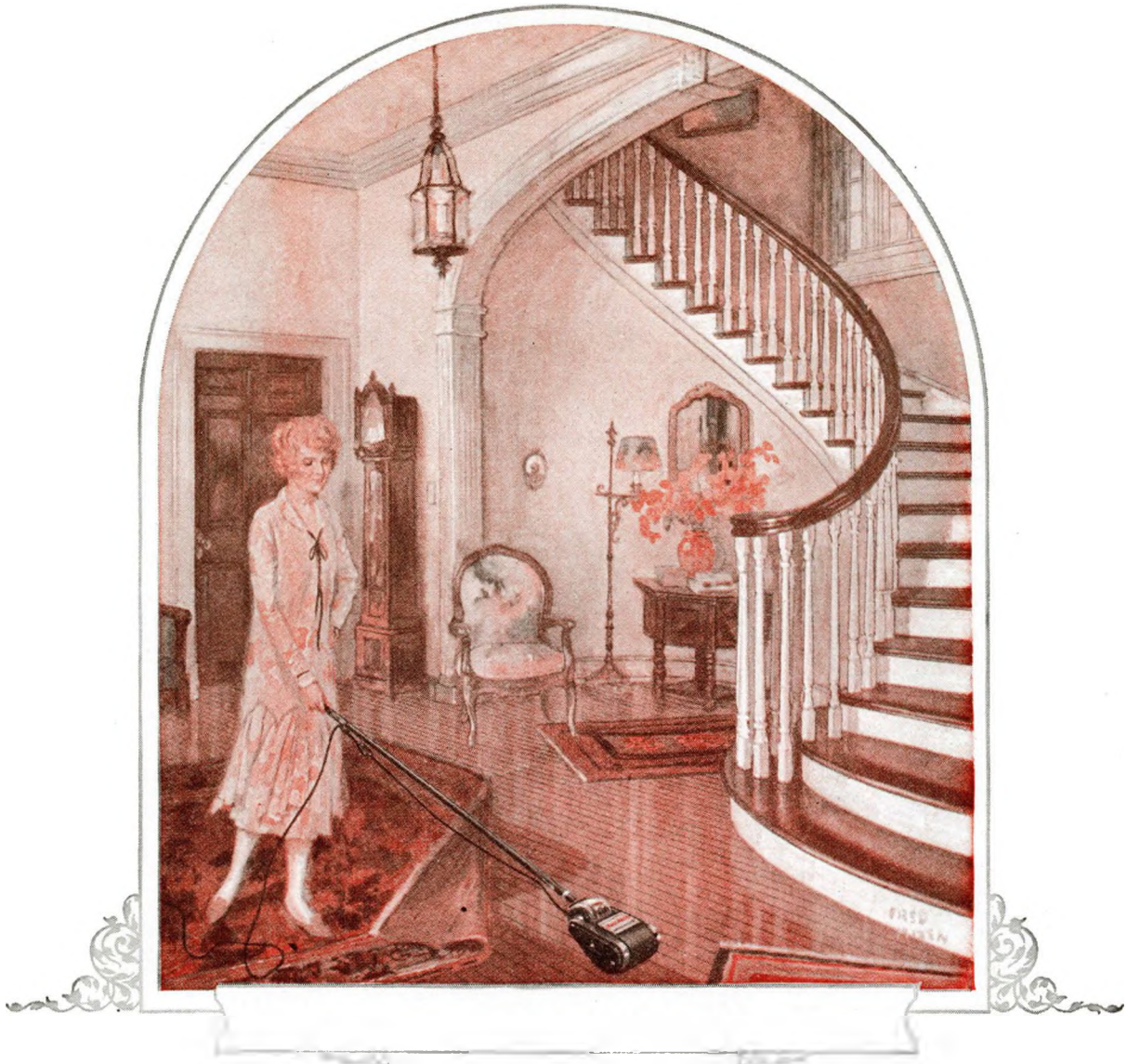
One evening in January when he came home from the mill, he found a plain envelop among his mail.

He noticed it had been redirected by his aunt from his uncle's house. It read:

> Dear Sir: There is a young woman here who asks me to write you. She wants me to say to you: "Evelyn would like to see you." I am the nurse in charge of the ward. Yours truly, Flora McWade.

The letter was headed: "City Hospital, North Brother Island, Ward II."

Next Month *you follow the spectacular career of Sam Smith on his way to becoming one of America's Captains of Industry—and you watch the curious situation that develops between him and his beautiful wife*



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Just spread on a thin, even coat of Johnson's Polishing Wax with a Lamb's-wool Mop. This cleans the floor and deposits a protecting Wax film which a few easy strokes of the Weighted Brush or Electric Polisher will quickly bring to a beautiful, durable polish.

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Johnson's Wax Electric Floor Polisher is a wonderful new labor-saver which polishes floors instantly and without effort. It runs itself—you just guide it.

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JOHNSON'S LIQUID WAX

Love o' Women *by Adela Rogers St. Johns* (Continued from page 75)

who loves much and is afraid. Still, she had cleverness. She understood a great deal about men, and she knew that vain, brilliant, erratic mind of Royce Wingate's backward. Had she not lived with it for twelve years? Who should know how to pet and pamper and flatter him if she did not? She could be amusing enough when she chose, for she had a keen wit and she had seen much of life.

Also, when she was good-natured, she rested him. No strain for him in her companionship. She made the most of that.

One night when he sat in the big chair beside the open window of her drawing-room, deep in his paper, she went to him and stood behind him, her arms drawing his head back against her bosom. She could see his face in the mirror opposite, the strikingly handsome face under the dark hair.

"We've been together a long time, haven't we, Royce?" she said, "and things have changed an awful lot since we come pretty near starving to death in Goldfield. I told you you'd succeed. You remember that? I wanted you to come down here because I knew you'd get to be a big man. But we haven't changed, have we?" You could feel the ache of her heart through the words, begging for assurance, pleading for it.

Royce Wingate patted her hand. In the mirror, above his paper, she could see that his face had hardened. "Right you are, girl," he said.

Dolly stiffened and her nostrils flared. Perhaps he did not know it himself. Obviously he had not meant it to creep through. But the ears of her spirit, listening for that love note in his voice, the one thing neither man nor woman can counterfeit, had caught instead the note of hate. Instantly she denied it. But it kept striking in her head like a gong. Hate!

"I've been awful grateful to you," she said soberly, a tall, gorgeous woman in a white and gold evening gown, "for all you've done for me."

It was her not very subtle way of reminding him of what she had done for him, of how she had given him his start when he hit Goldfield broke and discouraged.

He kissed her fingers and she yearned down, her lips on his hair. This man who had never been true to her, who never would be true to her, and yet who always came back to her. And as her lips touched him, she caught the taint of some other woman upon him. Nothing that the civilized senses could have recognized, but something as plain to her as a strange scent within his lair is plain to a tiger.

She went out of the room swiftly, and in the dining-room clung a moment to the heavy velvet portières, almost fainting. When she came back, she sat down opposite him, very quietly, her eyes soft with a kind of dumb agony. Only suffering touched her. Revenge, hatred, jealousy, rage had not raised their heads. It was one of her soft moments.

It was then that Royce Wingate, watching her over his paper, made his great mistake. He should have told her then. And it was a mistake whose cost was to be beyond anything either of them dreamed. For it was her last soft moment.

But he put the thing off because he dreaded it, as he dreaded all unpleasantness, all scenes. When the time came, he would be able to handle her, even if he had to crush her without mercy. But there was no need to subject himself to the wildness of her anger. His vanity shied away from the whole thing.

Also, though he did not know it, he hated to hurt her. He had been very fond of Dolly. If she behaved herself, she could have anything she wanted. He intended to be generous in the extreme.

The very next day one of the weeklies, a bit inclined to the daring in journalism, printed a premature announcement of the much-discussed Wingate-Cardigan engagement.

It was one of those old houses that had survived the fire—one room wide and four stories high, with the kitchen in the basement and a short flight of steps up to the front door. A trifle shabby it was, to be sure but for all that it had a certain air.

The horse came to a stop before this house, stood on his hind legs and pawed the air with dainty white forefeet.

"O-oh," said the girl on his back, "don't do that please, Rey! It always makes me giddy as giddy when you dance about like that. Do get down, lambkin."

She said it all in the softest, sweetest voice, and she looked quite terrified, with her blue eyes very round and her mouth open a little for the "O-oh" to come out, but she kept her seat perfectly, and the horse came down on all fours, trembling, but steady beneath a firm hand and a stern heel. The girl swung off, with a movement like a ballet-dancer, and flung the reins and a smile to the waiting boy.

Then she flew up the short flight of stairs. Finding the door locked, she rang and waited, very impatiently, very restlessly, and when an ancient Chinaman opened it, she said, "Why do you always lock me out, Fu?" and her smile was sweet, but her voice was a little cross.

The Chinaman never batted an eye.

"Where's mother?"

"Gone Burlingame for lunch."

"Oh dear! Well I shall——"

"Lady wait see you."

"At this time in the morning?" said Amy Cardigan, with surprise in her voice and eyebrows. But you could not be sure whether her surprise was genuine or not. Very much of the beau monde, just a little studied were the every-day emotions of this lady. And if a real feeling shook and swept her, her code decreed that it should be rigorously concealed.

The Chinaman looked past her at the big clock that stood on the mantel of the ostentatious, shabby room. "Not so early," he said. "Most eleven. You get no breakfast. Bimeby I get lunch. Lady waiting in the bookroom."

"What in the world does she want?"

"I don' know. She say something about chality, maybe."

Amy Cardigan danced across to the library. All her movements were dancers' movements. Very graceful, very effective.

A woman rose from the couch and they stood facing each other.

Dolly Wall saw a small blond girl in a black and white checked riding-habit. Two curls showed beneath the black velvet tam, and for all her fragility there was something tenacious, immovable about her. Her hand, from which she had just stripped the riding gauntlet, was bare of ornament.

Amy Cardigan saw a woman who must once have been amazingly handsome. She was still handsome. Her well-cut gown showed a superb figure. There was a dash to her. She carried the sweeping plumes and the diamonds and the furs with an air, dominating them.

But Amy's blue eyes blinked before the make-up which stood out on her hard face like a frivolous picture painted on the face of a cliff. Her chin began to quiver ever so little under the searching eager stare the woman turned upon her, but she set it firmly. She had poise, this granddaughter of Eleanor Templeton.

"Did you want to see me?" she said, with a nice dignity.

"Yes," said the woman. "I did. Very much."

Her voice was high and it grated in that mellow old library, where only soft, low voices were wont to be heard. But it awoke a kindness in Miss Cardigan. She could not bear to see people humiliated. She could not endure that anyone should be embarrassed. She felt a sudden pity for this woman, whose voice was so out of place, so harsh, in that room.

"What can I do for you?" she said.

The woman did not answer at once. Amy Cardigan wondered what she was thinking.

At last she spoke. "I came to make a contribution to your fund for the poor children," she said. "I hope it's all right to come here. I didn't know exactly."

"Oh, how kind of you!" said Amy Cardigan. "It's quite all right to come here. I'll get a form."

She went over to the desk that stood in the corner, that desk which had come across the seas to Virginia with Grandmother Templeton's grandmother. It was a very polished and stately desk, and its beauty of line made people who cared for such things stand breathless before it. But the woman who had followed Amy knew nothing of such things, nor did she so much as glance at it. Her eyes were fixed coldly upon the only photograph in the room.

When Amy looked up, she paused trembling, startled by something, all her poise and sweetness swamped by helplessness.

She had known before that this dashing woman with the hard face was not a lady. Now it rushed upon her that she might even be a bad woman, in the technical meaning of the words. The big hat with the plumes, the diamonds in the morning, the brazen make-up and the heavy perfume.

That was, of course, in the days before the Great War when there was still some difference in the way different kinds of women dressed and made up and perfumed themselves.

A wave of repulsion swept over the girl, a wave of distaste that was almost like nausea. She controlled it as best she could. But evil always affected her like that. It was not mental; it was a deep spiritual recoil that showed itself in this physical weakness.

For that reason it had never been possible for her to be friends with her aunt, the notorious Mrs. McMahon, though Mrs. McMahon had never put herself beyond the pale.

The woman saw that recoil. She had met it once or twice before in her career. And she knew instantly that it would be no use for her to speak. This girl would believe nothing such a woman as Dolly Wall had to tell her. The Dolly Walls were something apart.

"Is that the man you're going to marry?" she said, with an effort to make the question sound casual and social. "I read in the paper you were going to be married."

The girl's young eyes went back to the handsome profile, cut like a cameo against the dark background. And her face was suffused with color and light and warmth. She had forgotten everything before the pictured likeness.

"Yes," she said softly, "we're going to be married."

Dolly Wall turned away from that happiness, that confidence, the rage that was in her for a moment a righteous rage.

Good Lord, must this little flower thing be crushed for a man's ambition? Must she know, this child, the crucifixion of infidelity, the shame and humiliation of neglect, the scorched and burned spirit of a woman dragged into the depth of beastliness—man's beastliness? What could such an inmature, virginal, conventional creature as this one do to hold a man like Royce Wingate? Dolly's lip curled. He'd soon enough break that pride and trail that high hope in the dust.

She started forward, hot words on her lips. But she did not say them. What was the use? In this girl's face with its quivering chin, its delicate pallor, she saw the stubbornness of the weak, the weak who will cling and close their eyes to everything they do not wish to see. There was no language in which Dolly Wall could speak to this love-sick girl.

A great pity whipped her rage, and she went home almost convinced that this thing she meant to do was as much for the sake of Amy Cardigan as for the sake of her own revenge.

Now there were things about Royce Wingate that men liked very much. That is, they liked him strictly as a man among men. Not

How our soft and savory eatables have impaired the health of our teeth and gums

—and how by a simple addition to their daily care you may keep your gums healthy and your teeth brilliant!

A FORMAL dinner, served with pomp and ceremony, may seem quite different from a snack that you take at home, but there is one way at least in which they are very much the same.

The food at both is soft. It is deficient in fibre—utterly unstimulating to the tissue of your gums. And the gums, which much need the exercise that rough, coarse food was meant to give, are growing soft—more open to the attacks of that long list of gum troubles that seem to be so fashionably prevalent today.

How to counteract the damage soft food is doing

Sometimes the gums bleed—the tooth brush "shows pink" in the mornings. This does not necessarily mean that you have pyorrhea, for authenticated cases are few and far between. But it does mean that your gums need some daily attention, as any good dentist will readily attest.

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This massage with Ipana will help by improving the circulation, by augmenting the stimulation to the gum tissue itself and even more directly because of the ziratol content of Ipana. Ziratol is an antiseptic and hemostatic used by dentists in their work at the chair, to allay bleeding and to restore gum tissue to its normal tonicity. Ask your dentist about Ipana today! He knows it. He and thousands of others approve its good work. It was, in fact, through the help of the dental profession that Ipana first became known and famous.

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Even if your gums bother you but seldom, start your use of this delicious dentifrice today, for it not only cleans teeth safely but, with its help, you can keep your gums as they were meant to be—firm, sound and in perfect health.

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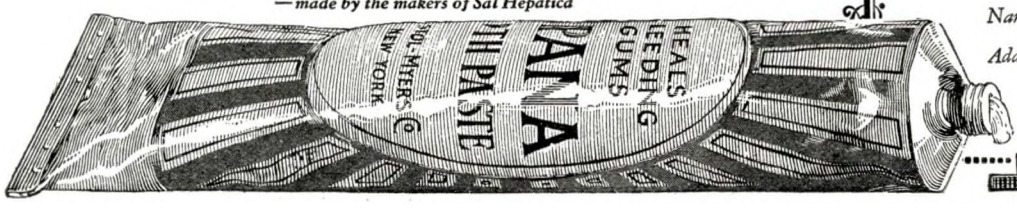

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many of them trusted him where women were concerned. He knew this and it did not please him.

But he was popular with men because he was extraordinarily clever in many ways, and he had a cold, compelling sort of nerve, and he was what has been loathsomely described as a jolly good fellow.

So that when he arose from the card-table in the big, lofty card-room of the Mercury Club upon a certain night in October, there was a general protest.

But Royce Wingate, standing tall and dark and smiling, shook his head. "I've got just sense enough to know when I'm licked," he said, peeling off some greenbacks with that quick, ready smile of his that was one of the things about him all men liked.

The famous criminal lawyer who pocketed the greenbacks allowed his steady, legal gray eyes to rest upon that large roll of greenbacks.

"I shouldn't carry that about much at night if I were you, Royce," he said, in his persuasive voice. "The gangs and the tongs have both been a little more active recently than is really a credit to our chief of police. Not that you'd mind losing the money, but it's a silly thing to get a cracked skull for."

Royce Wingate laughed out defiantly.

"I'm heeled," he said.

The lawyer raised expressive eyebrows. "Really?" he said. "The habits of a lifetime, I suppose. Even so, I'd rather not have to defend you for shooting some thug." He broke off, smiling. "Good night, then."

Royce Wingate went across the room with that free swing of his, got his hat and coat from the boy and went out into the night.

"He's a good loser," said one of the men he had left behind him.

"He's a handsome brute," said a banker tersely. "I don't like handsome men as a rule. They're too conceited."

The lawyer nodded. "I shouldn't say that Royce was without his share of conceit," he said blandly.

"I like him well enough," said the banker. "But I can't say I like the idea of his marrying a girl like Amy Cardigan. There's something rather awful about it, by glory."

"You mean because of Mrs. Wall?" asked the lawyer slowly.

"Yes, that and other things," said the banker. "He's had a rotten bad reputation with women. Not that I'm any prude or anything like that, but at the same time it makes me a little sick to see a man like that step out and marry a good, sweet, clean girl like Amy."

"He hasn't married her yet," said the lawyer.

He did not think it necessary to add that, in the way of business, he had met Mrs. Wall several times.

Royce Wingate walked along the dark, quiet streets, delighting in the mystery of this city he loved—for there is no city in the world that so wins the hearts of men as this city by the Golden Gate.

The sky was a strange Chinese blue and the stars were out, but there were wisps of fog beginning to blow about, like lace handkerchiefs, catching here and there on the lamp-posts and buildings. Adventure was in the air.

And Royce Wingate walked through the night joyously, a man ready for adventure, a man with the world at his feet, a man keen to enjoy. He had started up the hill to his hotel that hung upon one of the seven picturesque hills when he remembered an urgent message that had come to him earlier in the evening, and altered his course. He had not been to see Dolly for three days. It would be wiser to obey her summons, all things being as they were. But his face flushed darkly under this bondage.

He let himself into the apartment without knocking.

Dolly was sitting there, in a tight-fitting black velvet dinner gown, sewing under the light. She embroidered beautifully. That was one of the things she had learned years before in a convent, where she had been sent, having neither father nor mother to care for her. The nuns had commended her for her sewing, perhaps for lack of other things to commend. A hot-headed, high-tempered thing she had been even then, and they used to shake their heads over her and pray that life would lead her along safe paths. For they loved her.

Royce kissed her. Oh, the history of kisses that are given—unwanted kisses, stolen kisses, perfunctory, hateful kisses!

Her eyes were down, on the delicate bit of stuff, poppies beginning to bloom frivolously upon a green field. The lids looked dark and worn, like charred love-letters, but her face was calm. Expressionless. He hated her suddenly, as a man can hate only a woman he has wronged, is about to wrong even more greatly. He hated her because she stood the only thing that entangled him, tripped him in his wild and free roving about this new world.

"Well, Royce," she said quietly, "I hear you're going to get married."

His eyes narrowed. Under his well-cut evening clothes, that stamped him with that outward pattern of a gentleman, his muscles grew tense. He waited, but she did not say anything else. Her hands, weaving the needle in and out, were steady, competent, delicate.

Was it possible that he had spent these agonized hours of fear about what Dolly was going to do all for nothing? Maybe she had decided to keep quiet and stick him up.

"Where'd you hear all that?" he said, matching her calmness.

Oh, it was a strange calmness between them, like a thin sheet of ice above turbulent waters.

"I read it in the paper," she said, and spread the embroidery on her knee.

He jumped up, nervous, catlike. Why was it that in spite of her quietness, his nerves were jarring him all over with tiny shocks?

"Don't believe everything you see in the papers," he told her airily. "Besides, what if I was? You've probably suspected I would some day."

"I didn't believe the paper," said Dolly Wall in that quiet voice. "I went to see Miss Cardigan myself."

He towered over her menacingly. Spat an oath at her. "How dare you—did you——"

She laughed at him strangely. A soundless laugh. "Don't get excited," she said. "I didn't say a word to her. I don't suppose you want her to know much about me, hey? Well, I just wanted to see her. Woman's curiosity. I had a lot of curiosity about her."

Warily, breathing quickly, he watched her. It was not her nature to take things quietly. An imminent sense of danger crackled about him. "Well?" he shot at her impatiently.

"She's a sweet girl and a good girl," said the woman, and something hot crawled from beneath the ice of her voice, as lava crawls moltenly from the crust of a volcano. "You ought to be ashamed, trying to marry a girl like that, with what you've done. You always liked picking on good girls that never had a thought of doing wrong."

He gave a shout of laughter. "Oh, Dolly—this is too good! You as a defender of the innocent Act natural, Dolly. This isn't a melodrama."

"I'm aiming to act natural," said Dolly Wall. She swung around in her chair, very straight and still in the black velvet gown, all black and white except the striking red hair that flamed in the light. "Did you think you were going to get away with it, Royce?"

"I'll get away with anything I start, and don't you forget it," said the man arrogantly.

She shook her head. "No, I guess not. Did you think you were going to throw me over after all these years without me making a move? I didn't figure you for such a fool. Did you think after we'd been together twelve years and me being your common law wife, like I always figured I was, and being true to you, and helping you every step of the way, that you could step out and marry some good girl and get respectable? After all I've done for you and all I've been through with you?"

She was working herself up to one of her white-hot frenzies. Suddenly she looked full

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at him. And he drew back from the fire of her glance, wondering how he could ever have thought her calm. Hate had been thrown upon that fire and jealousy and revenge, and now the fire of her madness burned high, uncontrollable as the flames that sweep a prairie or a forest to ashes before them. He realized his danger.

They were back whence they came, these two. The crisis had swept them back. Dolly Wall of Goldfield and her man, adventurer and prospector, known to have at least two notches on his gun.

As they had once loved each other, so they hated each other, for there is no hate so bitter as that which is the progeny of love.

Dolly Wall put her sewing away in a little basket, a wicker basket it was, lined in scarlet satin. But her hand did not come out empty. Her fingers curled about something and she covered it as she got up and moved toward him.

"What was it that little doctor called you—the one whose girl you stole and then left her flat? 'Love-o'-Women,' wasn't it?" Her voice crept toward him like a snake, deadly, cold, poisonous. "Well, you're through being 'Love-o'-Women' from tonight. I guess maybe you think that girl would still want you if you wasn't quite so handsome as you are. Maybe she would.

"But I guess her folks won't be quite so anxious for you as a son-in-law once I get my brand on you. I haven't got anything to lose by a scandal, but you have. I'll make your name a laughing-stock with them that think you're so grand. I'm going to fix you so there won't be any woman want you again as long as you live. I'm going to see to it you don't put no other woman through the hell you've put me through for twelve years."

Her fingers uncurled. The sight of that red label, its silly childish skull and cross-bones, paralyzed him for a moment with fear beyond anything he had ever known in his life.

In that moment she screamed at him, "I'll show you whether you can throw me over for another woman and get away with it."

Her arm went up.

But she never hurled the acid with which she had meant to ravage the handsome face of the man who was about to leave her.

Royce Wingate was still quick on the draw.

A telephone stood upon the stand beside Dolly's bed, with its gay blue satin counterpane. To it went a man, still holding himself with an iron nerve, obeying the one voice that could be heard distinctly in the clamor of his soul—the voice of self-preservation.

Now there was a legend in San Francisco that the famous criminal lawyer with whom Royce Wingate had played poker upon that night in October never slept. The looms of crime weave most often in the dark.

When the telephone beside his bed rang, sharp and furious, he put down his book and answered it coolly. It might mean everything to that caller through the night to hear a cool, collected voice. For a call at that hour usually meant that some strange and terrible thing had happened in the dark, mysterious city.

This time he lay still for a long moment, the telephone held before him on the white bedspread, listening, his face tense and white, like a man who thinks in disastrous emergency at top speed.

"Let me get this straight," he said into the telephone, "and be sure you understand me. You say that Mrs. Wall threw a bottle of acid in your face and that you were blinded by it and driven temporarily insane by the pain, and you shot her in self-defense. Wasn't that what you meant to say?"

The lawyer waited, and then he said very slowly and distinctly, so that a man in great mental stress might be forced to listen: "Well, Royce, it's a good thing for you she threw the acid first. There's a prejudice against killing women, especially under such circumstances as the prosecution can prove in your case. I don't believe I'd have much chance of getting you off if she hadn't thrown that acid. You better get a doctor and give yourself up, and I'll dress and come down to the station at once."

It was very still in the room. A room can never be quite so still as after the noise of a shot. Civilization hangs suspended.

In that stillness, the man did not move for what to him was a long time. How long it was he would never know. Only that it was longer than all the rest of his life. Oh, it was!

A long, low-lighted drawing-room. A woman in black velvet lying so quietly upon the floor, one hand curled under her cheek. A man, standing still, sweat pouring down his face.

When he moved, it was to lay down upon a chair the thing he still clutched in his hand. No need to touch her. His aim had completed the breaking of her heart, that was all.

And suddenly he felt alone—as though this woman who lay so quiet, in leaving him had left him friendless, loveless, forever forlorn. As though this quiet woman were the only person in the world who had really loved him.

The light from the lamp missed her, all but the right hand that had flung clear of her, the fingers still curled about that bottle she had taken from her gay work-basket. If only they could go back to that!

At sight of that bottle he gave a dry, quick sob, an angry sob. He knew well enough what the lawyer had meant. Plain, his subtle commands were to this man. And in him there rose a passion of protest, of outraged vanity, of horror, of utter, utter despair.

He cried, "Dolly! Dolly!"

It was almost as though he pleaded with her. Never before had she failed him. Surely, no matter what lay between, she would manage somehow to fight her way back to him, since he needed her so desperately.

Why, he actually saw her struggling against a black wall of space that would not yield, striving to come back to him. Fighting with all her terrible, terrible loyalty, back to the man who could never be true to her.

"Dolly—for God's sake, Dolly!"

A man calling piteously to a woman who for the first time did not crawl to answer him.

He wouldn't do it. He'd rather die. But from the thought of death with its mystery he recoiled, beaten. They couldn't hang him, though. He'd fight. He was Royce Wingate, ruler of millions and millions.

And all the time he knew that his lies and his bluster were no use to him any more, nor ever would be. He wanted one thing—to be decent, to be clean. He knew that he would sell his soul for purity, and could not buy.

He thought for the first time of that Persian kitten of a girl. Her little chin quivered when she spoke to him. Surely she was purity. Surely she would love him, even though he must do this thing that the lawyer had told him to do.

But the thought of Amy left him athirst, like a picture of water before a man dying of thirst.

He knelt and touched the bottle.

Before him lay that calm white face. This woman who had loved him. This woman who had climbed out of the pit for his sake. Why, love had lifted her up, raised her up. If he had asked higher things of her, would she not somehow have achieved them?

Poor Dolly. Come, like so many of her sisterhood, to this violent end.

All the steps by which she had come to this were plain before him. He could see her leaving the narrow old house by the Presidio, white with pain, burned with agony. He could see her yielding little by little before the surging tide of her jealousy. He could see her ready to strike at last, as a wounded tiger strikes.

The drug store. The simpering clerk, staring curiously at the painted woman in the plumed hat. The poison register. The squat, wide-mouthed bottle.

Why hadn't he helped her to control the demon of anger? Why hadn't he loved her as she deserved to be loved? What had he to do with delicate Persian kittens? He—adventurer, mountebank, gunman. Who was he to set himself above a woman the price of whose sins he had not scrupled to share? If only he'd stood by her!

He had always wanted women. Well, there were still women in the world who did not lie quiet, as she lay quiet.

But he shut his eyes, that burned like the eyes of men who came to Goldfield across the desert, for he knew now that he had loved this woman, and this woman only.

Everything had melted away at that pistol-shot like some silly magician's trick at the theater. His silly ambitions. His hollow mock of success. Even, bitterly, his pleasures. They stood alone, he and the woman he had killed.

Ah, and had she not been pure, this woman who had loved him? Since she had loved him, had she not been wholly pure, utterly faithful?

He sobbed aloud, wrenched by those sobs, stabbed by them. And the ghosts of many other women came to torment him as he knelt there, shaking the skeletons of dead joys, for which he must pay such a price because he had killed the thing he loved.

He tried to tear his thought away from the bottle that lay in Dolly Wall's quiet hand. It seemed too terrible that he must take this thing from her dead hand and do with it the very thing he had killed her to keep her from doing. He must go through with the horror he had committed murder to escape. Death could not halt the retribution she had planned for him.

His soul, steeped in vanity, craven with desire, foul with indulgence, stood face to face with the gallows, with a prison cell, in which they might pen him for life.

If only he could go back. If only he could wipe away some of the horror. If only he could be clean! It could not have been that Dolly spoke to him then. It could not have been.

But a voice spoke to him.

"The consuming fire!"

He was not alone in that room, then. Something was there, some one to help even such as he. "The consuming fire." To burn away the filth. To consume the dross. To destroy the Judas beauty of evil that had brought him to this sad place.

He took the bottle from her hand, and though he was weak with the ravages that had passed over him, his hand was steady as he prepared to pay that strangely just reckoning Dolly Wall had ordained for him.

As the men at the club had said, he was a vain, handsome brute, but he had nerve.

The jury acquitted him, having decided after seventy-two hours of deliberation that he had fired under the agony and surprise of the woman's attack upon him with the acid, and in obedience to that irresistible instinct for self-defense which is deep-rooted in every man.

A tough case to win, that one, and one which added much luster to the crown of the famous criminal lawyer who fought it through, for as he had said in that mysterious telephone command, there is a prejudice against men who kill women.

It had even been necessary once, when he was on the witness-stand, for Royce Wingate to lift the bandages that still swathed his face, that the jurymen might see what no one else had ever seen.

"Well, my dear," said the lawyer to his wife that night, "that's over, and I think I'm to be congratulated."

"Well, I don't," said his wife angrily. "He should have been hung! Even if she was a wicked woman, he had no right to just shoot her like that. She certainly paid for anything she'd ever done. And poor little Amy, in spite of even her uncle, the Bishop, trying to talk her out of it, going into that convent where she was brought up and breaking her mother's heart. I say he should have been *hung*."

"It would have been easier for him, of course," said the lawyer. "It always is. I don't envy him the rest of his life. Do you?"

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CAROLINE: *Why wouldn't you dance with that tall man with the red domino?*

ELIZABETH: *The red domino didn't deceive me, my dear.*

Ellen Begins at Home *by Kathleen Norris* *(Continued from page 43)*

really did not see at all, as a matter of fact.

After Jessie left she and Clem were to pick up Bessie Reilly and her beau and go off in the car for the day. But the thought of Jessie haunted Ellen. A mother who kicked her out, a quarrelsome father, a brother whose arm was sore, a cousin whose house was no fit place for a young girl—these things came between Ellen and the leisurely beauty of a spring day in Clem's car.

A few days later she sought out Jessie's home, in the smoky West Thirties. The dirty streets were crowded with children and garbage tins and drifting papers and curb-carts. Ellen, threading her way in the noon sunshine between staring idlers, found the Slater name filthily scrawled upon a mail-box that was broken and useless, and mounted three flights of dark and noisome stairs.

Mrs. Slater, in incredibly dirty and worn garments that were superimposed upon apparently dirtier and even more worn others, eyed her visitor truculently from a welter of cheap kitchen furnishings all in the last stages of age, disintegration and dirt.

The mere mention of Jessie's name started her mother on a wild burst of bitter denunciation. Jessie was like her papa, who never brought a cent home to his wife and children. Jessie was going to go like her big sister—Etta was no good. Everyone knew that Harry Slater had a woman in the Bronx. The lady could ast anybody.

Ellen's healthy soul sickened at the details, at the thought of sly-eyed, canny little Jessie caught here in this trap. Jessie's mother told of fights, "the time her papa took a strap to her," not, as might have been supposed, for more obvious reasons but because Jessie wouldn't hand him her money.

"She useter work down on Long Island," ran the maternal story, "but her papa would go hang round the place and the lady fired her. She felt awful bad; she wanted to get another place—she's a kinder shy, slow girl, Jessie is."

Shy? Slow? Ellen tried to fit the adjectives to her charge and wondered. If Jessie had ever naturally been shy and slow, then she had had a poor chance for the preservation of these qualities.

Mrs. Slater's financial troubles, her kidney trouble and backache, however, were far more absorbing to her than anything that had to do with Jessie. She reluctantly admitted that when the girl worked regularly in one of the near-by factories she had almost constant headaches.

"I'll show you what I give her," she said, selecting from a jumble of medicine bottles one that appeared particularly deadly. "Medicine costs me an awful lot," she added resentfully.

A sore-mouthed child, one of Jessie's two smaller sisters, now came upon the scene with a package of pork-chops and potato-chips and spongy doughnuts from the delicacy store.

"Ma, I got to get back to school," she whined.

"Wait a minute, will you!" the woman said, with an incredible swift ferocity. And she flung a pork-chop into a warm, greasy pan. Ellen, departing sick-hearted, saw the little girl begin to tear indifferently at a doughnut as she awaited her meal.

"We've always been poor, Clem," she told her husband later, "but, my goodness, I never saw anything as awful as that before. This horrible woman, Jessie's mother, knew every movie star, and after all pork-chops and potato chips cost something, but the *filth* of it, the lazy, dirty *poverty* of it!

"I thought of ma's feather rolls and creamed chicken and the fun we all used to have Saturday nights!" she burst out again, after a pause during which Clem had merely placed little kisses on her bare arm, making no comment. "And of how we all used to be dressed up for Sundays, and meet the Callahans and the Olivers walking to church."

"What can you do for her, darling?" Clem asked, in another long silence.

"Oh, I don't know." Ellen sighed deeply. "It seems hopeless," she said.

Jessie came to see her for three successive Sundays, sitting timidly on the edge of a chair, looking wisely at Ellen before she dutifully answered the other girl's questions. "I want to be a young lady," she stated.

"A young lady?"

"Yep. With clo'es," elucidated Jessie.

"Well, but—but don't all girls grow up to be young ladies?"

"You bet your life they don't! My sister ain't one. She's with that feller now," Jessie narrated dispassionately. "Ma and pop had an awful fight last night," she added. "My sisters run out in the street, yellin'."

"Jessie, you couldn't ever have a caller in your own home, could you?"

"No, ma'am. Mama'd be mad."

"Who"—Ellen was flinging her hook about carelessly over the unplumbed waters—"who washes your clothes for you?"

"Sometimes I wash out a waist," volunteered Jessie.

"Your mother doesn't do any washing?"

"No, ma'am. She don't like housework."

"Well—but she cooks dinner?"

"Not often she don't. My sisters cook good."

And after these profoundly unsatisfying interviews Jessie would elegantly depart again, jingling her little bangles and bag.

Ellen in despair went to see Miss Carrie in the big clean office from which, like the tentacles of an octopus, rescue work for the city's girls was incessantly reaching, spreading, seizing. Twenty-two hundred little girls had passed through Miss Carrie's clean maidenly hands in a dozen years.

"How can Jessie possibly keep straight as things are now?" Ellen demanded passionately.

"She can't," Caroline Jenkins admitted, making a note on a card.

"But, Miss Carrie, what can we do?"

"Not much." Miss Carrie signed a check, blotted it.

"Can't we take her away from that awful mother?"

"And put her where? It's a bad case," the older woman said. "The mother's bad. The girl ran away once and lived with an aunt, or rather an uncle's wife—that was worse. She didn't know what she'd got into, and we sent her up to the Shelter for a few months while the aunt and uncle were up in court.

"Now she's out again, back with her parents. The father's been up on all sorts of charges; he makes money enough—it isn't that. It's simply that they are bad people. We got Jessie a job down on Long Island once—she loved it. It wasn't an easy job either, a doctor's wife who had four babies, but Jessie was fine with them—except that this precious father of hers used to hang around trying to get her money and her mother would keep her in town, whenever she came home, on some pretext of being ill.

"Well, my dear Ellen," Miss Carrie added, "there are thousands of homes like that in this city, thousands of lazy, dirty women poisoning their children's souls and bodies all day long—what can you do? Nothing, until they become criminals or wards of the city."

"Well, mama never wrote articles for the magazines about housekeeping," Ellen said. "I've seen our kitchen look pretty mussy sometimes. But the fun we used to have—and the meals!"

"Don't compare the two," Miss Carrie, glancing through a typewritten list, said quickly. "It isn't the outer dirt after all, Ellen. It's dirt inside that ruins these poor little girls—thousands of them, every year. You had your religion, your love for each other, your mother to stop you if the conversation got too reckless."

"Stop us!" Ellen recalled, with a laugh. "Paste us in the jaw, you mean! One ugly word in ma's house——"

"Well, exactly. You adored each other, laughed at trouble—that's the difference. This Slater woman, and lots of others, is a sickly, poisoned, resentful, ignorant creature, who never should have married much less brought other wretched beings into the world at all."

"Mama's gone back to my brother's wife now," Ellen said after a pause. "I've got that room——"

"No, don't do that. Don't consider it. You don't know these girls. She might have you and your husband all mixed into some blackmail case."

Ellen shuddered. She bit her full red underlip, frowning, considering.

"This," Miss Carrie said, sealing a long envelop and securing it with a pound of her clean, thin fist, "this is the phase of it that astonishes me. This poor girl, Jessie, will go on this way for a few months; then she'll get into 'trouble.' A baby—a dear little innocent, unconscious human being, perhaps with seventy years of weak will and weak brain to face, will be dragged into it . . . My young man died in Manila twenty-five years ago, fighting," she volunteered. "I'd planned for a houseful of children, children whose mother wanted them, loved them, bought them rompers and skates! Well, no matter."

There was a silence broken only by the scratch of the older woman's pen. Then the telephone bell rang suddenly and after it was answered Ellen went away.

"No way! No way! No way!" her thoughts buzzed as she threaded the bright streets. "I couldn't do anything for her really," Ellen mused. "Not if I saw her every day. It's all done—the mischief is done! Poor little Jessie. I'll try to see her oftener. I'll try to get down there tomorrow."

However, even though Jessie did not come to see her as usual on Sunday, Ellen did not manage to call on the Slaters that week. It was a full week.

Clem, in the first place, had to go to Boston and Ellen went too. The two-day visit proved to be eight and they got back to their own apartment only twenty-four hours too late for Jessie's Sunday call. On the third Sunday she did not appear.

And then befell the miracle, and Ellen had two or three dazed days trying to accustom her thoughts to it. Clem was in ecstasies of course—hadn't they always wanted one! Ellen was happy too but a little frightened—a little bewildered. Her mother came from Jersey to see her, accompanied by Dan Murphy's young widow, and Ellen sat for a whole afternoon under the big trees in the Park with baby Danny in her lap, thinking—thinking. Lizzie-Kate wrote enthusiastically, tenderly, from her crowded house; measles had seized violently upon the young Kanes, but Lizzie-Kate would come in to see Ellen as soon as she could find a free afternoon.

And thus three weeks fled by with no word from Jessie. Ellen, when a final cool day came, foggy and silent and dripping, was horrified upon reaching the Slaters' fetid tenement to learn that Jessie had disappeared almost a month before—run away, nobody could find her. Her mother shrilled the news with a sort of ghoulish triumph.

Miss Carrie, to whom Ellen rushed wild-eyed, was calm.

"It's not your fault, Ellen; don't have it on your mind," Miss Carrie said soothingly. "It's the regular history of these cases, and we can always console ourselves that by the time we get hold of such a girl at all it's years too late! Now and then it works, and that makes the whole machinery worth while. And now and then they do learn something—even if it's after years."

Early in July, though the sun blazed mercilessly, Ellen announced cheerfully at the breakfast-table that she meant to go down to Flushing for a three-day visit with Lizzie-Kate.

"It's weeks since I've seen her, Clem," she said, "and the children have had measles and everything."

Lizzie-Kate lived in a quiet side-street of the sprawling country town. When Ellen walked slowly through the yard the silence of burning mid-summer held the tree-shaded street and the house. Not a chicken peeped; the Kanes' half-breed dog, lying in the shade, merely flapped a languid tail in recognition of a visitor. Flurry and Joe, the small sons of the house, were not as usual digging and murmuring under the lilacs, and the baby's chair or coach or wagon was not in sight.

Asleep, maybe—the whole crowd. Ellen mounted the step noiselessly and crossed the porch to turn the knob of the kitchen door gently.

Looking into the kitchen she stood for a full minute stupefied with amazement and fear. There was no sound. Yet they were all there—Lizzie Kate and the three babies. The smallest, young Frank, was in his high-chair, great tears arrested in his blue baby eyes, a tremble stopped midway upon his smeared and crusted little mouth. He moved his frightened baby glance to Ellen; his lip began to tremble again.

A single iron bed, intrusive and unwieldy, had been moved into the kitchen and in it were Flurry and Joseph, aged six and four, sitting up in draggled little canton-flannel nightgowns in a welter of papers, comic supplements, games, blocks, dishes, dolls and toy animals and staring straight ahead of them with the same appalled expression that had so altered the baby's little face.

But what horrified Ellen and gave her the clue to the whole scene was the fourth occupant of the hot and cluttered room, Lizzie-Kate's self, sunk in a chair at the end of the table, the untidy head bowed on her outflung arm, the thin shoulders shaking with sobs.

Lizzie-Kate, the tireless, the undiscouraged, the angelic! Ellen felt a moment of panic as baseless as the babies' own.

"Lizzie-Kate—for heaven's sakes——" she stammered.

The other woman's head came up with a jerk; she was on her feet, her draggled gingham apron at her eyes.

"Lizzie-Kate, what is it?" Ellen gasped.

"Ellen, darling, and as pretty as a peach!" Lizzie-Kate said instead of answering, in a gulpy, wet parody of her own warm voice. "Well, children, look who's come to see us! What's *what?*" she asked, with a great feint of innocence, wiping her nose and putting one hand to her tumbled hair. But suddenly, as Ellen continued to stand aghast staring at her, her brave attempt to indicate that nothing was amiss faltered a little and she began to laugh almost as violently as she had recently been sobbing. "They've all been quarantined for three weeks on me," she stammered, between gales of mirth. "Even Aunt Aggie Callahan nor Kate Oliver couldn't come to see me because of the other children and sometimes——

"Sometimes," Lizzie-Kate repeated composedly, pinning up her tumbled hair and speaking in a cold, weary voice, "they almost drive me crazy. Well, don't stare at mama that way, lovey," she said tenderly, taking the baby into her arms as she sat down in her creaking rocker—the rocker her old mother always called "the thraveler of the wor'rld." "Just before you came in—sit down, Ellen dear," resumed Lizzie-Kate, "what with Flurry and Joe yelling like banshees and the baby burning his finger, I just bawled at them. 'Shut *up*—every one of you, for the love of Pete!' I said, and I guess I scared the poor little things to death."

The children's joy at this sudden return to normality impressed Ellen as did the usually calm Lizzie-Kate's air of excitement and tension. The kitchen was in hopeless disorder. It reminded Ellen of something—some place—not a pleasant likeness either, but she must find it. Ah! It was like the Slater kitchen. Ellen's face grew red.

"I've not seen anybody but Frank and he's been working hard, poor fellow, and has an awful boil behind his ear," Lizzie-Kate was saying. "Mama couldn't come because of Moira's little Danny, and for days and days and days nobody's been near me. I thought I'd lose my mind with them all."

She leaned an elbow on the table; the baby slipped to the floor and began to trot investigatingly about. Ellen looked sharply at her sister's bowed head—it wasn't like Lizzie-Kate to cry! But there were tears slipping down under the thin fingers.

"I'm so glad to see you, Ellen," faltered Lizzie-Kate. "Wait until I run up and slip on a clean apron and then we'll talk ourselves to death. I'm just hungry for all the news."

"Lissen," Ellen said decidedly, tying about her own slim waist the none-too-fresh apron that was hanging by the sink, "I've come to stay—a week, if you want me! But now lissen, I'll walk right out of the house this minute if you don't go straight up-stairs and pull a sheet or something up over you and get an hour's sleep. Now stop arguing and go on and when you wake up we'll whip this room into shape in five minutes. Why, Lizzie-Kate, you must be sick!" she protested, her own voice shaking as her sister put her thin arms about her and laid her untidy head against Ellen's firm young shoulder. Through the thin silk of her new frock Ellen could feel Lizzie-Kate's hot tears.

"An hour's sleep!" Lizzie-Kate echoed scornfully, proudly, joyfully, to her mother when the story of that dreadful afternoon was reviewed for Mrs. Murphy a week later. "I slep' the clock round! Frank never waked me nor the children nor nothing. I came down-stairs," went on Lizzie-Kate, "at four o'clock the next day and never as long as I draw the breath of life will I forget the way that cup of tea tasted to me then. It seemed like the weather was cooler too. The doctor had said all the children could go out in the yard and Ellen and Frank had moved the bed back up-stairs; this room was—well, like you see it," said Lizzie-Kate, indicating the perfectly ordered kitchen.

"I phoned Aunt Aggie Callahan and she came right over—she never knew how bad everything was, because they've all been at the beach," Ellen explained modestly.

The floor was swept, the table bore nothing except a fresh red cloth and the indispensable brown glazed-ware sugar-bowl, the sink was clean and empty, the window-shade drawn. Peace, quiet, homely comfort reigned in the kitchen. Lizzie-Kate sat idle, resting in her rocker; Mrs. Murphy perched, with her usual effect of extreme discomfort, upon the edge of a chair; Ellen was at the table, her hands locked before her.

"You'd think Ellen might have come down before, the way she was runnin' around lookin' for something that she'd do," the mother remarked dispassionately. "There's manny would be glad to do for others and leave their own lay in the gutter," she added.

Ellen's laughing eyes met Lizzie-Kate's serious and affectionate glance.

"There was no one ever did a lovelier act of charity than Ellen's done right here in this house this week," the elder sister said.

"I'd have come," Mrs. Murphy said, "on'y that young Danny was teethin' on the poor girl and she fit to be tied did he get the measles on her. But now it's over and she's bringin' him here later."

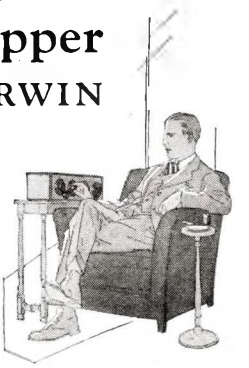
A quiet glance exchanged among them all indicated that perfect understanding reigned. There came a time of peace in the kitchen.

It was broken by the arrival of the widowed young Moira and Danny, a fat, pallid, blond child with his golden hair scooped into a silky tunnel above his stolid little vacuous face.

But Ellen hardly noted Danny or Moira; her gaze was fixed upon the third member of the party, obviously a sort of companion or nurse—a slim, serious-faced young girl in a neat hat and a blue linen dress piped with yellow. Her cheeks were rosy, but it was not all rouge, her mouth looked clean—she was laughing at Danny.

ATWATER KENT RADIO

"It is remarkable that anything so small can be so powerful. It's like hiding the Boston Symphony Orchestra in one of the upper drawers of my desk." —WALLACE IRWIN



The famous author of "The Japanese Schoolboy" and "The Golden Bed" might be expected to impale a whole set of facts with one unerring phrase. This he has done in writing to us about his Model 20 Compact. And note what else he says:

"I approach a radio set much as I approach an automobile. I don't know what goes on inside, or why. I only know that if you turn something on, something is supposed to happen.

"For that reason I am an ideal Atwater Kent addict. I don't even have to turn it on. My oldest boy, aged 8, does that for me, and produces such music as I am sure Beethoven at the age of 8 never even dared to tackle."

So simple that even a child's fingers are sufficient. So small and so beautiful that it *belongs*—never intrudes—in any room, in any home. Yet a full-powered, robust, complete five-tube set that meets all your demands in performance. That is the Model 20 Compact, as so many persons who could buy *any* radio set have found out.

In the home of WALLACE IRWIN *is the Atwater Kent Model 20 Compact and Model H Radio Speaker*

Prices slightly higher from the Rockies west, and in Canada.

Model 20 Compact, $80

Hear the Atwater Kent Radio Artists every Sunday evening at 9:15 o'clock (Eastern Standard Time) through stations—

WEAF	*New York*	WFI	*Philadelphia*
WJAR	*Providence*	WOO	*alternating*
WEEI	*Boston*	WCAE	*Pittsburgh*
WCAP	*Washington*	WGR	*Buffalo*
WSAI	*Cincinnati*	WOC	*Davenport*
WCCO	*Minneapolis-St. Paul*	WTAG	*Worcester*
WEAR	*Cleveland*	KSD	*St. Louis*
		WWJ	*Detroit*
		WLIB	*Chicago*

Radio Speaker Model H, $22

Write for illustrated booklet telling the story of Atwater Kent Radio

ATWATER KENT MANUFACTURING CO.
A. Atwater Kent, President
4750 WISSAHICKON AVE. PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Jessie Slater! Fatter, oddly younger, prettier—but Jessie.

"Sure I've had me thumb on her every instant minute since she run off!" Mrs. Murphy explained in answer to Ellen's stupefied look. "Didn't I put her up to it? I met her one Sunda' mornin' when I was steppin' home from eleven and she just havin' been to see you that wasn't there, and I tolt her to come down and see me and Moira did she ever be needin' a friend in it, and down she come the day followin'—or was it the day afther that?

"Annyway, she come and I tolt her I'd draw no car'rds on her nor write down did she have blue eyes or green or was her papa a Chinee or a Pole, but I says, 'Jessie, I'll give you all you can eat and pay you somethin' too will you but keep an eye on the young boy here now and then, and you'll go to Sunda'-school and learn the commandments off the Sisters and leave me hear no sass nor back talk whatsoever out of you or I'll lay you over my knee as I did me own! You'll have no committees to thrap you into this and that here,' I tolt her, 'but you'll act like a Christian and not an Ay-rab or back you go to the courts and reform school and all the rest of the rid tape!' I says.

"She's not one," Mrs. Murphy continued dispassionately, giving a repressive look at the visibly elated Jessie, who was thrilled by this recital, "she's not one wud ever set the river afire and manners wud die on her very easy, for she's a mean one in a fight. But Moira and I have young Bessie Reilly at the house now, and what wit' this and that thim young ger'rls makes very free wit' their laughin' and noise and maybe the lads'll stip up Saturda' nights and take them out to a movie—or maybe they'd walk. They'll walk their legs off if there's a moon as big as an apple parin'," she commented witheringly, "but oh, they're tired to death do you but ask thim to step to the store for a cake of yeast!"

Lizzie-Kate grinned, recognizing the dear old grumble that had accompanied all the happy hours of her girlhood.

"The way you talk, mama," Ellen observed cunningly, "they're right about Jessie when they say she is a hard case. Walking with the boys but not willing to help you by running for the yeast."

"Now, leave me tell you something, me fine Lady Illigant," Mrs. Murphy began magnificently. "Jessie here's worth the whole lot an' boilin' of you an' she'll do more in an hour than you and Lizzie-Kate would be doin' in the full len'th of two days for me. The young boy," she added, with a glance at the immaculate Danny, "never would put the taste of an egg or maybe a little soup in his mouth, and didn't he ate it for her like a lamb itself and she bastin' the sleeves into Moira's good dress that wouldn't never lay straight if it was the Pope himself that stitched on thim!

"A fine, sad, decent man like Pat Broley, that lost his wife and baby come Christmas three years, an' he sendin' her a box of candy you cud lay out a cat in, wit' little lace d'ylies on it—and you sit there an' have no more to do than you'd sick the whole wor'rks onto her again, thim rescue people that'd have a saint in a jail and a madhouse at wan and the same time! Put on the kettle, Lizzie-Kate," Mrs. Murphy finished breathlessly, as Lizzie-Kate's fine mouth twitched with irrepressible mirth.

Jessie and Moira laughed outright and Ellen laid her pretty head down on the table and fairly sobbed with mirth.

"An' quit mockin' your mama, the whole crowd of you. Rescue homes," Mrs Murphy muttered, untying the dingy strings of her old widow's bonnet. "I'd rescue *thim*—wit' the flat of me slipper! Thank you, dear," she added, as Jessie gently took the bonnet and hung it up out of harm's way.

Ellen saw the look, the loving, trusting look that passed between them.

"You're welcome, ma," said Jessie.

Neither Bachelor nor Married (*Continued from page 59*)

from that—it is questionable if a life semi-monastic could ever be unalloyed happiness. Married life, even in the worst circumstances, is a habit, and a good one to my mind.

I am always half conscious that my life is incomplete. I'd like to give up my lonely existence if I could live with a woman in clear understanding. But suppose it were to happen that I was in a position to marry again. Or take it, to begin with, that I found a woman with whom a clear understanding seemed possible, and who would enter into a relationship with me that had not the sanction of marriage. Suppose I did find such a woman, would I give up the life I lead? I don't think I would.

I don't care how possible a clear understanding might be, or how much I might care for a woman, I would be very chary indeed of living with her. I thought when I married that my wife and I would be sure to reach the clear understanding, but though, as I have said, she is one of the kindliest, best-humored and most decent-minded of women, I failed to hit it off with her. That being the case where the union had the sanction of marriage, how much more difficult would it be where the relationship was illicit?

To deal justly with my own case I must not pass over the consideration of promiscuous sex attachment, but I can dismiss it with a word or two. It is probably because my wife established for me such a high standard that I am left fastidious regarding women. It would seem to me like slapping her across the mouth if I allowed my relationship with women to become casual.

And so far I have not met any real reason for desiring the dissolution of my marriage, beyond the fact that the present arrangement is unfair to my wife, but I am not dismissing the chance that one day I may have such a reason. I am still under forty, and of an age at which many men marry for the first time. The trouble for me now is that I must not go in search of this thing that I have missed. I have not the right.

It is a curious position to be in, this of being married and living like a bachelor. I often meet women and girls who are attractive, and like any other man I often would like to follow up the acquaintanceships. I'd like to experiment, and discover if these friendships with women could possibly ripen into something deeper, something more worth while. But, knowing my position, the best women are chary of experiment with me—I am the possession of another woman. The unpossessed and unpossessing possession, if you like. And that damns me. At least with nice women.

But there is no situation so bad that it has not its compensations. I have mine. The outsider, it is said, sees most of the game. In some curious way I am still in the game—this game of marrying and giving in marriage which takes up so much of the time of humans—but I am outside it. I have played and lost, and yet my name is not scratched off the list. I stand by and watch those who are still playing, the married folk, and those about to play, the lovers.

Since my marriage wrecked on some uncharted rock, I have discovered more tolerance for the foibles and foolishnesses of my kind. I am less impatient than I was. It is a humbling thought to realize that one has failed in the task one would have liked best to do well.

If there is one thing my wrecked marriage has not left room for, one thing my curious position of being neither bachelor, widower, nor married man cannot allow, it is cynicism regarding marriage, or regarding life itself. If, being an outsider, I see most of the game, perhaps I have some title to assure you that it seems worth the candle. That I remain outside is probably due to nothing more nor less than a lack of courage.

ONE SUN that has never set!

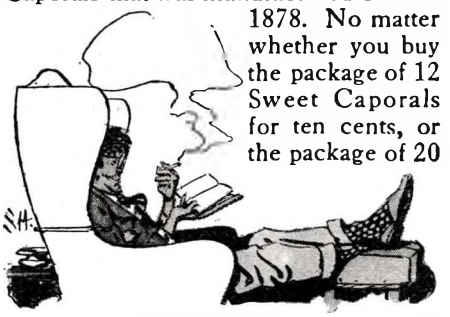
By Irvin S. Cobb

OVER at the factory they told me that the sales of Sweet Caporal Cigarettes had been mounting up steadily here of late. There was no unusual stimulation in the way of a special advertising campaign. But sales had grown larger and still larger. They are growing while you are reading this. More Sweet Caporals are being sold today than were sold yesterday, more will be sold tomorrow than were sold today.

This condition applies to the retailers all over the United States. According to expert opinion there can be but one explanation to account for so spontaneous and unforced a groundswell in the demand for a brand which has been a standard and a staple for forty-seven years.

The answer is that an increasing number of cigarette smokers in America are turning to the crusty natural blend that suited their fathers and their grandfathers who bought Sweet Caporal Cigarettes before them, a blend of selected Virginia tobacco, made into cigarettes by a process which has never been changed, with the purest of Vermont maple sugar for its savoring, and positively nothing else.

Perhaps you have noticed that part of the trademark of Sweet Caporals is a blazing sun. That trademark is historic. It appeared on the first package of Sweet Caporals that was manufactured back in 1878. No matter whether you buy the package of 12 Sweet Caporals for ten cents, or the package of 20 Sweet Caporals for fifteen cents, you'll find that same ancient and honorable device upon it. Here is one sun that has never set or sunk in forty-seven years and is rising higher now than it ever rose before. You can't get away from an argument that speaks for itself.



Sweet Caporal, to my way of thinking, is that kind of cigarette. It speaks for itself. And it's speaking louder all the time.

Thank you. Irvin S. Cobb

P. S. — *I write an article like this every once in a while. Watch for the next. I have declined propositions to turn out advertisements for various manufactured articles because I feel I merely would be a hired hand, exploiting this, that or the other thing for so much a word. But I reached for this opportunity. I knew I could put my heart in it—could with sincerity endorse the article I was praising.*

The Patent Leather Kid (Continued from page 47)

added the flag to his other favorite hates.

One afternoon when he was strolling along Fit' Avenya with Fay, for a little light exercise before the bout of the night with the Jersey Skeeter—the biggest man he had taken on yet—they were checked at a crossing by a regiment moving up the street. There was always a regiment moving up the street.

The mob at the curb trod on Curly's toes with no thought of who it was they were shoving. When he was pushed out into the street by a gang of lunkheads behind, two big stiffs of cops put their hands on his chest and used him for a battering-ram. And one of the cops sang out:

"Hello, Curly, where's your uniform?"

"Where's yours, you big bum?" was the best Curly could think of. Then he leaned out and looked down the line of the pop-eyed populace, and saw the hats spilling off as if a wave were breaking along the curb.

Another flag was coming along! A flag was always coming along! Curly eyed the leaning standards slanting north as the Stars and Stripes beat backward in a writhe of red and white and a twinkle of stars in a restless blue. He hated them so that he kept his hands at his sides and his hat on his head.

The bareheaded idiots around him stared at him in wrath. People muttered:

"Hats off!"

"The lid! The lid!"

Curly did not move. A stunted runt next to him had the nerve to say:

"Take it off before I smash it over your ugly mug!"

Curly's answer was a contemptuous elbow-jab that took the guy's wind and doubled him up. An old man, grizzled and tall, whispered over Curly's shoulder:

"Uncover, man; the flag is coming."

"Ah, to hell wit' the rag!" said Curly.

There was a movement in the crowd as if a snake were coiling to strike, and Curly made ready to learn these dubs who they were talking to. Suddenly his hat was whisked off by some unknown hand. Curly whirled and searched for it, but could not find it. Fay, who was standing at his side, had evidently not noticed the atrocity, for she was staring at the soldiers.

Just then the troops were checked by some jam ahead; and people waiting to cross the street made a dash to pass between the platoons marking time. Fay caught Curly's arm and urged him forward. He was swept across, looking frantically for his hat among the hurrying feet.

There are few things as sacred to a man as his hat and Curly was in a mood to assault the whole town when Fay said: "Here's your bonnet, dearie." She glanced at his fist. "Don't waste that mallet on me, boy; save it for the Skeeter."

Curly snatched the hat from her hand, jammed it on his head and struck out for his training-quarters, leaving her flat. When he turned to see if she were following, she was gazing at the soldiers, whose bayonets flowed beyond the heads of the witnesses in a long saw-blade of steel.

All this put Curly in high spirit for the bout. The Jersey Skeeter had more height and weight and a three-inch longer reach than Curly, but only courage enough to submit for a few dollars to the brief death of a knock-out. It had been agreed that the fight was to go four rounds before the Skeeter took the count; but Curly was so furious that he forgot his instructions, and went right after the Skeeter with that low menacing prowl of his, brushed aside the Skeeter's hands with his open left glove and drove his right to the chin with a zing that rocked the Skeeter's head almost to sleep, and woke the crowd to frenzy.

The Skeeter fell into a clinch and mumbled: "Hey, whatta hell? Easy on dat stuff."

Curly flung him off and almost dropped him with a blow to the heart. The Skeeter went into another clinch and Curly smote him over the kidneys so hard that he straightened with a yowl, only to be doubled up with a jab in the pit of the stomach.

Curly soon had the Skeeter so cock-eyed that only the bell saved him. Stuke and Molasses whispered to Curly to slow up and ease along till the fourth round or he'd have a dead man on the canvas.

The second was so stupid that the crowd grew rabid as the two men fanned the air, fell into clinches until the referee pried them apart; whiffed, danced and embraced. The referee did all the work and the crowd howled.

"Say, whyn't you kiss each other?"

"Give the poor beezer an ice-cream cone, sweetheart."

"Nah, make it a cream-puff apiece."

Curly could not endure ridicule and he sent the Skeeter cowering against the ropes, trying to cover himself in a dozen places with only two useless fists. The magnificence of Curly's shoulder-blades rippling and glistening in the downward flare of light, and the pure mechanical beauty of his jabs and uppercuts, filled the stodgiest spectator with a sense of beautiful efficiency. The many-voiced had one voice.

"Put him out!"

Curly glanced inquiringly at Stuke, and Stuke, afraid of the crowd, nodded and called through the ropes, "Give him all you got, boy!"

With his left hand, Curly set the head of the Skeeter in just the position to knock it off, drew back that right meat-ax of his, and—a regiment marched by! The band played "The Star-Spangled Banner." There was a racket of people getting to their feet; then a hush of attention.

Curly paused to think up a proper curse. The Skeeter, glancing between his gloves, saw that Curly's jaw had sagged and his hands had dropped. The much abused Skeeter could not resist the chance. Curly was sitting too pretty.

The Skeeter made a sledge-hammer of himself and caught Curly just below the inverted V of his ribs. As Curly crumpled the Skeeter's right hand came up from the floor, met the point of Curly's jaw, slammed it shut and jarred off every nerve in his head.

Flop went Curly, knocked out twice at once. Before his soul could get back into his body the sexton's fatal forefinger was beating the death-knell over him, and chanting "Six! Seven! Eight!"

By the cry of "Nine!" Curly had forced one paralyzed arm to action and heaved his two-ton weight up to his left elbow. At "Ten and out!" he had his right palm on the canvas and was prying his other shoulder out of the ground where it had taken root. His head came up as if it were made of lead and his eyes were pitiful with fog and wonder.

He could hear faint sounds of cheering several miles away and the next thing he knew was his dressing-room, with his black sparring partner and his fat adorer, Puffy Kinch, working over him; and Stuke trying to look like a good loser.

Curly tore off his gloves and sobbed and wailed as only prize-fighters can weep. His three disconsolate retainers tried in vain to console him. Stuke was kind enough to say: "Now that you know how it feels to be knocked out, you'll be all the better for it."

But the Skeeter gave him the only comfort he could accept. The Skeeter put his head in to apologize and Curly, with a howl of joy, dragged him in, beat him senseless, and kicked him out. Then he wept again. He outwept his own shower-bath.

He would not have gone to the cabaret where the Patent Leather Kid always waited for the good news, but he hardly dared let anyone else tell her how it came about. When he arrived she was dancing with a tipsy young lieutenant, who hugged her so tight that the two ensigns who dogged their steps could not cut in.

Fay danced the uniform toward Curly and hailed him. "Hay, Coily, how many rounds did he last before you handed him his K. O.?"

LOOK YOUR BEST *Every Day*

Choose a shade of Pompeian Beauty Powder scientifically blended to match your skin ~ ~ ~

Will your skin stand the close inspection of your escort's eyes? Will your powder be so perfectly matched to the tone of your skin that it will not look like powder—but your own complexion?

By MADAME JEANNETTE

Widely known cosmetician, retained by The Pompeian Laboratories as a consultant to give authentic advice regarding the care of the skin and the proper use of beauty preparations.

A SOFT, delicate texture—a lovely satiny face—yet not a sign of powder. What is the secret of her alluring complexion? Does she use powder? She does, but a shade that matches so perfectly the tone of her skin that she secures the good effects of powder without seeming to use it.

All smart women strive for a natural complexion, but all do not achieve it. Not all women have found a powder that really matches their skin—a powder that reveals their natural coloring. These women thank me for telling them about Pompeian Beauty Powder. Complexions are not composed of single colors, but a blend of different colors. So it is only natural that powder to match your complexion must also be a blend.

Pompeian Beauty Powder is scientifically blended from different colors. Whatever the tone of your complexion, some one shade of this powder matches it perfectly.

Choose the correct shade for your complexion from the shade chart. In case of doubt about the shade you require, write a description of your skin, hair and eyes to me for special advice.

SHADE CHART for selecting your shade of Pompeian Beauty Powder

Medium Skin: The average American skin tone is Medium, neither decidedly light nor definitely olive. This skin should use the *Naturelle* shade.

Olive Skin: Women with this type of skin are apt to have dark hair and eyes. This skin should use the *Rachel* shade to match its rich tones.

Pink Skin: This is the youthful, rose-tinted skin (not the florid skin) and should use *Flesh* shade.

White Skin: This skin is unusual, but if you have it you should use *White* powder in the daytime.

Pompeian Beauty Powder is 60c a box. (Slightly higher in Canada.) Satisfaction guaranteed.

Madame Jeannette
Specialiste en Beauté

P. S.: I also suggest that you use Pompeian Day Cream as a foundation for your Pompeian Beauty Powder.

Miss E. S. B———, a striking example of the loveliness of rich brown hair, sparkling brown eyes, and slightly olive toned skin. The Rachel shade of Pompeian Beauty Powder is ideally adapted for her skin-tones.

SPECIAL OFFER

⅓ of a 60c. box of Bloom *with 1926 Panel, Beauty Powder and other samples*

IN addition to sample of Beauty Powder and to help you realize the exceptional quality of Pompeian Bloom, we make this special offer above. The 1926 Panel is the most beautiful and expensive one we have ever offered. Size 27 x 7 in. Art store value 75c to $1. Sent for two dimes along with ⅓ of a 60c box of Pompeian Bloom and valuable samples of Beauty Powder: Day Cream (protecting); and Night Cream (cleansing); and Madame Jeannette's beauty booklet.

Tear off, sign and send

Madame Jeannette,
The Pompeian Laboratories
2708 Payne Ave., Cleveland, Ohio

I enclose 2 dimes (20c) for **1926** Panel, ⅓ of 60c box of Bloom, other samples, and your beauty booklet.

Name.....

Street Address.....

City.....State.....

Shade of powder wanted?.....

This coupon void after July 15, 1926

"Ah, to hell wit choo!" snapped Curly.

"Oh, I say," said the lieutenant, "I can't have that, you know."

"Then you can have that!" said Curly, and pasted him one that sent him into the orchestra, where the saxophones emitted a dying squawk. The ensigns fell on Curly, and he said: "Split that between yous!" as he handed them a left and a right, zing-zing!

Fay caught his arm. He gave her a back-hander that slammed her across a table into a wall. It took two waiters to relieve her of the sharp knife she seized with a sincere promise to lose it in Curly's black heart.

As all the soldiers, sailors and marines massed to avenge the uniform, Stuke and Puffy Kinch dragged Curly away.

The next morning as his bitter eyes ransacked the newspapers he found little but military and naval mention, and only one scant reference to himself:

> Something must have gone wrong with Jake Stuke's Curly Boyle last night. He was completely upset by his own set-up. The pitiful Jersey Skeeter stopped the pitiful four-flusher in the second. If Mr. Boyle still believes that he is a fighter, let him take himself to France, where all the important American fighting will be done until further notice. Since he has never been tempted to volunteer, it is to be hoped that the draft act will catch him.

It did.

Stuke bribed a physician to certify that he had a weak heart on the same day that a more patriotic citizen bribed the same physician to certify that his weak heart was sound. The patriotic citizen had the pleasure and honor of dying of heart-disease during a great battle, and Stuke had the pleasure of holding down a swivel-chair on a draft board.

Puffy Kinch made a noble effort to evade the sleuth-hounds of the draft, but when he took his final refuge under a bed, he was so fat that his amused pursuers stood a while and watched the mattress breathe.

Stuke arranged to have Curly assigned to the important post of physical instructor to the Boy Scouts, but when he told Fay of his good luck, her laugh of cold scorn dazed him. He gasped: "Say, sa-ay, what's bitin' you that you got such a itch to get me moidered by the Joimans? The Kaiser never done me no doit."

She stared at him, shook her head feebly, broke down crying and ran away.

She sent him a note.

> Curly dearie: I couldent fight, I couldent be a train nurse, I couldent be a stenographer but when I toled them I could dance they says go on over to france and dance for the boys so I am on my way. Dont worry I am taking your place so take good care of your precious self so no more at present from if I don't see you any more hello Fay

Curly crushed the note in his fist, and consigned Fay to his overcrowded private hell. Then he went to the draft board and asked to be shipped to France—not to spite the Kaiser, but the Patent Leather Kid.

In the training camp he met Puffy Kinch, who was in the same brigade and served as a splendid press-agent. Curly was soon the champion boxer of the whole division. But on the transport he was not so good. His stout stomach had been his mainstay and it betrayed him—incessantly. He was already licked to a standstill when he reached France.

At the sight of the first wounded men, his courage took another K. O. Every man has his pet cowardice and a bullet was Curly's. He confessed to Puffy: "Them human remnants have got my goat. I can't get 'em out of my system. I'm all in already. I didn't know they was as much yella in all the woild as I got right now."

Puffy suffered for him and with him, but their terror was like their seasickness: the ship had not stopped on account of Curly's nausea; the army marched him on for all his reluctance. It marched him straight to Fay Poplin.

This was not so strange since she had begged to be sent to the billet where the New York draft troops would be sent. All the while he was in the training camp, she had been dancing in Paris with everybody that asked her to—soldiers on leave, soldiers on the way up, soldiers stationed there for administration work.

But her longing was for the trenches. She had always had the adventurous heart and she wanted to do her bit for the boys who were about to die, or who had returned from the dugouts for a respite before they went back into the mud.

When she learned where the draft regiment was stationed, she exerted a little unfair influence on one of her countless suitors and had herself forwarded to the Y. M. C. A. hut. There on the same ballroom floor with her were an English duchess, two French comtesses, and various American aristocrats who wore themselves out in the arms of shagbark soldiers of every sort, many of them all too fresh from the de-lousing machines; many of them apparently delayed on their way thither. But everything hideous, ridiculous, incredible, inconceivable was sanctified if it helped to cheer the soldiers. No sacrifice was too great for the great god Morale.

Here was a girl of Fay Poplin's type dancing under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A.! The Y itself had dazed itself by embarking in the tobacco business and giving out cigarets in place of tracts. Then it had turned its chapels into public dance-halls and substituted jazz for hymns. Day and night the sacred priestesses spun about the spinning soldiers. They rested only on Sundays.

Then they saw that when the lonely soldiers found the ballroom closed on Sundays, they simply drifted "down the line." And so the Y. M. C. A., as the lesser of two evils, gave dances on the Sabbath!

The footsore Duchess exclaimed: "If the war lasts much longer, the Lord only knows what they'll make of us!"

Fay was afraid of nothing but her feet. Her poor "dogs" swollen, bruised from the tread of many a hobnailed boot, threatened to die on her. Hundreds of soldiers twirled and pursued her over thousands of miles of distance and it seemed that everybody in the division took her into his arms except Curly Boyle.

She could not be sure that he was with the army, but she always hoped and was forever asking. "Do you happen to know a boy named Coily Berl?"

Even those who knew Curly Boyle did not know his name in that dialect. Lieutenant Hugo Breen, who was in command of him, failed to recognize the name when Fay asked him her old question. But he recognized that Fay was the most delicious armful he had ever dandled and he came every evening to tote her round the floor.

He found her so peaked and jaded one Sabbath night that his pity grew dangerously tender. "It's a crime to keep you on your feet. Come out in the moonlight and rest."

She shook her head and glanced along the line of homesick, dance-hungry, girl-famished soldiers edging the floor.

"Look at the poor boys that may never dance again! They're goin' out to die, maybe, and I got a right to die for 'em. I got an ambish too. I'm keepin' track of my distance and it won't be long now till I've danced my twenty-fi' thousandth mile. Then I'm goin' to call it a day."

So she danced on and on until she actually fell asleep in Hugo's arms.

If she dreamed of Curly, she never dreamed that he was watching her now. He and Puffy had steered clear of everything bearing so respectable a label as the Y. M. C. A. and had studied French among the living dictionaries in the native quarters.

But on this quiet Sunday they had been attracted by two pretty things of evident American stock. The girls had such a come-along look in their eyes that Curly and Puffy

followed them and overtook them at the hut, where the two scouts flung back their capes and revealed their uniforms. Having decoyed Curly and Puffy into this safe environment, they invited the lads to dance.

"Nobody can't sting me twice in the same place," said Curly. "I bet yous goils can't dance for sour apples."

The benevolent sirens found other soldiers more willing and Curly and Puffy lingered in the outer darkness watching the merry-go-round. Suddenly Curly gripped Puffy with a vigor that had him yowling, and gasped:

"Sweet cheese! Lookit!"

It was the Patent Leather Kid dancing with some shavetail who kept his head so close to hers that Curly could not make him out as his own lieutenant. Nor could Curly understand that his own wrath was jealousy.

Just then Hugo Breen realized that Fay was actually slumbering in his arms, walking in her sleep. So he danced her into the blue air, brushing aside the envious witnesses. He had her almost out of ear-shot of the music before she woke, as startled as if she had fallen out of bed. When she realized where she was she gasped:

"I gotta get back! I gotta get back!"

Breen kept his arms about her and told her how adorable she was, and how pitiful. He begged her for a kiss. So many men had taken her kisses with or without the asking that she laughed drowsily and put up her pretty mouth.

Before the enchanted Hugo could accept the gift, a big hand was thrust between his lips and Fay's, and he received instead of a kiss a slap in the face that swept him back and tore his hands from Fay.

She opened her eyes. Curly! Her first thought was one of delight that he was in uniform and in France—but not for long, it seemed, since Hugo had already whipped out his pistol. He would have emptied it into Curly, too, if Fay had not seized his hand and spread her fingers over the muzzle.

Puffy almost swooned when he saw that Curly had struck his own lieutenant in the face, but Curly was too blind to care. Puffy held his terrific left arm and his more terrible right, while Hugo checked his own fury for Fay's sake, put up his pistol and mumbled:

"Boyle, I could shoot you for this, or have you shot. But I'll let you live in the hope that you'll stop some German bullet that might have killed a decent man."

Curly sneered at such magnanimity and took it for cowardice. Then he turned on Fay and reviled her with such names that a squad of her admirers fell on Curly, and Hugo had to save him from being beaten to death.

The next morning Curly woke up battered and defiant, calling himself a sucker, a set-up, a plain fall-guy for this war-stuff. But he could not buck his corporal, his sergeants and his officers; and Hugo ran him raw for his own good and the good of the service, while Curly's hatred smoldered and ate deeper into his soul.

Of evenings he hung infatuated outside the hut watching Fay flit from soldier's arms to soldier's arms, and fuming with wrath at Lieutenant Breen's proprietary way of holding her and murmuring to her.

Sometimes a woman has more reasons than one for snubbing a man, but when Fay first gave Curly the icy eye and the shoulder-blade after he had called her all those names, he could only imagine that she was sore at him for putting her where she belonged. So he made no effort to force a reconciliation.

He took his rage out on Breen, with a subtlety of insolence impossible not to recognize and impossible to specify. It was a hard position for both natures; Curly had to knuckle under to a man he could whip with one hand; Breen had to bear the mean looks of a subordinate.

Curly was a fierce individualist and punishments drove him to mutiny. Breen was a fanatic patriot and felt it his highest dignity to forget his dignity in the name of the service. After all, Curly Boyle was one more rifle, one more bayonet, one more stop-gap.

And Fay, who was on fire with patriotism, who admired Breen and both loved and loathed Curly, succeeded only in keeping them in a humor of mutual murder.

Curly grew so difficult that Breen rejoiced at an unexpected solution of the problem of what to do with him.

The regiment was joined by a platoon of tanks, Renault tanks just up from Langres, where American troops had studied the use of them as American troops had to study the use of all the French and British war material, since their own country had none of it ready.

These tanks were not the great baggage-cars of the English type that startled the Germans one day like a herd of elephants breaking from the jungle. The Renaults were called "rhinos," mere whippets. They weighed only a matter of seven tons apiece and carried only a chauffeur and a gunner, in addition to their engines, their gas and their ammunition.

The tanks fascinated the infantry. Puffy had to wedge into the first one he saw, and he filled it to overflowing. Breen called out:

"Sergeant, take that crowd out of there. Get a can-opener and squeeze him out before he swells up and busts."

The sergeant needed Curly's help to pull Puffy through the narrow door, and the sergeant sighed:

"Fat boy, you're just naturally too big for this little war."

Only the day before Puffy had got stuck in the elbow of a communication trench during the rehearsal of a battle and had caused the technical destruction of a whole platoon.

Curly doubled Puffy up with a playful jab and made to step into the tank to give it the once-over, but Breen drawled:

"Sergeant, keep Mr. Boyle out of there. He's so careless with his big fists that he might break something. But since he and Kinch are so fond of tanks, I've found at last the very job they're looking for. Assign them both to the squad of tank-nurses."

When he found out what this new dignity meant, Puffy had to explain it that night to the English duchess, who had found him the drollest of dancing-partners.

"Well, your Duchessship, whadda ya suppose I and Coily Berl have been p'moted to?"

"I can't imagine. Do tell me."

"We've been raised to tank-noisses."

"Tank-nusses? Fancy! And whatever might they be?"

"It's a great honor. We don't have to ride in the doity old busses, thank Gawd; the air in them things is stuffy and the noise would bust your ears. All we gotta do is walk along outside and take care of 'em—pick off snipers and things."

The duchess surprised Puffy by a view of the matter that his slow brain had never thought of.

"But I say! I should fancy it would be far more dangerous outside the tanks than in. What if—while you are picking off the snipahs, the snipahs should pick you off—if you know what I mean?"

"I know just what you mean, Duchess. I get you poifeck. But o' course—well, if the snipers snipe us, I guess we just gotta be sniped."

"Indeed yes! I guess also—quite!" said the duchess.

Curly had not been so thick as Puffy. His training had quickened his imagination and taught him to foresee and duck danger. His fame and his prowess as a pugilist made him unashamed of his cowardice as a soldier.

The moment Breen got rid of him by assigning him to "outdoor" duty, he saw just what it would mean to dog one of these steel brutes under the storm of fire that would rattle off their thick hides.

His wrath grew blacker as his liver turned whiter. He solemnly resolved to escape from the ordeal if he had to win his discharge by shooting off one of his own fingers. He set the muzzle of a pistol against his left forefinger, but could not bring himself to pull the trigger.

He decided instead to lift his hand above the parapet of the first fighting trench he visited and let the enemy slice it for him.

He was so sick with a disease of cowardice that even Puffy began to bully him.

"In the first place, there ain't goin' to be no trenches for us tankers; in the seckin' place, for the love o' Mike, quit braggin' about how brave you ain't—or they'll give you a medal for it."

With the abruptness of a bomb from a Big Bertha, the order came for the division to advance into action. The tanks trundled right alongside the platoon commanded by Hugo Breen, who made it his business to keep an eye on Curly.

The blundering behemoths crept along the night-weird roads, through villages like ruined graveyards, as if primeval times had come again and prehistoric reptiles crawled toward some Mesozoic encounter.

Curly had not spoken to Fay since he reviled her at their first meeting outside the hut, but Hugo Breen had bidden her many a good-by, his only comfort the thought that he left her far from the perils he embraced.

But the division had hardly crossed the horizon before the village was thrilled with the visit of a troupe of American players, actors and actresses from the legitimate, and vaudeville stars from the—illegitimate?

They brought Broadway to camp; but for one night only since they were on their way right into the danger zone. Fay implored them to take her along, told them lies about her fame as the Patent Leather Kid, and, when they were politely skeptical, insisted on proving her quality, pleading:

"I had a hunch to bring my woikin'-clothes along. Just lea' me duck into 'em and do my stuff once. See my act and then let your conscience be your guide."

She sped to her tent, took from her camp trunk the varnished costume, caressed it, ducked into it, ran back through the streets and onto the stage they had improvised in a broken church.

There was no resisting her beauty, her tantalizing allure, and the overwhelming pathos of her feeling that dancing was her one expression, her sole oratory of a seething patriotism.

The manager had only one protest left: "You're too pretty, my dear, to be risked. One airplane raid and—well, your patent has expired. Stay here and jazz along with the boys in this billet."

"I'd rather a bomb hit me! I've figured it out that I've one-stepped as far as once around the globe. Ain't that enough for one pair of dogs? Gawd, but I'd like to dance alone for a while."

"All right. Come along and if a shell hits you—well, you've earned your rest."

The troupe moved on in racing cars and set up shop wherever there were troops to entertain, either before or after taking the stinking medicine of the trenches.

Curly's division drew up at length to the brink of the volcano under cover of night—at least they called it "night," though the pitch-black gloom was torn to shreds with rain like blood and fire in the rip and split and spatter of star-shalls and the shattering zoom of big ammunition feeling out the secret places.

The mud here was almost too much for the slithering tanks, but it was worse for the poor nurse, who must skip and leap and flounder in the fumes of gasoline and clamber through the branches of the trees the tanks bore down, and the barbed wire that whipped up in their wake.

In the mangled forest of their last resort, the tank crews set to work with frenzy to tune up their engines, their guns, their caterpillar tractors. But Curly had nothing to do except listen to the dog-weary Puffy's snores and nurse his grouch and his blue funk.

The dank woods reeked with fog and pockets of stale gas and were nauseous with the garbage of the human slaughter-pen. Hundreds of men had been chopped to mince-meat here and never buried and their ghosts whispered to Curly:

Brushing your coat collar doesn't stop dandruff

IF YOU have dandruff, you're a slave to a whisk-broom. And so you brush, brush, brush—to save yourself embarrassment.

But it isn't necessary to be embarrassed, nor to play second fiddle to a whisk-broom—if you are willing to try the simple Wildroot treatment. For years, Wildroot Hair Tonic has been famous, because it *does* remove dandruff.

A very interesting thing happens with the first few applications of Wildroot. The accumulated dandruff loosens up and is temporarily more apparent, but soon disappears under regular treatment. This is a good picture of Wildroot at work.

After applying to the scalp, dress your hair with Wildroot, to renew the lustre and beauty. Get some Wildroot at your druggist's today.

IMPORTANT NOTE

It is incorrect to suppose that Wildroot grows hair. *Only a healthy scalp can grow hair.* Wildroot removes the very unhealthy condition of dandruff, and thus *prevents the loss of hair* that is sure to follow dandruff.

WILDROOT HAIR TONIC for dandruff

"It won't be long till you jern up with us."

When the fatal moment came to advance, Curly's morale was at the absolute zero. His tank moved off and left him, and he thought of the lumbering, yawning Puffy as a fool hound heeling a car of death.

He could not budge until the nose of the following tank bunted him over. Only a swift wriggle saved him from being ironed into a flat pulp by the caterpillar rollers. He lay panting a moment to watch them pouring in a hideous cascade that ran to the rear, climbed again and came back endlessly. But as the last of the beasts of steel deployed into line, he ran after his own because it was the sole familiar thing in the insanity about him.

The dawn was seeping through the fog when the Renaults nosed out of the thicket into the open and Curly saw darkly before him his first battle-field. It was not only before him but behind him; above, where the planes whirred and whence the wasted shrapnel rattled from the anti-aircraft cannon; beneath, where the shells dived and came back in geysers of steel splinters mingled with bones and flesh and mud —and noise!—eternal, maddening noise that never ended and made death all but desirable.

The earth was like a picture of the moon, pitted and poxed, slimy and foul, gashed with trenches, with barbed-wire everywhere. The only soldiers visible were the sprawled corpses and the lines of helmeted heads set like rows of skulls behind the parapets.

The wonder was that anybody lived, that anybody dared advance. Curly stared ahead and turned to run. Behind him a squad of his own platoon was advancing ahead of the infantry support. Something fell from the sky. There was a black oil tank on fire there; then nothing; then a hole; and no more soldiers. "I can't toin back!" He shifted to the right, where a line of men was coming up over the top. Machine guns caught their range and they went back like hollyhocks flopping across a scythe. "Nothin' doin' over there!" He shifted to the left.

For the sake of surprise the long preliminary bombardment had been omitted so that the enemy could not be warned to concentrate reserves, but now the American barrage was coming along ahead of the infantry, pelting the earth with hailstones that walked and rent the earth. "The left is woist of all."

The only shelter Curly found was his own tank, donkeying along as pretty as a steel-riveted coffin blown out of a tomb and sent sliding and bumping across the ground. A whole row of giants' coffins was bobbing and dipping in a ludicrous row and the invisible Germans were giving them all they had. Their biggest shells thumped and thundered, vanished, towered back in smoke, always missed but always promised death the next time.

When the tanks got up to the range of the machine guns, a level rain of bullets beat upon the steel and rained backward with the blood-curdling scream and whir of ricochet. Now Curly had only to put out his hand and pluck that wound he had prayed for. But he hugged his rifle like a drowning man and cowered under his all-too-little helmet singing with the dust of steel. Inside the tank, safe and snug sat the driver and the gunner, stripped to the waist and watching the fun through a slit, not troubling even to reply to the shot that peppered the thick rind of their crawling fort.

The tanks were unbelievably serene in their ugly progress, unhurried, irresistible, imperturbable, invulnerable, waddling with ponderous deliberation.

They were vast iron idiots obliterating everything they met. Ahead of them was a narrow trench with a line of Heinies pop-eyed, too paralyzed to fire. The monsters slid up to them snapped off the barbed wire and the posts and smeared the trench, the soldiers and their weapons into one grisly paste.

Curly had to follow, realizing what was underfoot. He would have vomited if there had not come a blast of fire from the flank. He and Puffy ducked to the other side of the tank.

The gunner must have heard the drum of the bullets on the side, for the old duck whirled and swam to the right where a machine gun pill-box was hidden in a clump of ragged trees. The Renault bunted the trees over upon the nest, crushed the concrete emplacement into dust, smothered the little garrison in its own fortress and sealed it smooth.

Then it swung north again, jouncing and nodding toward a trench whose tenants had witnessed the rubbing out of their compatriots. They had just strength enough to clamber out, hold up their shivering hands and stutter, "*K-K-Kame-Kamerad-I-d!*"

The tank stopped short. The two passengers came out for air, sweating and naked as stokers. Breen and a batch of infantry swarmed up. Breen ordered the Germans to drop their weapons and take off their belts. A sergeant went among them and with a trench knife slashed their suspenders so that they must use their hands to hold their breeches up —which they would do from no sense of decency, but because they could not run or walk or fight with their breeches about their knees.

If Breen had had a decent streak in him, he would have sent Curly back with the prisoners. But he chose another man, who was fool enough to protest.

While they paused, a big shell made a crater so close to Curly's feet that he rolled down into it. He decided to play dead and stay put. But the lousy Breen looked down and called:

"Snap out of that, Mr. Boyle! I'm just as scared as you are, but I'm going forward with you. You've got a chance for life if you come along, but if you don't, I'll kill you myself."

Curly came to life and scrambled cravenly out of the well. Breen put up his pistol, the tank crew stepped into their limousine and closed the door. If Puffy had not knocked up the barrel of Curly's rifle, Breen's war record would have been ended, like many another officer's, with a cartridge from one of his own men.

The trench was so wide that the stern of the Renault sank in it and it could not pull out for all its snorting and plunging. The Germans got the range again and Curly must stand and shudder while the big shells thundered as if all the devils were shooting craps for him.

The advance was checked till one of the other Renaults could be fetched back and a chain fastened and a maddening while spent in bucking and tugging till the whippet was on the level again, and able to proceed.

Curly died a score of times and could not believe that he still lived when the blast and the ruin of each shell had given way to the next.

The tanks lumbered on. They tilted up a hillock, coasted down, straddled a trench and filled it up, wiped down a dugout, waded a crimson rivulet.

Then Curly's tank began to wobble, to fall behind the line again. It stopped dead. Smoke poured from its crevices. The door flung wide and the crew swarmed out, grimy and scorched and singed. Inside, blazes fluttered.

The driver reached in to snatch out fire-extinguishers and squirt them on the flames while the enemy snipers began to snipe. From the trenches, fat-helmeted men in gray who had waited to surrender, swarmed out to capture.

Breen was on hand again. He shouted to Curly to mount the tank but before Curly could refuse, he turned to Puffy, took Puffy's big muddy boot in the palm of both hands and shot him to the ho' roof.

Puffy was scared brave. He fired off all his catridges and then reached down for hand-grenades and piled them at his feet. Then he stood up and hurled them here and there where they were most needed. There was something beautiful and joyous about him even in the eyes of Curly, who stood palsied, unable to decide where to fire or how to cover.

Puffy was too big to miss, too drunk with battle-hooch to care for a nick in the ribs, a bite out of his thigh. When his right arm cracked, he threw grenades with his left.

Curly saw two snipers kneeling and taking aim at Puffy. He wished he had the power to

protect his friend. But he could not find his muscles.

Then Puffy came over as if a mule had kicked him off the roof. He fell at Curly's feet, splashed up bloody mud and took the count with his mouth open and his eyes rolled back white.

This was what Curly needed. His country, his flag, his honor, his duty meant nothing. But when the black-hearted blackguards got his friend, he understood. That put it all in words of one syllable. He saw a German dashing toward him with his bayonet low. Curly touched the trigger and the Heinie went forward on his nose. Another gray-backed louse was on his heels. Curly fired and missed, but knocked the man's gun aside with his own and then with all the famous drive of his punching muscles, and as if the bayonet were the far end of his fist, he smote that Heinie in the pit of his belly. This too was something Curly could understand. This was what his muscles understood and loved.

Breen, who was lending a hand in the tank, backed right into a galloping German's bayonet. Curly caught the blade in his hand and dragged it toward his own chest, sidestepped it, shifted his gun into the hollow of his left arm and lifted the Heinie off his feet with an uppercut to the point of the jaw. And now Curly was so much himself again that he began to count the senseless Heinie out—"One, two, t'ree."

Amazed and admiring, Breen yelled, "Good work, Boyle. Much obliged!" He wrung Curly's bleeding left hand and apologized!

The crew leaped into the tank and slammed the door, and then the gun of the tank began to spit. The siege was over. The assailants fell over one another in flight. The tank whirled this way and that, coughing and belching lead. It broke half a dozen German legs and cleared the neighborhood, then moved on with the disgusting wobble of an old gander late to dinner.

Curly hesitated by Puffy's side, weeping and cursing. But stretcher-bearers came up, darted to Puffy and carried him back. Curly, tied a dirty handkerchief about his left hand and ran after his tank, strangely interested, drunkenly eager for more of this kind of stuff.

When the advance for the day ended at the appointed spot, the tanks found shelter in the lee of a high mound, and the stokers came out into the evening air to rest and consider their glory. Breen strode up, slapped Curly on the shoulder and said to everybody within reach of his voice:

"If it hadn't been for old man Boyle's boy, I wouldn't be here tonight. He saved my life."

Curly was still surly enough, and frank enough to mutter:

"I wonder why."

Breen tried to laugh that off, but there was regret in his laughter, and the other men stared at Curly as if he were a skunk from somewhere.

That night seemed no longer to Curly than a period between rounds. It was as if his seconds worked over the groggy fighter in his sleep, for by morning his soul was washed and fanned with towels, given a wet sponge to drink from, and heartened for the gong.

When he was wakened a little before the Zero with a tap and a whisper, "Ten to go!" there leaped up a different Curly, ready for battle, eager for battle, keen to fight for—for what? He could not have told. It was not for the fun or the pride of fighting as in the ring, or for any championships or medal. He was fighting for a mystery.

This day's work involved the capture of an ex-village. There were stone walls and cellars and piles of tumbled masonry to overcome, with enemy soldiers as thick as cooties.

A two-story church tower was the key position and just as Curly's tank reached it the steering-gear jammed. The whippet went round and round the building so fast that it all but flattened Curly, dancing to escape the stones and bullets from the upper windows. Suddenly the old bus decided to quit circling and dive. It catapulted into a doorway with

such a leap that it brought down the whole shell-riddled tower upon itself.

A smoke of rubble-dust went up and when it settled, Curly could not even see the tank. He dropped his rifle and began to tear at the masonry. Other soldiers came to his aid and they flung aside blocks of granite and dead Germans with equal unconcern.

They cleared a space along the side of the tank till they reached the door, but a tottering pile of stone stood waiting here to come down in avalanche the moment the keystone was removed.

The rescuers stood baffled while the men in the tank pounded and suffocated. At last Curly climbed a tier or two, set his feet with care and took the weight upon his own great shoulder-blades. Bracing himself, like old Atlas in the almanac, he straddled the doorway of the tank and then with all his strength, and more, heaved upward and backward, wondering just when the stones would begin to roll and crack his fool neck.

But what did his neck matter before the danger to the sacred tank?

Somehow he held, shivering and dripping with sweat from the strain, while his comrades pulled out the last block. The tank door swung back, and the all but strangled crew fell out. They looked up to see that they passed between the legs of Curly Boyle.

The next job was to extract Curly. But how were they to do that? He was himself the keystone of the arch, and all above him was piled white stone trembling to spill at his least quaver.

While the men gaped and planned how they could shore him up till they could get him out, Curly watched in a failing agony but with a certain grandeur in his eyes. He groaned:

"Watch out below, yous guys, or some of yous'll get hoit."

Then he wilted, caved, came down like a crucifix. And all the wall came with him. There was nothing in front of them but a cairn of stone, and Curly buried alive within.

Breen and his men went at it with frenzy, their eyes drenched, their language foul, their hands gashed and scarlet. They found his head, at last, face down, bleeding, lifeless. When they had dug the rest of him out, he came back to life, but liked it so little that he went right back into the dark again.

There was an awful limpness about him when they laid him on the ground at a distance from the church. His back was broken and his arms and legs seemed to have no bones in them.

As an ordinary casualty, he was not worth wasting precious time over, but as Curly Boyle, the savior of his tank—well, let the Heinie wait!

Then a great shell struck the ruin of the tower and finished the tank, a fragment of which ripped off a piece of Curly's shoulder. The blear-eyed sergeant shook his fist at the Vaterland and said it was a dirty trick.

Surgeons came up and started Curly on the long way to the rear to a ghastly relief station. The rough handling Curly was receiving here was ended by a shell that killed the surgeon, and wounded Curly further. Another surgeon took up the interrupted task and turned Curly over to stretcher-bearers, who ran back with him. One of these was killed and the other wounded, and Curly thrown sprawling.

A corporal, who was bringing back a number of Germans carrying their own wounded, made four of them spill two dead Heinies on the ground and take up Curly and the living stretcher-bearer.

Eventually Curly reached the first line of ambulances and was shoved into one. The way to the next hospital was under heavy fire. A shell tore up the road ahead. The ambulance driver jammed on the brakes to reverse. Another shell tore up the road in the rear. The driver leaped out, built a hasty bridge of stone and timber, worried across it, and jounced on his way. A German airplane pursued him and finally caught him with a dropped bomb before it was driven off by an American plane. The ambulance was crushed, and the wounded killed or wounded anew.

But another ambulance gathered the living fragments. There was hesitation whether or not to include Curly, ambiguous between alive and dead; but they slipped him in to save the trouble of deciding.

All this while, the Patent Leather Kid had been doing her stuff wherever her band of mummers halted. She had immense success with her act, but she could not keep her promise to herself that she would dance alone.

Too many dismal soldiers eyed her luscious body, their starved eyes aching with meek longing to hold beauty to their hearts just once more before they courted misery, ugliness and maybe death.

After her dance she went always to the huts again without stopping to change her costume. She let whoever asked her for a dance hug her and wamble her about. Sometimes she felt a soldier kiss her hair. Sometimes hungry lips brushed her ear. Sometimes some famished rake would flirt a little. Why should she care? Who was she to stiffen herself and murmur, "Sir!"

She returned the clinches and pretended to be overcome with equal love.

She passed her twenty-five thousandth mile, and still she could not stop.

One midnight after the last soldier had ground her last toe the last time and the hut closed down, she went stumbling back to her sleeping quarters so tired that she had just decided to lie down in the street to take the toothache out of her feet when she realized that she was passing an improvised hospital where an endless procession of litters was being dumped outside in the dark.

As she paused shuddering, a surgeon, maniac with overwork and horror, stepped out of the house. The shaft of light illumined the startling figure of the half-naked Patent Leather Kid—all too manifestly a woman. He growled:

"Here, you! We need you!"

Fay was too tired to protest or resist. She went in with him on tipsy feet and the sight she saw had either to kill her or refresh her. It woke her with the flaring pain of driving a tack up under the finger-nail. She fell back, gibbering: "I'm sorry, sir, but I—I don't know anything but dancing."

"You can hand me things, can't you? And hold things—including your tongue. Mrs. Vanderhoef will tell you."

Mrs. Vanderhoef was a New York woman of enormous wealth and size. She had sold two thousand cups of chocolate and had been shuffling bedward to take a heavy weight off her feet when the surgeon saw her. He had pressed her into service an hour ago. Fay almost fainted at the sight of her. She was scarlet from head to foot, her white hair matted with blood, every inch of her drenched and dripping.

These two extremes from the opposite poles of New York quality and beauty were equaled here by the bitter need for womanhood. Fay's patent leather suit and her slim bare shoulders and legs were soon of an equal red with Mrs. Vanderhoef's uniform.

The worst was the slipping on the floor. And the things Fay had to hold! to hand! and to take away! And then the silence! Nothing but the little clink and slish of knives, the ripping of gauze and tape, the surgeon's curt demands, the uncouth animal noises the soldiers made trying to keep from distressing the ladies with a sign of their unearthly pain.

This once wanton little girl and this once snobbish matron, this once dapper surgeon and these once hale and hearty lads now crimson with gore and doddering through a red Gehenna of anguish were all doing things that nobody could have done if everybody had not been doing them—the foe, the Allies, the least and the greatest men, animals, machines.

In honest mathematics, nothing multiplied by infinity is nothing still. But in the sardonic nonsense of war, it became infinity; the impossible became universal.

In the times of sanity, Fay would have died

of horror before she could have helped in the benevolent butchery of one of these poor boys who were brought in like rolls of cloth, cut, slashed, patched together and carted away. To have witnessed one such operation would have sent Fay to the floor in a swoon or howling in flight. But as she passed the knives that must gouge dozens and dozens and dozens of mutilated wretches, she never even sighed to realize that further hundreds were on the way to her door, and millions were yet to be massacred along the incalculable frontier of the war.

The first sound she made to show that she was not a mere handy kitchen cabinet of utensils was when the surgeon threw back a blanket from a thing more like a scarecrow than a man. The rips and blotches in the uniform were an index of appalling wounds.

Fay glanced dully overshoulder, from the boiler where she was blistering her fingers snatching steel instruments from scalding water. Then she let out a little whine and caught at Mrs. Vanderhoef to keep from falling.

The surgeon made a swift survey of the stretcher's contents and the tag attached, threw back the blanket and growled: "Take him away. He's past all mending."

Fay shrieked and clawed the surgeon: "No! No! No! It's Coily Berl!"

"I can't help it if it's General Pershing. I can't waste precious time on him."

"But you gotta! It's Coily! It's my boy. He was so brave. He hadda be! for he hadda whip himself foist."

"I'm sorry, honey, but——"

"You save him now or I'll wreck this whole Gawdam' joint!"

The surgeon blinked his eyes, came out of the coma of his frenzy, and snapped: "Well, why don't you fetch the anesthetic?"

Mrs. Vanderhoef, with a blur of tears in her parched eyes, tried to check Fay and break it gently to her, but she had dashed past and learned the grim fact, announced it with a moan:

"Oh, Gawd! It's all gone!"

The fierce eyes of the surgeon softened a little as he laid his awful hand on Fay's shoulder and muttered: "Better let him sleep."

"Would he—would he wake up?"

"Not in this world, my child."

"This woild is the only one I know. You bring him back and give him his chance to make good, d'ya hear, or—or—oh, don't lose me my Coily now!"

"Hold hard, then!"

At the first thrust of the knife, Curly came back from wherever he was. He saw the crimson caricature of Fay, everything red, red. He gasped in a husk of voice:

"Are we in hell, Kid?"

She kissed him and whispered: "Not yet, but we're on our way through, Coily boy. It's goin' to hoit—it's goin' to hoit woiss than anybody was ever hoit before. But they can't down Coily Berl, the comin' champ—the champi'n of the woil', can they, Coily?"

That was the word he needed—an appeal to his pride, his swagger, his conceit. He was—he must be Coily Berl. It was all he had to help him—that and the ferocious little fingers clenching his, and the warm christening of tears from other eyes.

Through Curly's tortured soul ran a phantasmagory of tanks, rolling over him, munching him with the alligator-jawed rollers, shrapnel searing him, bayonets piercing him, shells filling him with ragged iron in a pit of fog whose only light was a will-o'-the-wisp in patent leather, glinting and beckoning.

There was no anesthetic but nature's drug of exhaustion. When Curly could hurt no more, he hurt no more. He fell into what Fay hoped was sleep, but it might be what it looked more like.

For hours and hours Fay darted from the surgeon's elbow to look at Curly, wondering whether he were still in that great bolt of bandages, or had gone on his way. She fainted at last and Mrs. Vanderhoef laid her by Curly's side with a part of his blanket over her. She

slept hours and hours of woe away, and when she woke with a start, she wrung a groan from Curly that was better than the silence she dreaded most.

When that hospital was evacuated, Fay went back with the body that was just alive enough not to grow cold. She and Curly came to rest in a base hospital that had been a palace.

Here all of Curly's visible wounds healed, and all his bones were knit until he was restored to a health that was faultless except for one thing: he could not move a muscle from his neck down.

To a man whose whole life and ambition had been muscular, who had thought of hardly anything but the perfection of his sinews so that he should be the most agile, the most forceful being on earth of his weight, a life sentence to immobility was the ultimate doom. His very frenzies could find no expression. He never had had any language beyond the vocabulary of rough sport. Now he could not make even a gesture of protest or of defiance. He could not clench that fist which was to him what a brush is to a painter, a chisel to a sculptor, a pen to an author, a rifle to a soldier. His fist was himself. Life confronted him as a nightmare in which he was himself the marble monument of what he might have been.

With blurred speech from uncertain lips he babbled to Fay.

"I got the K. O. for keeps. It ain't gonna stop at the count of ten or ten million. I gotta lay here forever and ever like the ossified man in the muzhum. I'm petterfied."

None could understand his woe better than Fay, for her life was also a career of muscles. The speed and rhythmic pulse of her members were her heaven, and her reason and reward for existence.

She could imagine herself frozen and made Curly's inferno her own.

At first she tried, as people always do, to console the victim by belittling his affliction and pointing out how much worse it might have been. But she soon saw that this was poison to Curly.

Thereafter she poured out her grief. There was no need to pretend. She had merely to let her heart flow. She wept so bitterly that it became Curly's business to console her by making light of his disaster.

Sometimes she would dance for him to while away the endless hours. His eyes drank her in and he sighed:

"You're the one best bet for dancin'. You'll be woith a million to some manager when the war's over."

"That's the stuff, boy. You'll lay still and take the rest you've oined and mama'll go out and dance and bring home the bacon to her baby."

"She will like hell! Do you think I'm the kind of a guy would let a goil hamstring herself tryin' to take care of me? The gov'ment will do that. You go on about your business and forget you've ever knew me."

Self-sacrifice from Curly! Altruism from Curly! Rage because somebody else was to be incommoded for his sake! Love that could order its love into exile for her sake!

"Oh, Coily, quit bein' so good! Haul off and give me a slam in the map for the sake of old times. You're so sweet nowadays I'm afraid you're goin' to toin into a dam' angel. Be yourself, Coily! Be yourself!"

When Hugo Breen was granted leave, he traced Curly as soon as he could. He was embarrassed to find Fay with him. It was confusing to see the man who had hated him so well and saved his life, lying helpless in the care of the girl they had fought over.

In revenge he dumped a whole scuttleful of coals of fire on Curly's head. He praised him with an extravagance that became Hugo well and endeared him further to Fay. He announced that his battle report had recommended Curly for decoration, and the recommendation had been approved. A medal would soon be decorating Curly's manly chest.

Curly smiled feebly and said: "I thank you, sir, and I hope you'll excuse me not saluting, but I can't seem to lay hold of me hand."

He suffered a new pang when Fay went out with Hugo and did not come back for a long time. By then Curly had whipped himself again and he managed to disgorge his thought: "I'm glad you've took up with that guy. He's nutty about you and he'll make you a swell husbin'."

"Oh, ye-yuh? Well, not in this life, dear-ree. What I was talkin' to him about was gettin' some new dope on you. He's going to bring down the swellest soigeons in the business, and give you a real shake-down."

As a matter of fact Hugo had implored Fay not to sacrifice her youth and beauty to a man she could not help, and to join her life to his own, but she had only smiled and told him not to make her laugh since she had chapped lips. She kissed him and told him to run along and bring up the top sergeants in the medical world.

The big boys came down and went over Curly and through him, praised his condition and said that his only trouble was mental. All he needed to control his muscles was to believe that he could. He was suffering from an inferiority complex, shell shock, and a kind of spiritual lockjaw.

Fay was in ecstasies over the news. And so was Curly. But when he tried to move his muscles, nothing happened. He gnashed his teeth in an anguish of effort. He knitted his brows and strove till the sweat oozed. His head rolled from side to side in defeat.

"Nothin' doin', honey. It can't be did."

"It's gotta be did, Coily! All you gotta do is take up your bed and walk. Then you can begin trainin' once more, you can go back to America now and be the champi'n prize-fighter of the woild."

His head swung sidewise again. "I don't wanna go back in no ring and paste a lot of pugs in the snoot. I wanna go back with my regiment. I wanna be a soldier. I wanna fight for—for my country."

Tears were suddenly on his eyelashes in a gush of patriotism from unknown wells in his heart. Fay smiled sadly.

"Coily, ain't you fought enough for it? Your sweet country has mighty near ruined you."

"Yeah, you said it. But love ain't run like a business proposition. Seems like the people you love best are the ones you do the most for, not the ones that do the most for you. I never really loved me mother till I begun to toin over to her me prize-ring money. She didn't last long enough to get much of it. You're diff'rent. I never done nothin' for you but give you trouble, and take your heart out of you. So you ought to love me a lot."

"I do, Coily! Gawd knows, I do!"

"Well, that's the way I love America. I used to notice how the woist wounded soldiers was the ones that had the most patertism. Jake Stuke says it's the bunk. But I never knew I had a country till I'd gave her all I had."

Fay would not relinquish hope of bringing him back to the glory of his strength. He tried and tried but at each defeat his effort was more feeble. Even desire began to flicker out for lack of hope to feed on. He sought to explain it to Fay:

"If you'd ever been knocked out, Fay, you'd know just how it is. When the Joisey Skeeter give me me foist K. O., I was just this way. I was wise to every little thing. I seen the champi'nship fadin'. But I couldn't get up. I simpully couldn't get up. And now I've got a poimanent K. O. I can't find the right noive to pull me muscles. I bust meself tryin' but—I'd give all the woild—but you—if I could budge one of them concrete toes of mine, but I can't—I can't. Nothin' doin'."

Fay gave up nagging him. She settled down to be the lifelong nurse of a lifelong invalid.

Other people badgered him. Puffy Kinch waddled into the hospital like a human tank. He had a wound stripe, promotion and a decoration for distinguished valor—a word he could not pronounce. And he was greedy for more. He was on his way back into the t'ick of it.

This news rocked Curly like a jab in the jaw. But after one mad struggle he smiled at Puffy.

"Over the river, Puff! Give the Kaiser a sweet kiss for me when you ketch him."

Then he closed his eyes and pretended to sleep. Fay could tell that he was whipping himself again, throttling down the outcries and curses of unendurable defeat.

Often they put him in a wheeled chair and let her trundle him about the corridors and the great marble verandas. Sometimes she could get men to carry his chair down the steps, and then she would wheel him out on the grass.

Trees and flowers and grass were all right, but they were not in his line, and he wearied of them. From the distance they could often hear the blurred flourish of bugles, the dim thud of drums.

One day there was such a fanfare of brass and such a hint of far-off cheers that he urged her to run his chair down to the street. The eagerness in his face was like an inner sunlight. She knew that his soul was marching, though his poor feet were but so much lead. Through the iron railing of the fence they saw a regiment in khaki—Americans!

The French were cheering them mightily, because their aid assured triumph after prolonged doubt. The Americans rode in on the chariots of the dawn after a night of storm. These Americans seemed to be hurrying to the battle lest they arrive too late.

Fay, beaming on them with pride, heard Curly speak and asked him what he had said. He did not answer but she gradually pieced together the remembered sounds. He had groaned:

"Oh Gawd, lea' me go back in!"

Standing at his right side she put her left arm about his shoulder and squeezed the rock it was. The band blaring the jazz that had set all Europe agog, suddenly struck a more solemn strain. It began to bump the bumps. Curly croaked:

"'O-oh, say, can you see by the——' I wouldn't stand up when I could, and now——"

His head leaned out a little; hats were falling off in a breaking wave. Through the iron pickets he could see a torment of color in the breeze, a writhing, star-sprinkled rainbow above the helmets and the bayonet-glitter. That old flag was coming along! It was always coming along! And always trying to fight free from its own staff—beating about the faces of the color-guard like a wild bird, a red-winged, white-breasted bluebird!

"Fay!" he gasped. "Me cap! Me cap! Take off me cap!"

She whipped it from his brow and held it over his heart and was so much a soldier now in behalf of her disabled veteran that she brought her right hand smartly to her brow and kept it there till the flag should have passed.

As she stood transfixed, she felt a trembling under her left hand and a mighty thumping of Curly's heart. Wondering, but holding herself rigid at attention, she let her glance fall upon Curly and saw that he was being shaken with a great ague.

She could not see his face, but his head was bent as if he were trying to lift a tremendous weight—wrecking himself in a destroying endeavor. There was a quivering at his side. His right hand was shuddering! The hooked talons of the fingers were unbending, forcing themselves outward, straightening, drawing together!

The whole forearm was tremulous now. It was rising, rising, with a sense of rending itself from marble restraints. It came up slowly but with a deadly certainty till the forefinger touched the brow over the right eye. The head came back and up, erect.

Fay's tears of joy were lost in his curls as she understood that he was rigid now only because he wanted to be—rigid only till the flag went by.

And the flag went by, swirling, leaping, joyously determined to be free.


J.O'Neill '25
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Padlocked *by Rex Beach* *(Continued from page 63)*

indignation which had sent her home from Comfort Harbor with her head in the air had burned itself out and had been succeeded by a feeling of discouragement all the bleaker by comparison with the fine hopes she had lately cherished. She realized keenly what the influence of a man like Jesse Hermann meant and the difficulties she had put in the way of her success if indeed it turned out that he was lastingly offended.

When she looked back on that two weeks aboard the Swan and remembered his unfailing courtesy, his respect, it seemed incredible that he could have meant to embarrass her so cruelly. Why should he wish to do so? She had never given him cause to assume for one moment that he could—that she could ever consider him anything except what he pretended to be. And yet there were the facts. It was something she hated to think about, but she could not banish it from her mind.

Nor could she get over her resentment against Van Pelt. Of him she thought even more bitterly than of the elder man, but here again her mind stubbornly refused to obey her will. Of all the events during that crowded two weeks those which stood out most clearly were the ones in which Van Pelt figured. It seemed as if she could remember every word they had said to each other. The fun she had anticipated in disclosing the identity of the Lark . . . But all that was over. She hated Van Pelt. She hated him so fiercely that she cried more than once. Of course they were tears of mortification. He was a contemptible cad.

On the Saturday following her return Downing gave her notice that he was changing his bill in a week and would not need her services thereafter. It was a shock even more paralyzing than Lorelli's ultimatum. Bad luck seemed to run in cycles. She at once began a hurried and apprehensive round of the booking agencies but reaped no encouragement.

Pearl Gates was not so sympathetic as usual when she heard the news. "You would have your way, dearie. I tried to gas you off that guy Hermann but you had to have a convincer."

It was a remark bound to arouse Edith's resentment. "What has he to do with it?"

"Oh, try and fit that head of yours with something except a hat! Get an idea for a change. I suppose it's a mere coincidence that your guinea shout-promoter has a sudden rush of business to the throat and that Downing gives you the gate all at one time? You met a black cat or you saw a cross-eyed woman and forgot to spit? Turn over, jelly bean, your ear is folded . . . Do you read the society papers?"

"Certainly not. Why should I?"

"Humph! Now that you're so thick and sticky with the Newport *riche*, as we say in the old country, I supposed you'd thumb all the high-toned scandal sheets! Probably you haven't seen this." Pearl produced a clipping and handed it to her companion.

It had been cut from one of those gossipy publications of small but select circulation and it said that one of New York's richest men had been seen much of late in the company of a pretty little Broadway cabaret singer. Innocent amusement (ha! ha!) was all very well but polite society resented having one of its members parade a common conquest like this through the fashionable watering places. There was reference to the man's yacht, to his predilection for very young women of very great good looks; to former cruises not so decorous as this one. The paper shook a finger at him and chided him for his lack of delicacy.

Edith paled as she read the wretched thing. "This is abominable!" she cried furiously.

"Yeah! Rosen gave it to me. You may not know it but he's crazy about you. He's singing 'Eili, Eili,' and throwing ashes in his beard. Try to make *him* believe you walked home."

"What do I care what he thinks?" Edith stormed.

"He's the one who slipped me the low-down on your tonsil-trainer. He says that gargler never *gave* a lesson to anybody. Hermann hired him. Hired him, and fired him."

"How fantastic! No doubt Mr. Hermann hired Downing to fire *me!* And is paying the agencies to keep me out of work," Edith laughed scornfully.

"That's how the Japs took Port Arthur. Starved 'em out. You never know what men will do. Another one jumped off Brooklyn Bridge yesterday. It's all a matter of taste, as the sword swallower said. I've been slowly filling up with advice for you and now that you're in tough luck——"

Edith interrupted defiantly: "You needn't think for a minute that I'm discouraged. I'm going to succeed if I have to—if I——"

"Go ahead, pull the old wheeze—you'll succeed if you have to sell body and soul. Bodies, my dear, are a drug on the market and you couldn't get a nickel for your soul. Your heart is set on opera. Art, spelled with a capital A, so much greater, so much more important than the mere individual! It's worth any sacrifice! A lot of nice kids like you believe that hokum and they'd sell themselves for a chance to eat spaghetti with the high-priced opera humming-birds. But it's no cinch they'll get what they sell themselves for. There's a lot of cheaters among the body-and-soul buyers. Why don't you make up with your dad and either go home or get him to stake you?"

"Indeed! You don't know him."

"No. But I know his address and I took it on myself to drop him a line."

"You—*what?*"

"I wrote him a letter. About you."

There was a moment of silence, then in an icy tone: "What did you write him?"

"I wrote him in words of one syllable to come, get, fetch and carry you back to the sticks. For a prod I mentioned Hermann——"

"You had the effrontery to do—*that?*" Edith gasped.

"Oh, snap out of it! You look as if I'd cut your throat."

"No doubt you meant well. Meddlers always mean well, but you don't know him. You've made it impossible for me *ever* to go back, even if I wanted to. You spoke of selling myself; well, that's what it would mean if I went home. I'd have to bow to his bigotries, live a lie, just for my bed and board. I'd rather make that sort of a deal with—with Hermann——"

"You don't mean that."

"I do! I do! You've made a fool of me. I wish you'd mind your own business."

Pearl rose in a huff. "Thanks, kiddo! That's one thing I'll devote myself to nothing else but. Have your own sweet way, and the night you open in 'Madame Butterfly' I'll be around to apologize. But until then, as we say in the upper set, best of luck, precious old sprout." She flounced out of the room.

Edith was surprised one morning soon after to be told that a caller was awaiting her in Mrs. Mullaney's parlor. She had been more than half expecting Hermann to make another effort to see her and she assumed that it was he; she was astonished when she went down-stairs to find her father awaiting her. And with him Miss Galloway!

It was a stiff meeting, for Gilbert was self-conscious and took refuge behind an exaggerated unction that was wholly artificial. There was an exchange of desultory remarks. Then Mr. Gilbert said:

"In view of our painful parting, you are probably wondering why I'm here. Time is a healer; a father's love cannot be put aside. I hope your regrets have been as deep as mine."

"I've had my regrets, of course, but I'm not wondering why you came; Miss Gates told me about writing you."

"Ah!"

"It was a piece of unwarranted interference on her part."

Gilbert sighed. "It was a dreadful shock to me."

"It was a shock to both of us," Miss Galloway agreed.

Edith eyed the last speaker coldly. "I can guess what was in the letter. I'm surprised that father showed it to you."

"I was unable to meet the situation alone," Gilbert explained. "In my grief and bewilderment I sought counsel."

"Was that necessary? Even if you believed what it implied—and of course you *would* believe—was it considerate of you to consult a stranger?"

"Belle is not a stranger. I have an announcement to make—Belle and I were married, day before yesterday."

"*Married!*" Edith stared incredulously at the pair.

Her father nodded, his bride smiled; one might almost say that she simpered when she added her voice: "It was a private wedding—just a few of our oldest friends. We were so sorry you couldn't be there."

The daughter's face whitened; it assumed an expression of reproach, horror—the look of one pierced by a wound. "Married! Why, it's scarcely six months since——"

Gilbert broke in hurriedly: "I know. But circumstances demanded it."

"What circumstances?"

"My dear child! Yours, of course. I was prostrated to learn of your—ah—misfortune, and I didn't know what to do—which way to turn. I was in despair, my resources had fled. Then I was shown the way; my prayers were answered; I felt a hand in mine——"

"God's hand? Or Miss Galloway's?"

"Don't be irreverent. Belle's charity will shame you as it shamed me. She has come to take you home."

The elder woman broke in breathlessly: "That's it. I told him you should have a real home to come to, a house of refuge where you could forget all the—everything that has befallen you."

"Fortunately for all of us, nobody in Hopewell knows anything about what has happened"—it was the father speaking again. "Edith, my child, my poor broken bird, Belle will be a real mother to you and she'll teach you the true meaning of home. Alas, if you had been blessed with——"

Edith cried out in sudden anguish: "Wait! A 'real mother'! Oh, my God!" She hid her face in her hands and there was an awkward moment of silence. "If you couldn't spare me this you might, at least, have prepared me. But you mustn't talk about Mims—not like this; I shan't let you. Her memory is too sacred. I—I wonder if there's another man like you. I wonder if a man who reveres nothing which is sacred to others and holds sacred nothing except his own desires is really good or just monumentally selfish and conceited."

"Edith!"

"She's upset, naturally," Mrs. Gilbert exclaimed. "I understand, and it might be better if I withdrew while——"

"No! Don't! I want to talk to both of you. Let me have a moment . . . I don't propose to criticize you for what you've done: you are independent human beings with your own lives to live; our viewpoints are different, that's all. When you talk to me about a 'real mother' it shows you understand me as little as I'm able to understand you . . . I suppose your marriage was inevitable. You should have been married long ago. Mims realized that."

"You have no right to say such a thing," the wife indignantly exclaimed. "I shan't listen to you. I can make allowances for hysteria but——"

"I don't mean to be malicious and I don't accuse you of any offense, except against good taste and common decency. But I do resent it when you put the responsibility on me.

Father implies that he remarried to save me—or rather to salvage what's left of me. I'm his 'broken bird'! He did it to make a new home for me." The speaker's tone became frankly scornful. "What a pity to snatch away that crown of martyrdom just as it begins to prick agreeably! But I must. Bear with me, please, if I assure you both that I'm not what you so fondly anticipated, a fallen woman. I'm broke but not broken."

"Let us hope you are truthful," the other woman said frigidly.

Gilbert spoke in irritation: "Your attempt at mockery is weak and offensive——"

"Not half so offensive as your suspicions of me! Or the suggestion that you remarried for my sake. But you needn't worry—I won't go home with you."

"You must. I have myself to consider. I can't permit myself to be discredited by your actions, not after spending my life in an effort to avert the very evils that have befallen you. It would make me ridiculous."

"You must remember that Henry has enemies and they're vindictive," the stepmother added, more calmly. "They'd welcome an excuse to talk—in fact, there are rumors about already. Thank goodness they're only rumors, and your return would allay them. Leaving me entirely aside, you owe it to him to come back long enough for that. Rest assured no one shall ever learn from us that you have—er—I hardly know how to express myself without risking offense."

"Don't try."

"Of course if you'd consent to remain there under my care and guidance I'd——"

"You overwhelm me! Now let's be honest: I've done nothing to cause a wagging of tongues and if there is any I'll warrant it isn't among father's enemies but among his, and your, 'friends.' "

"Will you please drop this injured innocence pose?" Gilbert angrily demanded. "Or at least save it for Hopewell? We were at your place of employment last night and heard you sing, saw the whole wretched program. It was disgraceful!"

"I'm not proud of the work, but it's better than nothing."

"You call it 'work.' For shame! I have had you investigated——"

"Investigated?"

"By a detective!"

Edith flamed into sudden fury. "That's like you. No doubt it's the same one you hired to 'investigate' Mims."

"Silence! I have a report on your associates, your affair with this man Hermann, everything. But I saw enough last night with my own eyes, heard enough with my own ears, to convince me that you're not the innocent girl you were. It is your mother's story all over again. I saved her from herself; I propose to save you."

"Save me from what? For what? To live the sort of a life she lived? No, no!"

"If you won't come willingly, there are ways to compel you——"

"What ways?"

"There are laws and courts to enforce a parent's rights."

"What about *my* rights? There's no law that can make me the slave to your narrow prejudice nor send me into this woman's house. If there were, I wouldn't stay. I'm not a child."

"Quite so." Gilbert was shaking; his face was purple. "You're a wicked, untruthful, irreligious young woman."

"Religion has nothing to do with this. Religion is freedom, truth, tolerance; it's merely an attitude towards life. I'm ten times more religious than you. And wickedness! You did the wickedest thing any man ever did when you killed the sweetest woman——"

"We won't discuss that."

"And I'm untruthful? What about this marriage? You're untruthful about that; you're trying to blame it on me because you were ashamed to acknowledge that you wanted to get married. Yes, and it wasn't even for my sake that you came on here to snatch me out of my sinful life, but to save your own good name. Oh, what hypocrisy! If I'm wicked and deceitful and irreligious I inherited those traits. Thank heaven, you can't accuse me of hypocrisy!"

Gilbert rose. His eyes were bloodshot, his face was apoplectic. "We're getting nowhere with this argument, but you'll obey me," he chattered. "I don't propose to let you ruin me. You'll do as I say."

His wife took his arm in hers and spoke soothingly to him. She drew him towards the door. He was still muttering when he went out.

However distressing this interview had been to the father, it did not upset him so completely as it upset the daughter. It took her a long while to regain control of herself and then her anger, her resentment was succeeded by a great unhappiness and a vague fear. She asked herself if indeed she could be compelled to go home and if her father really meant his threat. It seemed absurd; she knew of no steps he could take—nevertheless the uncertainty was alarming. A man in his temper was likely to try anything.

Under the circumstances, she wondered if it would not be the course of wisdom to avoid him, disappear for a day or so—until he returned to Hopewell. It seemed a cowardly thing to do, but certain issues are better evaded than met. She decided, finally, to trust her intuitions, and inasmuch as she and Pearl were not on good terms she phoned to Amy Dupont. When the latter had been made aware of Edith's dilemma she was prompt in offering assistance. She and another girl were sharing an apartment and they had an extra room. Edith was welcome to come there for the time being.

This invitation was eagerly accepted and Edith got her belongings together. But it was impossible to move at once, for it was her afternoon to sing at WKL. When she left to keep that engagement, however, her trunks were packed and her arrangements were made to leave early the following morning.

It was a very sad, a very spiritless Lark who faced the microphone that afternoon. Tears were close to the surface, and there was a sob in her voice. That emotional quality which people remarked had never been more pronounced; she had never sung better.

So at least some of her unseen auditors thought. Van Pelt had been scanning the radio programs and, noting the name of the Lark once more, he had asked his mother to listen in with him.

Natalie sat in silence until the last note of the last song had died away, then she said: "Now I can understand why that voice moves you. I wonder who she can be."

Van Pelt looked up with a queer light in his eyes. "She never sang like that before. She must have known I was listening or—that you were here. It was like a—a swan-song."

"You may have enjoyed it but I feel terribly depressed." The mother stirred uncomfortably.

"Same here. I wonder if she's in trouble. I've heard her so often that I imagine I can tell how she's feeling. Sometimes she's happy, joyful, again she's blue and discouraged . . . There's no use stalling, Nat. I thought I was cured but I've got it worse than ever."

"Hm-m! I hoped your trip had cured all those notions. I've never seen you like this."

Norman spoke gravely, and with more feeling than his mother was accustomed to hear: "A queer thing happened to me while I was gone. I had a kind of an affair—one of those stilly-night things that sneaks up and takes you unawares. I got all worked up over a girl and the peculiar part was that I had much the same sort of feeling for her that I have when I hear this one. I didn't realize it at the time but—I dare say it was something about her voice. Same quality. Remember my telling you about a charming little gold-digger I met one night at a party of Hermann's?"

"The one who sang naughty songs, with an angel's face?

"That's the identical party. I ran across her

on the golf-course at Comfort and—she had everything the ads boast about: the smile that wins, the skin you love to touch, luxurious lingerie that lingers, and teeth that know no film. You'd be surprised. Refinement, culture! And what a wallop! She broke ninety right along. Well, we nestled together like waffles and honey and I didn't know how cuckoo I was until—I found she was the star boarder on Jesse's yacht. They were off on a cruise together; she was his guest of 'honor'! Believe me, I felt like a trained ape."

"No wonder But how could you let her put it over you? Why, you told me yourself that Jesse had fancied her."

"I didn't know how far it had gone or else she put the ether cone to me. She's the kind who makes you believe in Santa Claus; one look and you know the customer is always right, if you get what I mean. I've been bluer than a black eye."

"And now you're back on this one. I'm afraid you're a fickle boy."

"That's the extraordinary part: I am and—I'm not. I—don't know how to explain it except that I fell for the stuff in that girl that I've imagined this girl to have. I don't pretend to understand it myself. But one thing sure; she kicked my last scruple right in the face and I'm going to meet this singer if I have to hire ten detectives."

"But why? You say she's married."

"You were married when you met Dubose. Six days God labored and then he made Reno. There's a Gipsies' curse on me and I'm going to break it somehow. Of course, this one may cure me the way the other one did, but I've got a queer hunch that she won't."

"Assuming that she doesn't—what then?"

Norman stared at his mother almost defiantly. "I don't know. Trouble, perhaps. I'm not fooling. You caused trouble in your time; then you faced it and paid the bill. That sort of thing seems to run in our blood."

It was a moment before Mrs. Dubose spoke. "I can't preach, for my life offers a poor text. I'm pretty cynical about marriage, as an institution. But I'm sure of this much: it's better for one person to be dissatisfied than for two and if we'd keep that in mind we'd have fewer divorces. It's possible, on the other hand, that we'd have more. I don't know. At any rate, have the courage to play your hunches and merely remember that you're a gentleman and not a cad. Now, then"—the speaker's tone became matter-of-fact—"if I'd been in your place I'd have met this Lark long ago. But I'm sort of a buccaneer where my heart is concerned."

Fortune had not dealt kindly with Belle Galloway; nothing but stark necessity had bred in her those economies, those inhibitions, those stern powers of self-repression which Henry Gilbert so admired. To realize, alone and unaided, the desire of a lifetime, to raise herself from nothingness into a posi ion of power as wife of the richest man in Hopewell was an accomplishment. Her interview with Edith was the first thing that had occurred to mar her complete satisfaction.

She came away from that interview feeling deeply aggrieved, sorely offended, but extremely well pleased with the way it had gone.

She had always been aware of Edith's dislike and she had returned it, with interest, for not only were their temperaments antagonistic, but also the elder woman had been passionately envious. In spite of the fact that she had talked much, before her marriage, about offering the girl a mother's sympathy, a mother's love, she had never felt in the least motherly towards her, nor had she believed for a moment that Edith would tolerate any such make-believe. That proposal of hers was the result of careful thought and the first step in a well considered plan. It had appealed to Gilbert as strongly as she had expected.

But as to actually marrying again—the suggestion had awakened in him all the opposition of a suspicious nature. Gilbert was too keenly aware of his position and his personal

qualities to trust in the sincerity of any woman. He had even been suspicious of Belle for a while.

It had been a task to allay that suspicion, but she was a deeper woman than he suspected and she had gone about it in exactly the right way, stressing always her abhorrence of men, marriage, "sex," and at the same time employing her physical appeal with a virginal boldness and cunning. She had fluttered like a frightened bird when he began to show his preference for her.

Of course she had succeeded in her design, and why not? She had pondered it for years; she had studied the man himself until his very habits of thought were familiar.

And now this scene with Edith! Just when she, Belle, was feeling most triumphant! It had angered her terribly and yet she realized that it could not have turned out more fortunately for her if she had arranged it in advance. The girl was even more bitter and more unrelenting than she had expected; small chance of her coming back to spoil things.

Gilbert, on the other hand, seemed to be genuinely possessed with the idea of forcing her to do so. It seemed to be his idea that it would serve Edith right to be saved.

The wife agreed, tactfully, but at the same time she wondered, with a deep sigh, if it were possible to coerce the child. It was terrible to have their hopes crumble into ruins like this, but—repentance cannot be forced.

Devils could be exorcised, the husband fumed. He proposed to lay hands upon this evil and wrench it out. Evil he seemed to consider a solid, material thing which could be pulled, like a bad tooth. Edith would pay for her insults, through the nose: she would live under Belle's eye and obey her slightest wish.

The wife felt like smiling at this. Aloud she confessed that she was sorely wounded at the things Edith had said; they had destroyed all her innocent joy in marriage, they had horrified her. To be so misjudged! But the child's welfare was more important by far than any question of personal pride, insults were wasted upon the truly humble of heart, and if she refused their love and care, they could at least remove her from her unhealthy surroundings.

Gilbert didn't know about that. He clung to the idea of wholesome discipline.

But early the following afternoon his detective reported that Edith had fled from her lodging-house and had sought refuge with one of the cabaret employees, a girl named Dupont. The operative had followed her and he had made some inquiries about the character of the place and the reputation of the Dupont woman. Neither was very good. Naturally the father was angered and he was for immediately enforcing his authority as a parent.

But here his wife intervened; welfare work had familiarized her with certain disciplinary measures of which Gilbert knew little, and after questioning the operative closely she began to outline a course of procedure which intrigued her husband more and more as it was unfolded. He was in exactly the mood to listen.

There was a long and earnest conversation between the three of them and when it was finished the detective left to get in touch with certain officers on the vice squad.

It did not take Edith long to decide that she was not going to like her new home. For one thing, she did not fancy Amy's friend, a Miss Billee Gonzales by name. Miss Gonzales affected the Castilian in manner and in dress but aside from a head of black hair and a pair of bold black eyes she showed no indications of Spanish origin. She spoke with a dialect, to be sure, but it was the kind that comes from across Brooklyn Bridge. Her *r*'s had a way of disappearing when most needed and reappearing when least necessary. When Edith first arrived she was just leaving to keep an "oily" date with the hair-dresser for an "erl" shampoo. She spoke of her stage work, but later when Edith questioned Amy about this, the latter declared vaguely:

"Billee's done most everything. She's kind of a free-lance now. I teamed up with her because we don't clash. Since I quit gadding, she's been on her own a good deal, and she'll be glad of you."

Recalling the gossip at Downing's, Edith inferred that this reference to gadding was aimed at the speaker's friendship with Clark, and in fact there was ample evidence in Amy's room that he was a frequent caller.

All in all, Edith would at once have moved elsewhere had it not been for the fact that she had paid her share of the week's rent in advance.

That night, on her way home from work as she turned into the apartment-house, a stranger accosted her. Edith hurried past him and into the building

Miss Gonzales, in negligee, was reading when Edith let herself into the apartment; she had been to a movie earlier in the evening with a gentleman friend. He had just left—nice fella and he lived in Mount Voinon. Or was it Katoner? Amy was having supper with Mr. Clark and they wouldn't be in till all hours. He appeared to be wild about Amy and he peeled money the way a snake sheds its skin. He had a lot of rich friends, too.

Edith inquired curiously if the speaker had met Clark's chum, Norman Van Pelt.

Miss Gonzales ceased chewing gum. "Do *you* know that rowdy? Sure I've met him. Him and Clark gave a coupla parties here, but it's hard enough to find an apartment with privileges without having a Thoisday-nighter like him crash in and bust your lease."

Edith did not know what a "Thursday-nighter" might be and her companion explained cryptically that Van Pelt was always either two days late or a whole lot previous; he was all wet; he fizzed a lot but he never exploded. He was loose when he was tight, and tight when he was loose. His idea of a big time was to smash a stack of plates and his college yell was "Quick and Snappy!"

Later, while Edith was getting ready for bed, she heard the apartment bell ring and then a man's voice in the living-room. She assumed that Clark and Amy had returned but by and by there came a knock at her door. She opened it to find Billee Gonzales, still in negligee, outside; the latter urged her to slip something on and come out. She had a caller and he could get a friend in a few minutes.

When Edith declined in mingled anger and surprise, she heard another voice:

"Come on! Be a good fellow."

Edith recognized in Billee's caller the man who had spoken to her down-stairs. Without a word she slammed the door and locked it. She was shaking with indignation; what a fool she had been to come here! She'd move out in the morning.

She had completed her uneasy preparations and was about to creep into bed when she heard something that brought her again to the door, this time with her ears strained. From the direction of Billee's room there came a stir, angry voices, a cry, then what sounded like a scuffle. Edith flung open her door in time to behold the latter flying down the hall towards her and to receive her into her arms. Miss Gonzales was gasping, her face was ashen. Behind her strode the stranger. He was no longer smiling, he was grim and purposeful.

For the second time Edith slammed her door in the fellow's face and turned the key. She flung her weight against it. But the man made no attempt to force it open; she heard him pass on and open the outside door. He spoke to some one, another voice answered.

"What is it? Who are they?" Edith demanded hoarsely.

"It's no use! They've got us!" The Gonzales girl broke into a shrill cursing.

The knob under Edith's hand turned, the door was rattled, the stranger called in a voice of authority: "Open up, girls. No use getting excited and making a racket."

Edith flung a coat about her shoulders; she opened the door. "What do you want? Who are you?" she fiercely demanded.

The man brushed back his coat lapel and showed a badge. It resembled a large harness buckle; on it was a white enameled S.

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"I'm sorry, sister, but we're officers. Just a pair of boys from the Vice Squad. Don't make it any harder for us than you have to." He pushed into the room and looked about. "Got a man in here? We'll have to take his name——" He flung open the closet door, stepped to the window and peered out. He saw the owner's affrighted eyes fixed upon him and said: "It isn't exactly a nice job, but somebody has to do it."

"Looka here, you!" Miss Gonzales calmed herself sufficiently to speak intelligibly. "There ain't a soul in the flat but us, so let's not be foolish. There's no harm done. You ain't going to be hard on a coupla woiking goils——"

"I guess she's right, Ed." The speaker addressed his companion. "I didn't see anybody. You better phone for a uniformed man."

"Be a coupla gentlemen! There's easy ways to fix up these little frays. Don't be too cruel on us, that's all; we haven't got a million dollars——"

In a strangling voice Edith spoke: "Have you—are you going to—arrest her?"

"She *is* arrested. So are you."

"*I?* What for?"

Billee Gonzales came to her friend's defense; furiously she cried: "Lay offa her! What's she done? She just came here today. She's a good kid."

"Yeah? Tell that to the judge. Her name's Gilbert, isn't it? I thought so. Now, then, into your clothes—the pair of you. We've got to take a ride." The speaker turned to his companion. "Do your stuff, Ed, and let's push off."

The second officer left the room, they heard the outer door close behind him.

"Why do you arrest—*me?*" Edith asked. She could not believe it was her own voice she heard, but for that matter it did not seem possible that this scene was real—that she was here in the flesh. It was a nightmare. "What have *I* done? What do you accuse me of?"

"I suppose you'll be booked as an inmate."

"Inmate?"

"Frequenting a house of ill-fame."

The girl cried out, she swayed dizzily. Billee Gonzales again turned her wrath upon the intruder, but Edith was too ill, too dazed to understand much. She was, nevertheless, grateful for the latter's championship.

The man listened patiently, then broke in: "All right! All right! You're both good girls and we'll let it go at that, but my pal's coming back with a uniformed man to look after your flat while you're away, so hop into your clothes, unless you want to go like you are."

"How can she dress with you here?" Billee demanded. "Beat it, you big bum!"

"If she can take 'em off, I guess she can put 'em on——" the policeman began but Edith implored him:

"Please! I won't—run away."

The man shrugged and stepped into the hall.

"We gotta go," Billee told her in a low tone. "But they can't hold you."

"Will it—be in the papers?"

"Coitenly not. Who d'you think you are? This goes on all the time. It's a doity frame but we'll beat it. He asked for you and I thought you knew him. Ain't that luck? There oughta be a lawr to make these bulls wear harness. Now, now! Be yourself! They won't kill you. We're lucky they weren't stick-up men."

To Edith the events of the next few hours were both terrifying and humiliating, but fortunately that first feeling of unreality persisted. She was desperately frightened, of course, and at the same time she felt like an onlooker rather than an actor in the drama.

After the ride to the precinct station-house, a horrid experience, there followed the ritual of booking. An emotionless man behind a desk asked numerous questions and entered the answers. In the background hovered a horde of professional bondsmen—nocturnal birds of prey poised ready for a swoop.

Edith tried to make herself heard and so did her companion but their efforts availed nothing. They were under the wheels, they pleaded no longer with men but with pieces of machinery. Here all was grooved, the bearings were oiled, the machine itself was propelled by something vaster than any one or all of them.

Bail was set at $500 and the prisoners were given an opportunity to communicate with friends or relatives. Then the bondsmen flapped down upon them. In Edith they inspired a new terror; she could understand only vaguely what it was they proposed. Her companion drew her aside and explained: here was the chance to avoid a night in jail—the cost would be one hundred dollars each. But Edith did not have one hundred dollars.

"You better get it somehow. Hit the phone." When her listener looked helpless Billee exclaimed impatiently: "My Gawd, you must have at least *one* friend with a hundred!"

"Amy is the only——"

"That's out! That uniformed cop's liable to grab her when she comes in. Her and Clark!"

"Mr. Clark would help us if he were here."

"But he won't be here. They don't pinch the men. Only the goils. The man gives a phony name and walks out and the goil takes a ride. It isn't against the lawr for a man to get caught. Wasn't you off yachting with some Wall Street fella? How about him?"

"Oh, no, no! I'd die first!" Edith exclaimed. "My father's in the city somewhere but—I wouldn't let him know, either. That's what I'm so afraid of."

"Well, if you don't mind putting in the night, it's a good way to save a C. I've got enough to spring myself but that's all. If I was you, I'd stand for it. They can't do a thing to you if you tell the judge how it happened. Chances are the officer'll tell the truth. I wish I had half your chance, but I've beaten this thing twice a'ready and your luck runs out in time."

"Suppose I should be fined? I can't pay——"

"Gee, but you've got the heebie-jeebies! They don't fine you on this charge. You go in or you go out. Don't you worry—they'll put you up at the Crittenton Home and you'll be back in the flat by noon."

Whatever could be said of Billee Gonzales' moral character she was, at least, sincere in her effort to cheer and her concern was genuine. Edith felt a reluctant glow of gratitude. She was calm enough now to think of Pearl Gates, of Rosen and of Downing, but it was too late to reach either of the men and it was doubtful if Pearl could, or would, help her. In view of Billee's assurances, it seemed infinitely better to endure the ignominy of a night behind bars rather than to advertise her disgrace by a possibly futile effort to communicate with any one of those three.

When Miss Gonzales had arranged her own bail she made a final plea to the officer on the desk, saying: "It's an outrage to hold my little friend here and you oughta let her go. I'll see she comes to court. Be decent for once in your life, Sergeant. Why, she thinks you're going to hang her. Can't you fix it?"

"Don't be foolish. How can I fix anything?"

"But she don't know what it's all about. Honest! She's a small-town goil and as nice as your own daughter. She's got a job and she don't have to go wrong——"

"I know—I know. But she's booked. There's a charge against her. If she can't get bail I'll have to send her down to Jefferson Market."

"Why not the Florence Crittenton Home? She's no bob-haired bandit. I tell you it's the foist time she ever sawr a policeman. You can't send her down there."

The sergeant was good-natured enough to explain: "There's no room at the Home. They're remodeling or something. She should worry which place she goes."

From importunate Billee became indignant, her black eyes flashed. This was worse than Russia! It was enough to "make a poison's blood berl."

But nothing came of this appeal; Edith, in company with several other prisoners, some white, some black, some drunk, some evidently under the influence of drugs, was driven

to Jefferson Market Prison. She rode in a patrol-wagon and she went under guard.

Edith had never heard of this latter place until tonight; she found it more drab, more dreary, more terrifying than her imagination had pictured it. The van drew up beside a huge, smoky, red building; the arrivals were herded through a door and into a bare room. The door clanked heavily to behind them. It was barred. So, too, were the windows.

Again names and pedigrees were taken and entered in a huge volume; then the prisoners were turned over to a massive matron. They filed out through a second iron door and into an elevator, the gate of which was closed and locked behind them. The elevator itself was typical of the place, of the law—it ran slowly, heavily, but smoothly.

More turning of keys and slow pushing of metal doors, then a naked room fitted with a long table and a few chairs. Here the women were searched. Hatpins, nail-files, cosmetics were taken away from them. On one woman was found a vial of drugs.

Edith did as the others did; she heard words but they left no impress upon her numbed brain; she merely obeyed orders. She was beyond protest. The night seemed interminably long; she felt as if weeks had passed since calamity fell.

More corridors, more steel doors set in brick jambs, more locks, more jingling keys. Locks! Locks! Everything was locked. The women wore bunches of keys at their belts. They were ponderous, middle-aged women and they moved slowly, like that elevator, like the doors. Everything was massive, leaden, heavy—gaited to keep step with the Law.

The place was clean but sordid. There was a sudsy, antiseptic smell to it almost as offensive as the odor of filth. Edith's nostrils sickened, her soul was nauseated, she shrank from contact with the very walls.

Followed another deliberate journey, this time up a flight of iron stairs, through still another grated door to the cell block. The cells were brick; their doors were secured on the outside by enormous folding locks massive enough to defy a crowbar. One of them closed, slid into place behind Edith; she found herself in a ten-foot-square, sound-proof crypt against one wall of which was slung by chains a narrow folding canvas bunk. There was a pillow on it and two folded blankets. Opposite was a little wooden bench, and in the corner was a stationary wash-stand and toilet. She was alone.

There are times when sleep is not a sweet restorer, when it serves merely to drive away that merciful numbness which succeeds a paralyzing shock and is followed by a keener sensibility to pain. So it proved in Edith's case. She dozed fitfully during those early morning hours—complete exhaustion was responsible for that—but she awoke to a more cruel appreciation of her plight.

It was all so unbelievable, so hideous! Why, only yesterday she had been the pampered guest of luxury, the intimate friend of Jesse Hermann. Hermann the Mighty! That room of hers on the Swan, with its gay, splashy chintzes, its easy overstuffed chairs, its thick carpet and warm lights! Automobiles! Music! Laughter! Sunshine! Freedom! Yes, and—those mornings with Van Pelt! Today—painted brick, a concrete floor, a bunk hung on chains and a steel door with an outside lock which her white hands could scarcely have turned had they been allowed to try! Beyond those walls bedraggled women of the night; thieves, drug fiends and—worse!

Oh, it was too fantastic to credit! And yet it was true. Edith felt a sudden panicky urge to beat upon her bars and scream the name of Jesse Hermann. He could free her.

At six o'clock a matron called her and ordered her to get up, make herself presentable and prepare for breakfast. In the gallery outside her door she saw that a number of white enameled tables were being set with dishes.

Breakfast was simple but hot. Edith ate a little but tasted nothing, for her attention was riveted upon her fellow prisoners and that mental nausea of the night before had recurred. They were more drab, more repulsive now than then. Some were sullen, some apprehensive, others defiant. All were deeply depressed.

Later the matron told Edith: "No use of taking things too hard, miss. You've got till ten o'clock. Isn't there anybody you want to get in touch with?"

"No! Nobody! What will we have to do? Is there another—patrol-wagon?"

"Bless you, no. The court's right in this building. You've never been here before, have you?"

Edith shook her head; her eyes were strained. "I don't know in the least what I'm expected to do. You'll tell me?"

"Sure! Sure! You just take it easy."

"What have these women done?"

"Why, if you'd ask them they'd tell you they hadn't done a thing. And you'd believe them. On the books, they're charged with all sorts of things—petty crimes, you know. That colored girl who came in with you is a shoplifter. The woman by the window yonder is a drug addict. Most of the others are just prostitutes."

Edith gasped. Before she realized what she was doing she was explaining incoherently how she came to be here, imploring help.

"There, now! It's no use to tell me. You'll have a chance to tell the judge and he's easy on first offenders."

"But I'm not an offender. I've done nothing. I didn't even know——"

"If that's the case, don't act like one. You just get hold of yourself. You can either walk around here in the corridor or go back and lie down. Everything will come out all right."

At last the prisoners were taken downstairs and there turned over to still another matron. From a room they passed on the way issued that penetrating hospital smell Edith had noticed the night before and through the open door could be seen cases of instruments and what looked like an operating-table. She wondered dully what purpose they served in a place like this. She was to learn later.

Across a covered bridge they were led; the new matron again catechized them and again wrote down their answers. Then they were locked into waiting-rooms. There were two of these, bare rooms supplied only with benches and running water; in one the thieves were confined, in the other were held the prostitutes. Edith was placed with the latter.

More waiting while the women, one after another, were taken out to the complaint window. When Edith's turn came she was led to a tiny aperture which looked out into a room peopled with men. They were the officers who had made the arrests. A document was thrust through the window and she was told to sign it. She obeyed. Then she was returned to the waiting-room. Her knees were trembling under her when she sank to a seat. When would all this end?

It seemed hours before she was finally called and found herself given in charge, this time of a woman court attendant in a blue uniform. Her ordeal had come! Thank heaven the end must be near! The woman took her arm, guided her stumbling out into the court-room, then halted her just inside the door.

It was an enormous room, lighted from opposite ends by smoke-grimed windows of stained glass which were doubtless intended to afford it an ecclesiastic dignity but which somehow failed. Rows of half-filled benches occupied the rear; a railing separated them from the ample enclosure in front of the judicial dais.

The judge was a slender, white-haired man; he had the face of a student and the black robe he wore heightened his scholarly appearance. Behind him was a huge gloomy, black-walnut partition shaped not unlike a sounding-board; below him sat a court stenographer and a uniformed clerk.

He was talking with a man whom Edith later discovered was the assistant district attorney and with the bondsman who had gone Billee Gonzales's bail. The latter was excited and unhappy. Edith looked for the Gonzales girl

but did not see her and the reason was made plain when the woman at her side said:

"That girl who was arrested with you last night isn't here and her bondsman thinks she has jumped her bail."

Edith stared uncomprehendingly at the speaker. "Isn't she—coming?"

The other shrugged. "Sometimes they run away, but they're usually caught. Then it goes hard with them. We'll wait here."

Standing there at the door which led to the prison Edith Gilbert felt like some frightened captive exposed upon the slave block; she was certain that every eye in the room was fixed upon her. The faces dissolved, began slowly to gyrate; she felt deathly faint.

Her name was called; she moved or was propelled forward; over and over she whispered: "I must be calm. I must tell how it happened. I must tell everything."

By and by somebody placed a chair for her and she sat down upon it. The judge was saying something to her, asking her something. The district attorney came over to her and repeated it; he asked if she had counsel. She shook her head. Didn't she wish to have an attorney? Again she declined and at last found voice enough to say that all she wished was to tell her story to the judge.

The officer who had made the arrest was called, took the stand and was sworn. It did not take him long to make his case.

There was some questioning both by the district attorney and the judge. Edith was asked if she cared to cross-question the officer. She did not. Then she was called to the stand and sworn.

Through white lips she answered the first routine questions, then gave her version of the affair. The judge listened attentively.

The prosecutor interrogated her. When had she moved into the apartment? On the day before; on the morning of the day of her arrest. It was her first night there.

How long had she known the Gonzales woman? Edith answered frankly.

Did she know for what purpose the apartment was used? Certainly not.

How had she come to move there? Who was Amy Dupont? Had she heard nothing, seen nothing to make her think the apartment was not a decent place in which to live? Where had Edith resided before? Why had she moved?

In answering the last question, Edith managed to evade mention of her real reason; she could not bring herself to drag her father into this even by mentioning his name. She had been dissatisfied where she was living, so she explained. If she had dreamed that the new place was not respectable she would have shunned it.

So it went. The district attorney was, of course, skeptical of her innocence; when the judge took his turn at quizzing her she replied with a sincerity and candor that had its effect.

A stranger had come up from the body of the court-room, had drawn the district attorney aside and was whispering to him, but Edith's eyes were fixed imploringly upon the ascetic face above the black robe.

The judge made a pronouncement finally that brought unspeakable relief to the girl:

"It seems to me that this is a pretty weak case. The charge is frequenting a disorderly house, but the prisoner maintains that she was totally ignorant of the nature of the place, and there is no evidence to the contrary. She testifies that she came there innocently enough, only a few hours before her arrest; there has been nothing to prove that she knew the kind of place it was or that she herself committed or offered to commit a misdemeanor. It is quite conceivable that any innocent girl, under similar circumstances, might stray into such a place.

"This girl has a position which enables her to support herself decently. All this, coupled with the fact that the officer beheld no direct evidence of wrong-doing on her part, inclines me to believe her story. Unless further evidence is offered, I can do no less than discharge her."

Edith felt her spine give way, a sudden weak desire to cry came over her. The judge's face, the court-room became indistinct.

The prosecutor was saying something—something about a witness who wished to be heard . . . Into Edith's blurry field of vision came a familiar figure—her father's!

She choked down a wild, glad impulse to call his name and to stretch out her arms to him as she had done when she was a little girl. Here was deliverance, here was sanctuary! Here was an end to all her terrors! Her father! He had heard, somehow, and he had come to her.

There was no use longer trying to hold in; a retching sob shook her, she bowed her head and let the tears flow.

She was back in her chair; her father had taken her place. How stern, how impressive he was; and how magnificent in comparison with these people! What a handsome man he was; and how clean, how meticulous! At heart he was a good man, too; faults he had but they were petty and at a crisis he was as dependable as Gibraltar. Edith felt wretchedly ashamed of herself for having forced this supreme humiliation upon him. Of course she'd go home with him now. And mold her life to suit his wishes. After this she could do no less.

Henry Gilbert was indeed bitterly humiliated; this was the most painful hour of his life and, as he told himself, the cruelest test of his character. That he could rise to it was due to Belle, his wife, whose grief matched his but whose wisdom was far greater.

He began by giving his name, residence and business together with some of the high positions he held in the important reform and welfare organizations at home. The judge and the district attorney listened attentively.

Edith realized that her father had not once looked at her. He was facing the judge now and she had difficulty in making out his words. Doubtless that accounted for her misunderstanding him; he didn't seem to be testifying in her behalf at all. She strained forward and the tears dried on her cheeks.

Briefly, what Henry Gilbert told the court was this: his daughter was, and always had been, a "difficult" girl and a grave "responsibility." She was rebellious to discipline and her conduct and her choice of associates had ever been a cause for extreme apprehension on his part. She had run away from home, or at least she had left against his pleadings, and had come to New York, where she had fallen under influences that threatened to bring ruin upon herself and disgrace upon him. Worried to distraction, he had come on to protest, and in all sincerity to reason with her; above all, to urge her lovingly, kindly, to return home.

He had found her working in a cabaret, so-called, a public resort where drinking went on more or less openly and where the entertainment was vulgar if not actually indecent. Her "work" consisted of singing suggestive songs. Aside from this a confidential investigation of her private life had verified his worst fears; he had learned that her associates were common and that she was in grave danger of moral destruction, if indeed his efforts to save her had not already been too long delayed.

It grieved him to make these wretched disclosures; the judge could perhaps imagine with what painful reluctance he made this harrowing confession.

The court interrupted him to inquire: "Do you mean to charge that your daughter is not a virtuous girl?"

Edith felt that she must scream. Who was that monster made up like Henry Gilbert, her father? Here was a nightmare indeed. Had she gone wholly mad?

Mr. Gilbert flushed, paled, stammered; there was abject suffering in his eyes. He hoped that Edith had not gone that far. He had prayed—— But she was on terms of questionable intimacy with an enormously rich man. They had gone away together on the latter's yacht. The speaker preferred to withhold the man's name, unless the court insisted——

Edith broke out in a strangling voice but the

woman at her side checked her with a gesture.

The point Gilbert wished to make was that no good girl could remain good in the environment his daughter had chosen. So he had told her. But she had refused to listen, she had defied him when he threatened to compel her to return home. This it was which accounted for her presence in that evil-odored apartment—she had fled there to avoid him. He it was who had made complaint of the place and inspired the arrests. Prompt action, under the circumstances, he had deemed imperative.

"She has explained her presence there reasonably enough," the judge declared, "and you have told me nothing to indicate that she knew what sort of place it was. About her position, I know Downing's restaurant and the place is respectable enough. I'm sure you don't mean to charge that it is a dive or that all the entertainers on the program are immoral. Their surroundings I assume to be much the same as they would encounter in other public places of entertainment and I dare say the performers themselves are no better or no worse than the average.

"The fact remains, however, that your daughter was, for the time being, an inmate of a disorderly house and therefore in moral jeopardy. I am forced to consider, also, the other things you have told me. This isn't the first time parents have come to the court for aid; and I can't ignore your appeal. Do you wish me to send the girl home? Parole her in your custody?"

"I fear that would be useless," Gilbert told him. "She declares that nothing would induce her to stay there."

"Is that true?" The judge directed his question at Edith. "What have you to say?"

The girl rose; her face was blanched, stricken; she felt as if iron fingers were at her throat. "I left home because we couldn't—get along. What he told you is true only on the surface; the rest is a lie. I've kept myself clean. He's a—a filthy-minded man. Mother told him so, and she knew."

"Did you refuse to go home? Threaten to run away if he compelled you to go back?"

"Yes."

"Do you still refuse?"

"You—don't understand. He has married again. I couldn't—not after this."

Gilbert spoke. "My wife joined in our appeal. She is heart-broken. She has had a wide experience in welfare work, your Honor, and she is actively associated with some o' our most important charities and reforms. It is our wish that Edith shall be removed from her present environment and her moral welfare placed in more capable hands than ours."

The judge pondered. "My powers are clearly limited and well defined," said he. "Under the State Charities Law any female between the ages of sixteen and thirty years, upon conviction of being a common prostitute or frequenting a disorderly house, and who is not mentally or physically incapable of being substantially benefited by the discipline of such an institution, may be sentenced and committed to the State Reformatory for Women at Bedford. Do you and your wife feel that she is capable of being substantially benefited by such a commitment?"

Gilbert hesitated. It was a moment before he managed to say: "I—we do."

Edith uttered a cry of anguish, a wave of blackness rolled over her, she all but collapsed. The attendant was supporting her, holding a glass of water to her lips when that blackness went away; the judge was talking.

Then Henry Gilbert, pale, stern, deeply shaken, left the stand; he did not turn his eyes in Edith's direction as he passed her.

The prisoner was informed that she would be held for a period of forty-eight hours, pending a thorough investigation. Until that time the judge reserved his decision. Was there anything further that she wished to say? For the moment there was nothing. What could she say, except to repeat her story, to plead, to implore?

Somehow she got to her feet and was led

back into the prison wing. One after another, the iron doors opened and swallowed her—they were like jaws. Her cell door shut behind her, the lock slid into place again.

More endless hours of physical inaction and acute mental torture. Too late she regretted her refusal to send out a call for help, for when, in desperation, she decided to appeal to Jesse Hermann she was denied permission.

On the following morning she was put through an ordeal more repugnant, more shocking to a girl of tender sensibilities than anything she had so far undergone. She was taken down to that room with the surgeon's table, the instrument cases and the hospital smell and there forced to undergo a thorough medical examination. The memory of it was horrifying; she came away hysterical. She had never dreamed that such things could be. When it was over she was returned to her cell for another twenty-four hours.

Solitary confinement, the creeping terror of this place of iron and brick and cement, the resistless onward movement of the grooved machine had its effect. Shame, indignation disappeared and were succeeded by a sickening apprehension; a grinning skeleton sat on the hard bench at her side and lay down with her on her bunk. Her sense of wrong became apathetic, died; terror took its place. And finally despair. She could realize clearly but one thing—this was her father's doing.

In the back of her mind she retained the fragment of a line she had read somewhere, something about "remorseless hands clutching at the white throat of innocence." That expressed it. Her father's hands were at her throat; they were soft, pink-nailed, flabby hands, but they were remorseless indeed, and their strength was the strength of bigotry.

He a "good" man! She laughed mirthlessly and felt within herself the slow turning over of all her ideas of goodness and virtue, a futile rage against all the Henry Gilberts and that social system which permitted such people to impose their wills, wreak their "goodness," upon others. And their faith in themselves! She remembered seeing the letter-head of some organization, some fellowship of zealots to which he belonged, upon which was proudly emblazoned the astonishing motto or challenge, "We who are right with God." The smug satisfaction of that! The amazing conceit! Why, men like her father were defeating God. Witch-burning still went on, and the law abetted it. What use to fight the tyranny of virtue? What strength was in her white hands to spread the jaws that had closed upon her? The law had even gagged her so that she could not cry for help.

It was a haggard, hopeless creature, a frail, drooping girl with chalky cheeks and tragic shadows under her eyes, who was arraigned before the magistrate on the third morning after her arrest. With an indifference almost fatalistic she heard herself committed to Bedford Reformatory for an indefinite term, "but in no event for longer than three years."

The judge made it plain that he imposed this sentence not as punishment for the crime charged against her, but by reason of her father's earnest representation that she was in grave moral jeopardy and that she would be "substantially benefited by the discipline" of the institution. It was the court's duty to heed the plea of any parent and the prayer of one of such proven integrity and high character as Henry Gilbert could not be ignored.

As Edith left the court-room she saw for the first time that her father had been present to see virtue crowned and evil put to death. He and Belle were just passing down the aisle. Mr. Gilbert was wiping his eyes and blowing his nose; his wife was comforting him.

Next Month *Having, indirectly, got Edith into this terrible situation, Pearl Gates proceeds with characteristic directness to get her out again and thereby dramatically involves both Hermann and Van Pelt*

I Keep Myself Young (Continued from page 77)

who served with distinction overseas, lawyers who took degrees at the good schools, farmers who were trained at the State Universities and business men who have traveled and read. We have our dinner dances and bridge afternoons at the country club and the women in every town near here are organized to the limit. We have acquired, in recent years, concrete roads, magnificent schoolhouses, community buildings, trained athletic teams, California bungalows, grape-fruit in season, and the Klan. The neighbors are trying to keep up with the parade.

Of course, one doesn't meet many persons who are eager to talk about "Desire Under the Elms," Michael Arlen, Russian actors, birth control or where can you have it analyzed? But, as far as that is concerned, when I lived in the city I didn't try to acquire a writing pace by going along with the intellectual pacemakers. My environment was, as you might say, more Board of Trade than Art Institute.

Of course, every winter I am in Florida, mingling with those who have money and hope to acquire scores. The best comrades in the world round up in Florida every winter but they are all on vacation. Florida is a mean excuse for a workshop.

When I found that my summer and winter arrangements were weaning me away from the tonic influences of city existence, I tried to evolve a routine or system which would save me from becoming a moldy has-been or a phlegmatic outsider. I have learned that I must keep busy. I do twice as much work per week as I did twenty years ago when I was (ostensibly) young and vigorous. I deliberately take on contracts and assume obligations which will make it impossible for me to say on any morning, "I have nothing to do today."

In addition to syndicate and magazine work and various writing tasks, I am always snarled up with some kind of a "campaign." Just now my mail is congested with responses to an appeal on behalf of the Purdue alumni. Recently I have written about two hundred letters in behalf of an old musician in Chicago who is an invalid and needs help from the friends of happier days. We have chipped in $2700 for him. Somebody had to write the letters. Let George do it! Go ahead and be the goat! It is a privilege—not a penalty. Turn in every night, nursing to your pajamas the consoling thought that however foolish you may have been during the day just ended, you have not been fungus.

I promote all sorts of doings which will bring me into pleasant association with cheerful people. We have picnics, golf battles, various family reunions, Boy Scout encampments, dances, picture shows and sightseeing tours, all on the home grounds, one after another, so that there is never a dull and silent week.

I retain my club memberships and get into many enterprises which seem to be on the level and unselfish. I don't often drop in at the Lotos, the Lambs' or the Authors', in New York; the Chicago, the Chicago Athletic, the University or the Press Club, in Chicago; the National Press, at Washington; the Columbia, at Indianapolis; the Lafayette, at Lafayette, Indiana, or the attractive Writers' Club, away out in Hollywood, but I like to know that each of them continues to be my home and reserves a special peg on which I may hang the hat.

I have declared myself in on memorials to Roosevelt, Poe and John Burroughs. As a life member of the Izaak Walton League I am trying to help Will Dilg protect the game and fish. Also I am endeavoring to save the redwoods and conserve the forests. I am on a special Advisory Committee on Indian affairs,

appointed by the Secretary of the Interior. I know nothing about the Indians but I thought it was my duty to contribute my ignorance, inasmuch as other patriots were doing the same thing. I am in a league to encourage young authors in Indiana. Another league is trying to perpetuate the Lincoln landmarks in this state. I am on the editorial board of the Purdue alumni magazine and on the advisory council of the Riley Memorial Hospital at Indianapolis. They have me on the list for free dispensaries, a visiting nurse association and a home for crippled children. Get on the right lists and you will not be forgotten, even when you are out in the country.

I answer all letters except the fool kind and get a bundle of mail every day. Most of the time I am chin-deep in newspapers and magazines. I take the London Times to find out what the Prince is doing. Also daily papers from New York, Chicago, Indianapolis and Lafayette. Every kind of magazine except the all-fiction or those which are straining to be wicked. Like an exchange editor, I skim the dailies, weeklies and monthlies and grab the items that seem worth while. I know what is going on and keep up to the minute on the theater, which is my strongest weakness.

The outside reading is concentrated on travel, history and biography. I think the most entertaining books I read last summer were Weigall's "Cleopatra" and Werner's "Brigham Young." It is too bad those two never got together. They could have swapped recollections.

If I am leading a quiet life in the country, heaven help my poor countrymen who have to be strenuous!

What happens when a man takes his city predilections out into the farm-lands? Well, most of the neighbors are kindly and tolerant. Only a few of the dark-minded ones seem to feel that anyone who attends strictly to his own business must be harboring some ulterior and criminal motive. The others are willing to make allowances for anyone who is not "stuck up." I may add that the small boys down in the village call me "George."

Us Old Maids

(*Continued from page 39*)

woman living who seems to me the superior of her unmarried sisters simply because of her wedded state; though alas, there are a few who seem so to themselves. I hold my head high, and smile in all weather. I am a typical discreet feminine free agent of our times. I am a modern old maid.

There are thousands like me. And I am here to tell you something ought to be done about us. I am even here to tell you what. Marry us off!

In this so-strange universe there may be a few congenital virgins. However, most women want to get married. They want love. But not *just* love. They want wedding-rings, whether they want to wear them after they get them or not. They want them instinctively, passionately, eternally, not because marriage is marriage and a civil law, but because in whatever form it prevails, marriage is life.

Not long ago a group of professional women attended the wedding of one of their number. They were not frowsy frumps, these women. They were well-dressed, well-groomed, sparkling women, prominent in their chosen fields of business. Smart women. Good women. Attractive women. Old maids.

"I'll marry the next man who asks me!" cried one of these, gaily resolute.

And on the faces of the others there shone wistful sympathy, understanding accord with the emotional outburst. They all would, at that moment of sentimental longing. Attractive women. But unwed. Why?

Because they had never met the men they could marry. Because they were not clever at sex intrigue. Men resist marriage as women resist affairs. It is the way the game of sex

is played to its ultimate consummation. Unless the players tire or flee, the weaker contestant must always capitulate. Then there is a wedding. Or there is not.

But prudent women do not think highly of free love. It is a truism that free love costs them too much. As things are it is a luxury they can scarcely afford. They are reluctant to adopt its creeds, and sacrifice their social standing.

I have sounded out my friends on this question, somewhat to my own amusement and decidedly to their discomfiture. I like children, and they know it.

"Suppose," I have said tentatively to several of them, "suppose I have a few children?"

"But you're not married!"

"I know. There doesn't seem to be any man I want about the house permanently. But I could want almost any well-born man's child, if it were mine, too. Suppose——"

Invariably they look shocked, and then laugh.

"You're joking again, dear," they say.

But if I were brave enough to take myself at my word, I wonder which of my friends would still be my friends. One hand could count them, I fancy.

Of course women of independent means can acquire their children by adoption. But dependent old maids cannot adopt extra dependents. Besides, every woman wishes to suffer a little for her children. Not so much as she must, probably, but enough to make her feel that they are peculiarly and completely hers.

Here we are, then, you and Miss Nellie and I, and all the unmarried women we know who would make splendid wives and gallant mothers. We're not so much, you and Miss Nellie and I. Belike we're a trifle giddy. But these others—they are too fine to be wasted to posterity. We must marry them off!

Ah, but how?

Amateurish match-making often defeats its own ends. Advertising for husbands is ten-twenty-thirty business, too cheap to be considered. Only actresses can indulge themselves in high-salaried press-agents for their charms. And it is doubtful if one of them ever found her mate in her "fan" mail. Yet lonely women are almost always women who have no marital eligibles on their calling list, and have absolutely no way of getting acquainted with any. These old maids must meet the right men if they are to marry them. How?

It is not compatible with their breeding to expect them to make casual acquaintance with unsponsored gentlemen. Even if they try it they'll be disappointed. Most people can't size up other people at a passing glance. If they engage in impulsive conversation, they live to regret having saddled themselves with a bore or a boor. Old maids must combine their freedom with decorum if they would be happy.

Happiness can't be bought. But things that contribute to happiness can be. Why not acquaintancy? We have divorce courts as a means for separating uncongenial people. We should have connubial courts as a means for bringing congenial people together.

"Ho, you're joking again!" shout my friends who know me too well.

Yes and no. I am, but I am not.

I am entering a plea for the marriage broker. I want him elevated to a position where even Mrs. Astorbilt would sanction his aristocratic professional activities. The French manner of arranging marriages seems scarcely adapted to the requirements of American old maids. Nor do any of the other foreign matrimonial customs enchant us. We are too used to hustling for ourselves. If we would only go about our hustling in a sensible, businesslike way, we could all find men we could marry. We could file our pretensions with a reliable broker (who would have the flower of manhood at his nuptial beck and call), pay his fee gladly, however exorbitant, and amid the mahogany and Oriental rugs of his exclusive office we could meet our destined husbands—you and Miss Nellie and I, and the women who really deserve them.

The conventions cry me down. But propaganda can change conventions! What else has been responsible for the evolution of our modern marriage? The much vaunted cave-man method was once the conventional thing. So was the less bruited *Jus Primæ Noctis*. So, too, were trial marriages by "handfasting," and the undying Common Law. Propaganda, intentional or accidental, changed these conventional tactics. Propaganda could make it a perfectly correct thing for a modern old maid to hie her to a marriage broker and buy her a husband after her own heart. If it would!

Being a *modern* old maid has its compensations. One may be bold instead of meek, for instance. But nothing can ever compensate a woman for missing the love of one man, as she dreams it; and the love of little children who are her very own.

Can anybody recommend a marriage broker?

He Who Laughs Last (Continued from page 57)

of the seat-back behind her for all to see.

"Then the matter of the prize is settled," went on Mr. Talbott, openly pleased with the easy progess that was being made, "thanks to Miss Cave's generosity." He bowed an acknowledgment on behalf of the group. "By votes afterward we'll decide who the lucky one is. Now, then, let's see. Oh yes, now I've got it! I make a motion that the contest starts as soon as we pull into this town here and halt the car. We'll each be allowed an hour in which to frame up his or her surprise.

"If you go in for any striking effects in the way of fancy costumes, you can use anything you've brought along with you in the way of clothing, or anything you can find on short notice in any shop or store—in short, anything you can beg, buy, steal or borrow—is that agreeable? Good! And the same rule, I take it, applies to any other device you chose to follow. Whatever resources the peaceful village of Pony Falls provides are ours, eh?

"At the end of one hour we'll meet at the principal corner and journey along to this next town of what's-its-name? Oh yes, Cree City. If anyone chooses to save up a surprise for Cree City instead of springing it here that's to be allowed. We can give Cree City an eyeful, as they say out here, or not, just as we individually choose. Five or ten miles on the other side of that town we'll stop again and pick the winner. The second best gets honorable mention and a box of cigars if a man, a box of candy if a woman. I'll be responsible for that part of it."

"Oh, goody!" exclaimed plump little Mrs. Ware, dimpling like a pond in a shower. "Doesn't it sound just splendid, Gregory? And whatever we do, dear, we'll do together, won't we? Can't we two do something together, Mr. Talbott, if we want to?"

"I don't think there could be any objection to that," assented the gentleman gravely. "Oh yes, one thing more. I think it's only fair that if one of us elects to make somebody else a party to his or her particular stunt or plant or whatever you please to call it, the party of the second part must go under pledge to play up to it, and all the rest must back up the trick too and help the originator in every possible way to carry it off successfully. Is that also agreed to?"

It was and unanimously, so far as the prevailing five were concerned. Neither yea nor nay came from the dull Mr. Claypool. He was with the sport but not of it.

"Set your wits to working then, everybody. This road threatens to show signs of turning into a street around the next turn."

Probably less of concentrated mental effort

has been devoted to affairs of statecraft involving the destinies of nations than was expended in that onrolling automobile during the ensuing four or five minutes. You almost could hear brains creaking under the strain.

It would be like Miss Cave to finish plotting her campaign with expedition. It was. She did.

"Isn't that a hotel just across the way?" she asked, pointing towards a principal corner as the car slowed for a swing into what evidently was the communal center—a trampled little common with a band-stand in the middle and hitching racks for horses along two faces of it. "Yes. it is, I see its sign. Drop me there, please, Mr. Talbott."

Obediently he dropped her there, she taking with her a small square case in dull leather which during the ride she had been balancing upon her knees. No porter came forth to aid her but a Blackfoot half-breed lounging on the sidewalk under the skimpy marquee at the entrance graciously deigned to accept a half-dollar tip and in return therefor untied at her direction a mammoth English kit bag from the running-board and carried it in. She told the clerk she wanted the use of a room for an hour or so and vanished up the stairs.

Meanwhile at least three of the remaining contestants were scattering. Lena bounced out and darted very briskly into a dry-goods store, by good fortune finding there a Jewish woman manager who spoke German and who on being spoken to in that language showed a prompt and wide-awake understanding of what was wanted; and, what for Lena's purposes was better still, offered assistance of needlecraft. Chattering like a mated brace of Teutonic magpies, the two of them repaired to a workroom whence at once issued sounds of cloth being hastily rent and pleased exclamations.

The Wares quested in an opposite direction. They invaded a little shop announcing itself as one dealing in stationary, notions and novelties. Inside they also were lucky in enlisting the somewhat puzzled but entirely friendly cooperation of a giggling girl clerk. Swiftly they set to picking and purchasing and before they were done with this, their volunteer aide, apparently convinced that while these hilarious and slightly incoherent customers might be light-headed, nevertheless they were honest and could be trusted with the stock, ran at their behest next door to solicit divers loans from the shipping-clerk of the Pony Falls Wholesale Grocery and Supply Company.

With an interest quickening into curiosity, the clerk accompanied the messenger back, bearing his marking-pot and brushes and bits of planking and some large plain sheets of cardboard. On being taken into the patrons' confidence he immediately caught the point and, between fits of laughter, became their ardent helper too.

Mr. Talbott was in no such rush as these others. After he was on the sidewalk he cast a glance over his shoulder. Mr. Claypool still sat in his place, slowly masticating in a manner common to certain of the larger herbivorous animals.

"Ain't you declaring yourself in on this?" inquired Mr. Talbott.

"Not yit." The sluggish one seemed to begrudge giving up the two words.

"Saving up your little bundle of secrets for later on—is that it?"

"You might *putt* it that way," conceded Claypool and went on chewing.

"Suit yourself then. I'm not springing my own little game for a while either." vouchsafed Mr. Talbott. "He laughs, best who laughs last, eh?"

Claypool made no answer to this. Anyhow Mr. Talbott was out of easy ear-shot by now. From under the brim of his sombrero and without so much as stirring save as to his slowly working jaws, the present lone tenant of the car languidly watched Talbott as the latter went into a shop specializing in hardware, harness and undertaking goods. In a very few minutes he emerged and a little farther along the square, climbed a flight of stairs to the

upper floor of a squatty brick building. His errand aloft, whatever it might be, engaged Mr. Talbott for upwards of half an hour. So he missed the best part of the show.

As Miss Cave had been the first to disappear so was she the first to reappear, and give such residents as chanced to be abroad in the business district the initial shock of a series of pleasant shocks which they were to sustain this Monday afternoon. Stepping out into daylight, she still carried her little square leather case. This though was almost the only essentially feminine touch about her. Her coat had been left behind. The sleeves of her white silk blouse were rolled to the elbow; its collar was unbuttoned and laid back. About her throat was knotted a silk neckerchief of vivid purple and inflammatory red. On her bobbed head she wore an enormous cowboy's hat of white plush, it having the customary peaked crown and a gaudy beaded band encircling the lower circumference of the same.

Her legs were incased in a pair of magnificent Angora chaps, dyed black and yellow in alternating blotches of color—chaps with much embossing and many large silver studs in their belting. Below the flaring bottoms of these garments her small neatly-booted feet seemed by the contrast to be even smaller than they were; and on each of them jingled a handsome Mexican spur, elaborately strapped and vastly roweled. Jauntily oblivious of the wondering and admiring stares that focused upon her, she promenaded up one short strip of concrete pavement and, crossing over, promenaded down another. Her make-believe was a work of perfection.

Shortly thereafter the astonished populace had a refreshment of additional eye-filling spectacles presented for its free entertainment. For next Miss Cave's maid divided attention with her mistress, and next in order two more strangers were claiming their multiplying share of public comment. It surely was a notable afternoon for the Pony Fallians.

By a sorcery of quick seamstressing the blooming Lena had been transformed, what with a cord-laced bodice of black stuff and a flouncy short skirt of outstanding white stuff and an improvised lace cap, into a most creditable semblance of a Savoyard peasant maid. Her buttery tawny hair was plaited in two long braids which hung either side of her face and her eyes demurely were downcast as she rambled along very slowly with mincing steps—a picture fit for any musical comedy stage. At least three hypnotized gallants fell into step six paces in her rear.

The Wares were tethered together with bands of broad white satin ribbon tied on in wide bows. Little Mrs. Ware, blushing with embarrassment but resolute in her commitment to the role, was bestrewing her husband and herself with confetti plucked from a deep paper bag; and Mr. Ware, who constantly smiled a fixed mechanical smile, was with one hand ringing a clamorous dinner bell and with the other he proudly bore aloft a cardboard banner inscribed as follows:

JUST MARRIED
DON'T WE LOOK IT?
WE DO!

But the proclamation was unnecessary. Without it anybody would have known.

Thus embellished, these twain marched and countermarched and there was frequent applause; but to these outbursts they gave no heed, being silent except for their bell.

The hour allotted for the edification of Pony Falls almost was up when Mr. Talbott rejoined his companions where the car stood by the curb in front of the leading and only hotel. To reach them he had to wedge his way through a close-packed ring of citizens who continued to gape although the late masqueraders now were shorn of their fanciful housings.

Miss Cave showed astonishment at sight of the approaching member. He still was conventionally clad.

"Why, where's your rig-out?" she asked. "We four here have all made idiots of ourselves to grace a Roman holiday while you are just as you were before."

"Oh, I'm still in the race, I hope," he told her. "You'll remember there's plenty of time left yet. And I have my paraphernalia right here in my pocket."

He climbed in and took his station at the steering-wheel and they rolled out of a town that buzzed behind them.

In the automobile there likewise was a lesser buzz of conversational cross-fire.

"Honestly," Miss Cave was saying, "I don't believe I'm qualified. You see, I had the advantage—having that buckaroo's outfit in my kit-bag. I'm taking it East as a present to my fourteen-year-old nephew in Buffalo and all at once back yonder up the road I remembered about it. It was jolly though, parading about in all that picturesque Wild Western toggery. One inquisitive individual—I think it must have been the local newspaper publisher from the way he acted—stopped me and wanted to know if I wasn't Cyclone May Sutherland the Champion Lady Bronco Buster of the World. He thought he recognized me as the celebrated original from pictures he had seen and he cordially invited me to stay over and give an exhibition. He seemed to think the rest of you belonged to my troupe."

"I expect it appeared that way to a good many others," little Mrs. Ware was saying. "Really, Miss Cave, I think you made the real hit. I kept saying to Gregory all along that you were making the real hit. Didn't I, Gregory? I kept saying you'd showed more ingenuity than anybody. Didn't I, Gregory? But you were awfully cute-looking, too." She indicated that she meant Lena. "You know—cute. I told Gregory how cute you were, didn't I, Gregory? I haven't even decided yet who we'll vote for."

"Dose beeg clothoppers—three off them," Lena was saying with a gentle smile. "They chust came glumping along be'ine me. I tink dey vanted maybe I should marry *von* off them." It was clear that Lena highly esteemed her prospect of winning first prize.

Mr. Claypool was saying nothing at all, and nobody was saying anything to him. He appeared quite content to be ignored. As for Mr. Talbott he occasionally chuckled to himself. There was a finely restrained confidence in his look. This look became enhanced sometime later when he swung the heavy machine from the center of the highway and brought it to a standstill. Slightly below them and, in that clear air plainly visible across perhaps two intervening miles, Cree City was nestled down under the rocky convolutions of an off-jutting terminal vertebra of the range.

"Well," he said gaily, "I figure it's about time for me to undo my small box of tricks. First, I dropped into a hardware store back yonder. And here's what I got there."

From a side pocket of his coat he brought out a star-shaped silver-plated policeman's badge and a pair of steel handcuffs. The handcuffs he placed on the seat cushion at his side. The badge he pinned to the breast of his waistcoat so that two of its points showed beyond the slanted line of his coat lapel.

"Then I visited a job-printer's shop. The owner was in. I got him to turn me out a rush job. And while he was doing that I borrowed the use of a typewriter that he had in his so-called office and on a plain sheet of letter cap that he gave me I wrote out a communication and signed it—with a fictitious name. But this is what the printer chap turned out."

While he was speaking another pocket had yielded a largish square of glazed paper which, on being unfolded, proved to be covered on one side with printing.

"Read this, please, Miss Cave," he bade her and passed it over. "It concerns you. Read it aloud, if you don't mind."

So Miss Cave, in a tone of wonderment, began reading. First she read the staccato headings, then the body of the text:

$500 REWARD!
WANTED FOR ROBBERY

The above reward will be paid for information leading to the apprehension and conviction of Catherine Spencer, alias Toledo Kate, professional shoplifter and store-thief, wanted for the larceny of furs valued at $9,000.00 from the firm of Blumenthal Brothers, Denver, Colorado, on or about the ninth day of August of this year. Accused is 27 years old, blue eyes, brown hair cut short, fair complexion, straight nose, medium height, weight about 130 pounds; athletic-looking and speaks like an educated person. Is fond of wearing men's clothes and in conversation shows familiarity with sports. Officers are advised to use care in effecting arrest as suspect is dangerous. Distinguishing marks: This woman has a small scar shaped like a crescent on the left cheek and——

A sharp little cry of amazed comprehension interrupted the further reading of the handbill. "Why, that's me!" exclaimed Miss Cave. "That's my description."

"Exactly so," stated Mr. Talbott, his smile broadening as a bewildered babble arose from at least three of those present. "Such was the intention, my dear young lady. My only regret was that I could not make it more flattering. Still, you know how those police circulars are—they so rarely deal in compliments. And I'm glad you recognized the likeness so quickly. That perhaps may serve to simplify matters in another quarter."

"But I don't see the motive——"

"You will, very shortly." He assumed a manner of mock gravity. "Catherine Spencer, alias Toledo Kate, I arrest you for grand larceny and warn you that anything you say may be used against you!" He faced about, his voice at its natural pitch now but sharpened with emphasis. "You'll bear witness, everybody, that we all solemnly promised to play up to any hocus-pocus that anyone among us undertook."

"Oh, I quite understand that—we all do," Miss Cave said. "If you are going to pose awhile as an officer, I'm perfectly willing to pose as your prisoner—provided that's what you have in mind. And I'm sure all the rest will follow our lead. That's no more than fair to you. Only tell me what you expect me to do." On the last words she cast a quick glance at the seat beside her and made a grimace.

"You've guessed it," he said, reading her thought. "Kindly hold out both your hands, close together, palm to palm. I'm depending on these things—" he jingled the cuffs—"to give just the proper melodramatic touch."

"Yours to command," she assented and made as though to obey. "No, wait just one moment, please." She passed the small leather box over to the maid. "You're to look after this for a while, Lena," she said. "Now I'm ready for the next act of the farce."

Resignedly she extended her hands then and Mr. Talbott fitted the cuffs to her wrists and locked them fast and slipped the key into one of his pockets. "Not very uncomfortable, I hope," he ventured gallantly.

"Not very," she assented; "although a trifle embarrassing and apt to be inconvenient for continued wear—I might want to powder my nose, you know. And now if I might ask, what's next expected of me and the supporting company?"

"That's simplicity itself." By a gesture including all hands in the conspiracy: "We'll drive on ahead now into this town of Cree City. It's a town of three thousand population—this map says so—bigger than either of the two towns we've passed through. That means it'll have some sort of a lockup in it. We'll drive in and inquire the whereabouts of his majesty, the city marshal. I'll introduce myself to him as an operative for a big private detective agency in Denver. I'll present you. He'll get the thrill of his life, meeting the famous Toledo Kate. So will the innocent bystanders when they see you get out of this car with those bracelets on you. I warrant you that.

"I'll tell him that I've just landed you after a long chase across country and am now on the track of a supposed a complice who's believed to be over the line in Idaho. I ask him to take care of you until I've delivered these friends of mine"—he indicated their fellow passengers—"at the junction; that I'll be back to pick you up as soon as I can make the run."

"And then what?" Strangely enough it was Mr. Claypool who asked the question.

"Why, then we dust on out of Cree City for a few miles—you recall I suggested that."

"For why?" Mr. Claypool was actually growing conversational.

"Because we agreed to that part—that's why." Mr. Talbott was very firm and very serious about it. "Because we're going to live up to the rules; it spoils the fun if we don't. You see that, don't you? As I was saying, we run on beyond for the appointed distance—I believe I specified five or ten miles. Then we take a vote to decide who wins the contest. Miss Cave, being temporarily detained, can give her proxy privately to Mrs. Ware here. Well, we take the vote. Then we turn right around and hustle back and break the news to the marshal. We'll tell him it was a practical joke, or that Miss Cave was paying an election bet. I'll guarantee to square him. Slipping him a twenty-dollar bill will help.

"Anyhow, it'll be no trouble for Miss Cave or any of us, for that matter, to identify ourselves as perfectly reputable citizens. If, after that, he still has any lingering doubt, he has only to call up Lake McDonald on the long-distance. The people there will vouch for all of us. Or he can call up the printer and get further confirmation of the truth of the facts. In any event, he wouldn't dare risk his job and his reputation by keeping a well-known Eastern visitor locked up when it had been proven to him that she was exactly who she claimed to be. He gives her up and we go ahead, all of us, and catch our train."

"But look here a minute," the stubborn Claypool persisted. "Suppose this here Cree City chief, bein' maybe a careful man, should want to see your authority in the first place?"

"Thanks for the suggestion, Brother Inner Guard," replied Mr. Talbott with a tinge of satire; "that detail has already been attended to. That was what I borrowed Mr. Printer Man's typewriter for—to dash off my credentials. I've got them right here on my person," and he tapped that same breast pocket of his to which he had just restored his counterfeit reward notice. "Believe me, everything's quite in order—no, it's not, either." It was as though a new thought had popped into his mind. "For regularity and the appearance of things I ought to be armed. I don't suppose anybody in this car is carrying a pistol, by any chance?"

"I am," said Mr. Claypool, semi-apologetically.

"Is that so?" Mr. Talbott's eyebrows lifted.

"Yep, just sort of happened to be carryin' a six-gun." It almost was a shamefaced sort of admission.

"Would you mind letting me have it then for the next half hour or so?"

"Not at all. She's hitched onto a belt around my waist under my vest. You better drive on slow-like while I'm gettin' her loose."

So Mr. Talbott drove on at a reduced gait and at his rear Mr. Claypool, whose fingers seemed to be all awkward thumbs, fumbled interminably, first at his flank and then at his girth-line. Eventually though he handed up a heavy revolver in a holster swung on a strap broad enough for a surcingle and Mr. Talbott checked and buckled on the belt and bestowed the holstered clump against his hip, then speeded up again.

Ten minutes later Cree City was having its excitement too.

Getting away from there the big strong car fairly burned up the grit. Mr. Talbott let her out and let her show what she could do. Their bodies swayed to the swing of the machine.

Presently Lena, who vaguely was apprehensive that somehow or other this hoax would terminate disastrously for her mistress, pecked with a nervous forefinger at Mr. Talbott's shoulder.

"Uf you blease, meester," she pleaded, raising her voice to be heard above the roaring motor. "I sink we go too far now. Und too fast ulso. It iss more as fifteen miles already."

"Yes, and if I'm not badly mistaken we're off the main route," called out young Mr. Ware. "We got switched off four or five miles back, according to my guess."

"Gregory, you *are* so quick about noticing things," murmured young Mrs. Ware.

"I'm sure of it," continued the bridegroom. "Look, where we are, away up here, heaven knows where, in this lonely hollow!"

Sure enough, they were roaring into a densely wooded and precipitous canyon.

"By Jove, I believe you're right." Mr. Talbott answered, looking straight ahead. "Well, we'll remedy that immediately."

He throttled down and stopped her. Facing her around though would be a task and no mistake. The road had shrunk until it was no more than a double tire-track and on one side its shoulder dropped down precipitately to a creek and on the other the wall of the gulch rose steeply. He wriggled out from behind the wheel and climbed down on the pebbly footing as though to study the problem.

And then, with a swiftness that was astounding, that was incredible, he had them covered with that heavy blued-steel pistol.

"Slide out of there!" he ordered and in his words and in his eye and in the menacing swing of the gun-barrel there was revealed a great and poisoned viciousness. "Slide out—one at a time on this side, the whole bunch of you and line up here, in front of me. And you"—he signaled with an upward flirt of the muzzle at the dazed Lena—"you be sure to bring along that jewelry box that you've been nursing so carefully since we lost your boss. There, that's it—bring it along. I know what's in it without looking—sparklers among other things, and a nice bunch of emeralds."

Pressing upon one another and stumbling and shambling, the occupants dismounted and minding his sign manual, they single-filed to a certain spot in the narrowed byway just astern of the car and stood in a ragged formation, the four of them abreast, confronting their captor.

"Step forward and slip me the junk," he commanded of Lena. She performed, automatically, her entranced China-blue eyes staring out of a piteously white face at the lethal tool in his hands. "Now fall back and join your squad."

Lena fell back, trembling.

With the mask off, this jaunty crook relapsed into the finer argot of crookdom.

"Well; well!" he exulted and simultaneously he managed to be malignant and lowering and yet happily triumphant. "Well, you sure do make a lovely school of poor fish, standing there! And you're going to be some tired fish too before you get back to civilization. Because you're nearly six miles off the state road and even farther than that from a telephone. It'll be a long hard walk for you and while you're plugging along I'll be lamming on through by this short cut to parts unknown, as the bulls say. Tell the skirt we left behind in the rube hoosegow that she'll find her car up the line somewhere, maybe."

He edged past them, holding all of the row under dominion of the leveled gun and carrying the spoils of his successful stratagem in the bend of his left elbow; but then he paused alongside the opened door for a final taunt.

"Wowie!" He gloated on their discomfiture. "How you mob of simps have played into my mitt, right from the start. You sit and let me frame up the trap that gets rid of the only one of the lot except me who can drive this buzz wagon. Anyhow, she was the one I had to get rid of, to make this play safe and easy—she's the only one that might have sand and savvy enough to give me a battle. But she falls for my stuff and the rest of you fall for it. Oh say, ain't it just too rich? And on top of that you, you big dumb cheese, you let me con you out of your gun—the only other gun in the outfit, by gosh! That reminds me!" His grin broadened. "I guess I win the first prize of the surprise party. No, it's second money now; first prize is here under my arm. It's been first prize all along if only you saps had been wise——"

It was Lena who expelled from her throat the involuntary screech which gave the rogue his warning. Not that the latter needed any special warning, though. He too had been amply cognizant of the sudden forward lunge and rush of the man Claypool.

One second Claypool was slouched there between Lena and young Ware, a figure of impotence, and in the next, yes, in the fractional part of the next, he was leaping forward with an unexpected agility; and what had seemed furrows of fat across a broad back showed beneath his clothing as ridgy and bunching muscles.

Talbott threw down on him pointblank and pulled trigger. The gun snapped. He pulled again, it snapped again. He triggered the empty cylinder round, six futile snaps all told, then flung the useless pistol away and with the oncharging man almost upon him, he jammed his free hand into his right side coat pocket—and brought it out empty.

And now Claypool had closed with him and had wrapped both his arms around him and was squeezing him, shaking him, wrestling him, slapping him—actually slapping him—into gasping, choking helplessness. In what seemed to these breathless spectators no time at all, to speak of, the struggle was over. The victor, looking up from where he knelt on the prostrate form of the slighter man, addressed them in commonplace language:

"He never had a chance. Better come here, one of you, and gather up this joolry. Some of it seems to have got spilt on the ground."

He climbed upon his feet and dragged the vanquished one up upon his, which were unsteady under their owner. He pondered momentarily and then spoke to the yet paralyzed onlookers:

"Yes, sir, he never had a chance. You see, behind his back I emptied all the shells out of my gun before I handed her over to him. And when he raised up to get out of the car that last time there in front of the jail, I lifted his own gun out of his side pocket—nice little automatic it is. So you see I had him whenever I got ready to grab holt of him. But naturally, I was going to let him play his string out."

"Then you suspected something all the time? How marvelous!" trilled the bride, regaining her powers of utterance.

"Say, that's wonderful!" exclaimed her husband, advancing to gather up the scattered contents of the gaping jewelry box. "Who are you, anyhow?"

"Me? I'm sheriff of Quartz County, this state. And there wasn't no suspectin' about it. I knowed about him—in fact, I been campin' on this party's trail for quite some time." He made, as it were, a combination gesture at and with his half-strangled victim. That is to say, he bodily swung the prisoner about so the audience might have a better look at him and then gently rocked him to and fro as though for punctuation of the maneuver. "This here, young folks, is what they call an international criminal. His real name's Trainer, Vic Trainer.

"Well"—he appeared to be casting about for concluding words—"well, it's about time we was startin' back, ain't it?"

"But who's going to drive the car now—now that——" began little Mrs. Ware.

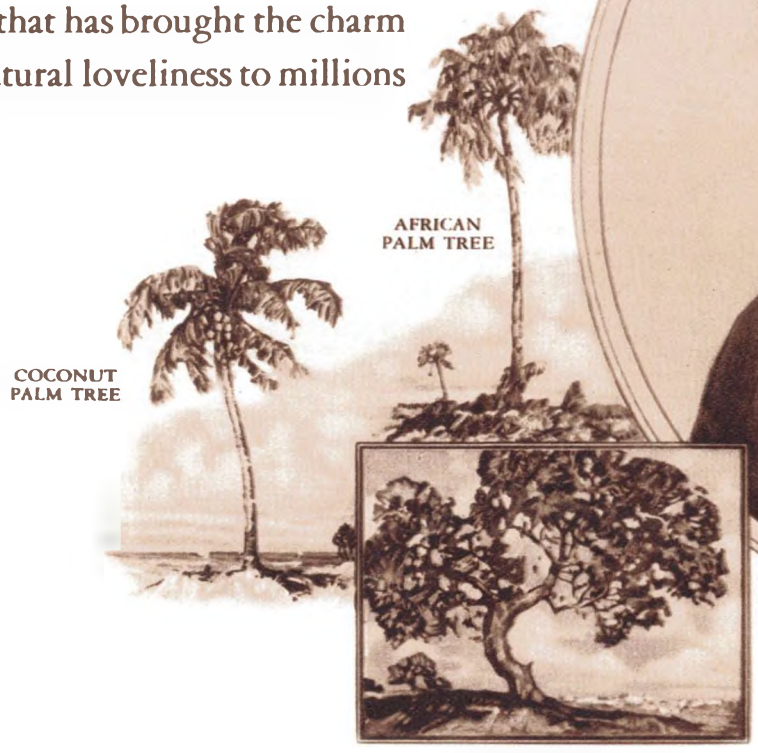
"Oh, he'll drive us," said Mr. Claypool reassuringly and imparting some more waving motions to his mute subject. "I'll be setting right alongside of him, goin' back!" He had an afterthought: "I'll hitch him by one hand to the steering-wheel with them cuffs that he was so accommodatin' as to buy."

Mrs. Ware had an inspiration. She ran forward and plucked the first prize from the forward seat and thrust it into Sheriff Claypool's shirt-front. For he was not wearing a tie.

Hearst's International–Cosmopolitan for February, 1926

Nature's Gift to Beauty

is embodied in this gentle, daily care that has brought the charm of natural loveliness to millions



Soap from Trees

The only oils in Palmolive Soap are the priceless beauty oils from these three trees—pictured above—and no other fats whatsoever.

That is why Palmolive Soap is the natural color that it is—for palm and olive oils, nothing else, give Palmolive its green color.

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Women have learned that gentle, common-sense care is far more potent than the most involved of beauty methods. For Youth is thus retained.

Keeping the skin clean is the secret. Doing this with pure soap . . . with soap made for ONE purpose only, to safeguard good complexions . . . is the *important* part to remember.

So, more and more, thousands turn to Palmolive . . . a soap that is kind to the skin, a soap made with beautiful complexions always in mind.

The rule to follow if guarding a good complexion is your goal

Wash your face with soothing Palmolive. Massage it gently into the skin. Rinse thoroughly. Then repeat both the washing and rinsing. Let the final rinsing be with cold water. If your skin is inclined to dryness, apply a touch of good cold cream that is all. Do this regularly, and particularly before retiring.

Use powder and rouge if you wish. But never leave them on over night. If you do, they clog the pores, often enlarge them. Blackheads and disfigurements often follow. They must be washed away.

Sallow, unattractive skin no longer excusable

Thus in a simple manner, millions since the days of Cleopatra have found beauty and charm.

No medicaments are necessary. Just remove the day's accumulations of dirt, oil and perspiration, cleanse the pores, and nature will be kind to you. Your skin will be of fine texture. Your color will be good. Wrinkles will not be the problem as the years advance.

Avoid this mistake

Do not use ordinary soaps in the treatment given above. Do not think any green soap, or represented as of palm and olive oils, is the same as Palmolive.

And it costs but 10c the cake! Obtain a cake today. Note the difference just one week makes.

Palmolive Soap is untouched by human hands until you break the wrapper it is never sold unwrapped

THE PALMOLIVE COMPANY (Del. Corp.), CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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A few short months ago, a new and higher standard was set. With Cosmopolitan was combined Hearst's International and into one single magazine came, as though on one great stage, a grouping of authors, writers, and artists such as never before had been assembled.

The results have been not only gratifying but startling. Also they are important to every manufacturer interested in a policy of constant betterment of an already fine product. Actually hundreds of thousands of new purchasers have been added to the number that not long ago was considered an astonishing attainment.

A magazine is an *institution.* A great magazine is a *great* institution. A magazine like Cosmopolitan, sought out each month by the American people at a price clearly proving its position, and staying for thirty days as a part of their everyday life, is a *unique* institution as well as a *great* one.

TODAY on the counter of the little general store in the frontier towns of Alaska—in the hotels at Palm Beach and "on the corner" in every city in this country, December COSMOPOLITAN is being purchased by people who wish to stimulate their lives and their living by reading the work of the really great writers of the hour.

The Black Hunter (*Continued from page 93*)

that—about—the Richelieu!" She swayed again and her hand caught at the edge of the table to steady herself. "If David is a traitor—then—there is—no God," she finished, and even in Bigot's breast came a passing touch of pity as he looked upon her hope and beauty dying before his eyes.

But he did not speak. He dragged himself like a sick man to another chair and sat down with his face buried in his hands. He heard Anne crumple into the chair from which she had risen. And then her dry, terrible sobbing filled the room. That was what he wanted. He looked up. Anne's head was buried in her arms on the table. Her heart was broken.

He went to her side and for a few moments spoke words which she only half heard. God alone could bear witness to the effort he had made to save David, he said. But it had been impossible under the circumstances. When the paroxysm of her shattered nerves had passed he let his words fall like pointed knives in her ears. The military and not his own friends had caught David, he explained. Vaudreuil was at the head of that, and Vaudreuil and all his council, embracing the highest officers in the land, had nothing but death in their hearts for the treachery that was imperiling New France. So bitter were they that preparations had already been made for a court-martial and David's fate would be known very soon. In a voice that trembled with emotion he entreated God to favor him in his last great fight for David.

To Anne's tortured brain and body his voice was like a soothing hand—the voice of her greatest friend on earth, the only friend who could save David. She felt a strange sense of something that was more than hope passing over her again and involuntarily her hands found one of Bigot's and clung to it. Her sobbing ended.

"I must see David," she whispered.

Bigot's free arm had closed gently about her.

"That is why I had you come, dear. In this hour I knew David would want to see you."

He could not have asked for a better development of the situation. Anne herself had suggested the step which would take her into the trap he had set for her.

"You must be brave. The fight is not yet lost. David's fate at present hangs in the balance, and when the Council has surveyed its evidence and is ready for a decision I shall appear before it with a request and demand for leniency. Meanwhile if you can persuade David to accredit his present position to the influence of the Black Hunter, and get him to give evidence against the scoundrel who has ruined him, it will help his case so much that the Council can refuse quite gracefully to pass the judgment of death upon him."

"Death!" The word broke in a startled gasp from Anne's lips and the room seemed to be swirling suddenly about her.

"Yes, it is that bad," said Bigot. "If David's capture might have been kept a secret among ourselves——"

"You believe that David Rock is guilty?" Anne's voice cut in upon him sharply and her eyes blazed amazement and indignant challenge. "*You* believe that?"

Bigot bowed his head. "The evidence was found inside the lining of his coat," he replied gently. "No matter what I believe, unless he betrays the Black Hunter the Council and all of New France will condemn him as guilty. I know, like you, my precious Anne, that in his heart David is clean. To save himself he must sacrifice that other who is at the bottom of his ruin. Just that much you must urge upon him, while I, with every atom of power at my command, shall work to free him from the terrible fate which suspends itself by nothing stronger than a gossamer thread above him."

Anne made no answer. She waited while he called Deschenaux, who was conveniently near in the outer rooms. Then he walked with her, holding her hand tenderly in his own, to the door through which she had entered his apartment. The secretary opened it for them.

"Deschenaux will go with you," he said. "I shall return to the council room. The minutes are drawing near when action will be taken. Be brave, dear heart, and win from David the evidence which will help so much to save him."

It was not uncommon in these days of Bigot's régime for the Intendant's plotters to assemble at night to plan or perform those hidden acts of moral and political rottenness which meant the ultimate destruction of the nation.

When she had gone he straightened himself with a gesture of relief and his face flashed with a triumphant smile. One more chapter in his little drama—the meeting between Anne and David—and his great moment would arrive.

Scarcely had Anne and Deschenaux disappeared through one door than de Pean had entered through another. Bigot turned.

"You have cared well for Sister Esther, who came with Mademoiselle St. Denis?" he asked. "She knows what has happened, has seen the evidence, and——"

"Has been told to the minutest detail how you are fighting to save David Rock," de Pean cut in, with a half mocking inclination of his head. "She is praying not only for Anne but also for you, François!"

Bigot's face shone with joyous satisfaction. "Have her kept comfortable and commend her praying," he said. "And do not by any chance let her see Anne."

From the moment Deschenaux led the way into the candle-lighted murk of a corridor that was new and strange to her Anne felt herself smothered in an atmosphere of gloom that seemed to press to her very heart. The candle-glow was ghostly, the silence deathlike, and as her escort opened door after door into other halls and corridors the grimness of the thing which threatened all her future lay heavily about her.

To pass sentence! The three words pierced Anne's brain. She quickened her steps so that she went ahead of her companion. She had no thought or desire to remain unseen. The wide double doors of the council chamber were partly open and the unusualness of this fact did not strike her. A brighter light poured from the room out into the hall and through this light a figure hurried into the chamber as she and Deschenaux approached.

She recognized the figure. It was Cadet, the commissary-general. An overwhelming impulse seized her to follow him in, to fight for David, to declare his innocence before them all and demand his freedom.

Yet something held her back, a hand within her stronger even than the impulse to begin her fight now with the men round the council table. It dragged her away from the door and toward David. She must see him first. The soul of David, his innocence and his own story must come back with her to that room and the men who were in it. Then she would win! She would not need Bigot. She would need only herself—and the truth from David.

As they continued into the more dimly lighted extremity of the hall she did not notice Captain René Robineau, who had entered from the outer corridor, and whose face was grimly set and white as he watched them disappear.

Into another and narrower tunnel-like passage and down a flight of steps to the lower level of the labyrinth of secret underground storerooms and dungeons under the Palace, Anne followed the steps of Deschenaux. There was little time for the horror of the cold and ghostly walls to creep upon her, for scarcely had they taken a score of paces beyond the steps than the corridor opened into a rock-walled room filled with the light of burning candles. One-half of this room was divided into two barred prison-cells. And in one of these cells, facing her as she entered, stood David.

In that same moment Deschenaux's footsteps were retreating rapidly down the passage, and before Anne's lips had formed a word or sound the upper door had opened and closed and he was gone.

It was David's attitude and his terrible appearance as he looked at her which held her speechless and almost powerless to move, now that she was alone with him. Somehow it seemed as if he had expected her and was waiting like that, grim and motionless, for her arrival. His coat was gone. His shirt was torn so that one shoulder gleamed naked in the candle-glow and his long hair was tangled and uncombed. But it was what lay in his eyes, his emotionless contemplation of her that shocked her.

She advanced toward him. "David!" she greeted him. "David!"

"Mademoiselle St. Denis," he replied, and his voice was so cold and unlike the David she had known that it chilled the blood in her veins.

She reached the iron bars and thrust her hands between them but he made no movement toward her. He was like a man cut out of stone. His silence frightened her. David himself frightened her. No sight of love-light or joy in his eyes, no gladness and no emotion that might betray more than dispassionate and uninterested recognition of her!

Her hands gripped the rough bars.

"Dear God, why do you look at me like that?" she entreated. "I have come to you as quickly as I could! Sister Esther is with me. She is out there—now—waiting. I came to tell them that they lie, that it is all false, that you are not a traitor and never could be one —that it is all a terrible mistake——"

She wanted to cry out her love first of all, but the smile which came to his lips stopped her as suddenly as if he had struck at her. He bowed a little. She had never seen cynicism and mockery in his face before.

"Yes, a mistake," he said quietly. "The mistake, Mademoiselle, of allowing yourself to become François Bigot's toy."

If a drop of blood remained in her face it went out then. The agony of his blow might have sent her swaying from the cell if she had not gripped fiercely at the bars. A dizziness overcame her, yet through it she heard clearly David's voice.

"De Pean told me Bigot had sent for you and that you were coming," he was saying. "You see, they wanted the show to be complete—wanted you to see me like this so there could be no doubt left in your mind as to my guilt. I asked de Pean to have you kept away from me but I knew they would not do that. And now that you are here I am not sorry. You already believe me a liar because I told you honestly that I did not know Peter Joel was in Quebec the day you saw him from the convent window. Now I want you to believe I am worse than that, a criminal and a traitor. Of course Bigot showed you my coat in which the papers and maps were concealed. *They* can leave no doubt, can they, Mademoiselle, when I confess to you that the coat is mine and the papers were found on me? You, like Bigot, must surely agree that I should be hung."

"David—David—this terrible thing that has happened has made you unlike yourself," moaned Anne. "Come to me! Let me touch you! Kiss me—let me know it is you—*you*—and not some one else who is speaking to me in this strange, mad way——"

Again she reached her arms through to him, but David did not move, and she saw in his face a thing which never in all her life had she seen there before—something which struck out at her in all its bitterness, almost like hatred.

She tried to speak again and her palsied lips whispered, "David—my David—I love you—love you——"

"So it would seem," and through the mist that blinded her she saw David coldly incline his head again. "So it would seem, from the day you succeeded in getting me to follow you from Grondin Manor that I might be hung as a traitor in Quebec. So fools might think, after knowing how well you have played the game with Bigot. But I, knowing that I am here because of you, refuse to believe it. Go back to Bigot, for whom you have sacrificed me. Please do that. You made your choice a long time ago—years and years ago, it seems to me—and you cannot change again even if it was in my heart to let you. I choose to be alone. I am not afraid or lonely, for I have with me one splendid consolation. It is the knowledge that some day you will know the truth of Bigot's friendship. And then—what a monstrously funny thing it will be for you to think of all the rest of your life!"

David, with his ears trained to the falling of wilderness leaves, had caught the sly returning of Deschenaux's footsteps after the opening and closing of the upper door, and now in a louder voice he cried: "Deschenaux, you may come in from your eavesdropping and assist Mademoiselle St. Denis back to your master, where you may report fully on what has passed between us. Give my compliments to Bigot, and tell him that you are almost as great a blackguard as he. Come quickly, for Mademoiselle seems a little faint at hearing so much truth so honestly spoken!"

And Anne, in truth, felt that the world had slipped away from under her. Dizziness swept over her, and as she fought against it, her lips forming unspoken words for David, she knew that some one had come to help her—and that it was Deschenaux—and that very soon she was walking unsteadily at his side back through the corridor and then up the dungeon steps.

She made no effort now to look into the council room when they passed. She did not observe Captain Robineau, still standing in the edge of the deeper gloom of the outer corridor. But Deschenaux saw him. Deschenaux noted the dead-white face, ghostly in its thinness, with eyes which were filled with something more sinister than the reflecting glow of flaming candles.

He found Bigot's apartment empty when they entered it.

"Monsieur must be in the council room," he said, as he relieved himself of his half fainting burden. "If you will remain here, Mademoiselle, I shall bring him quickly."

His voice roused Anne and she made an effort to call him back to tell him that it was not Bigot she wanted, but Sister Esther. But the door had closed before she could rise or her lips could form a sound. She swayed to her feet, took a step toward it and caught at the edge of the table to support herself. Only one thought possessed her and that was to return as quickly as she could to David. In a dazed way she wanted to tell him what was twisting round in her mind now—something she wanted him so terribly to hear—that she loved him more than she had ever loved him before, and that she knew he was innocent and that it was all the Black Hunter's fault—and that with her own hands she would kill—*kill*—yes, kill Bigot even!—if Bigot should cause harm to be done him.

And then the door opened suddenly and Bigot came in and closed it behind him.

In a moment he was at her side with his arm about her.

"Dear little Anne!" he cried. "It has been a hard night—a hard night for you. You are faint and sick. But we have won, dear! We have won!"

The note of triumph in his voice seemed to her like a shout of gladness.

Won!

She swayed against him. She was not conscious of his arm drawing her more closely to him. They had won—and David would be free! And he would not hate her now because of Bigot's friendship, for it was Bigot who had done this—Bigot . . .

She wanted to cry out in her joy. How horrible it had all been yet how easy to clear away! She was swaying on her feet even as gladness lighted up her face.

He caught her arm again.

"It might have been death," he said slowly

and clearly, his face aflame with a purpose which Anne no longer had the power to see or shrink from. "That was what they wanted, even Vaudreuil. To be broken with iron bars and then hanged before the eyes of the town that it might be a lesson to all of New France. At last they gave in, but not until I had threatened Vaudreuil and a few others with political and social ruin. Do you hear me, Anne? David is saved. He is not to be hanged. He is simply to be drummed out of the army, *and after that whipped through the streets of Quebec at the tail of an ox-cart, like Carbanac.*"

With a little cry Anne reached out, her hands seeking to find something in the empty air. The strain of months of suffering and unhappiness crowded upon her, driven by the pitilessness of Bigot's final blow. David to be whipped—whipped through the streets of the town—tied to an ox-cart—like Carbanac! That was her last thought as a dark cloud blotted out her consciousness. Yet even then as Bigot caught her in his arms her lips moved in an effort to speak David's name.

Of all the monstrous hours of his life this which had come to him now was Bigot's greatest. For a brief space he was stunned by its completeness as he looked into the beautiful face that had fallen back from his breast. With a cry that was almost savage in the intensity of its passion he crushed the limp form in his arms until if there had been consciousness left it must have fled.

He turned with her to the door through which he had come and locked it. The click of the key filled his face with a demoniac joy. Its metallic voice assured him of his happiness. Then he faced the opposite door, through which Vaudreuil had gone. But before he went to it he carried Anne to a sofa and placed her upon it.

For a moment he stood over her. His fingers had loosened the shining coils of her hair and their brightness streaming about her shoulders and throat added to the deathly whiteness of her face. He bent down with a guttural, brutish cry and kissed the silent lips and closed eyes. She belonged to him now! She would belong to him forever if he chained her closely enough this night—or day. For the day was breaking in a pale and sickly dawn as he turned to lock the other door.

His hand was reaching out when to his amazement the door swung in. He had heard no sound and no voice. Captain Robineau stood facing him. And a little behind this man of sinister fortune was Sister Esther.

For half a dozen seconds the eyes of the two men met, and then Robineau's hard face relaxed and for Bigot alone his thin lips twisted in a smile of understanding.

"Sister Esther has come to say that it is time for Mademoiselle St. Denis to return, Monsieur," he said, and bowed stiffly but without giving the military salute due to the representative of the King.

With the maddening fabric of his happiness crashing about him Bigot still had sense enough to hold back the storm of fury that possessed him. Robineau had beaten him. Robineau, who yesterday had lain so helplessly in the hollow of his hands. Beaten—*and by him!* Yet he smiled. While his heart and brain reeled under the blow of his disappointment and the surge of his hatred, the cleverness which never deserted him revealed itself in the swift transformation of his face—its change from astonishment and shock to solicitude and gladness as he greeted Sister Esther.

He was that very moment on the point of seeking her presence, he said, because he was alarmed about Anne. She had only a moment before fallen in a faint. He had carried her to the sofa, and prayed God that nothing was seriously wrong with her.

Now that his work was done Robineau had departed. So Bigot brought water and smelling-salts for Sister Esther, and when a few minutes later Anne sighed and opened her eyes his happiness was so great that it impressed itself deeply upon the good and trustful nun.

He called assistance, and Anne was borne tenderly to a carriage that took her to the convent, held securely in Sister Esther's arms.

Before the gloomy thickness of dawn had given way to a brighter glow of day Vaudreuil had received his instructions. Captain Jean Talon, the duellist, must instantly reopen an old quarrel with Robineau. Bigot had another ten thousand francs for Talon if the affair could be arranged within twenty-four hours. And Robineau must die.

At the end of March, 1755, the beginning of that change which had been slowly creeping over New France and which in the end was destined to rot the very foundations of the nation, was making itself felt in Quebec. For some time there had been a feeling of unrest and of uncertainty throughout the wide domains beyond Quebec's frontiers in spite of the apparent successes of French arms and diplomacy. The people, the sixty thousand men and women pioneers who kept these domains for France, were beginning to lose the pride and courage which go with a conviction of security and power behind them.

War had not yet been declared. Mirepoix, the French ambassador to London, was teaching the English how to dance, and Lord Albemarle, English ambassador at Versailles, was reciprocating by teaching the French to play whist. Madame Pompadour had risen to her highest power.

The courts of both nations were smiling at each other, eating, drinking, dancing and making love together, in March of 1755. Yet General Braddock had already arrived in the colonies with the forty-fourth and forty-eighth regiments to fight the French, and Baron Dieskau, with eighteen ships of war and six battalions of La Reine, Bourgoyne, Languedoc, Guienne, Artois and Bearn, three thousand men in all, was sailing after him to meet him in a mighty duel in the wildernesses of America.

Such was the situation, without a parallel in the history of the world, on the day when Anne St. Denis, crushed and broken, left David in the dungeon-cell of Bigot's palace—a spectacle of two great nations—the two mightiest courts in Europe—dancing and playing whist like loving friends while each sent out armies and fleets to wage war upon the other across the seas!

The people of New France, bred of warrior stock and loving their wilderness country as they loved their lives, had put up a loyal fight and were destined to make a still greater one. But a little at a time the truth of their situation had pressed upon them, until in this early spring of 1755 a panic of restlessness and uncertainty had begun to possess them, and many foresaw and dreaded the unavoidable and terrible calamities ahead of the nation.

And among the rumors, persistent and frequent in Quebec of late, had been one which spoke of treachery.

No time could have been chosen when the populace were readier for a sensation than on the twenty-third of March, when it learned that a traitor had been caught in the red-handed act of carrying precious secrets to the hated English, and that this traitor was Lieutenant David Rock, a favorite of the Intendant.

Various emotions swept the populace as the day lengthened. But above all swept a fiercely growing conflagration of sentiment that demanded and anticipated the punishment of the traitor, and which was only relieved by a strong undercurrent of pity for Anne St. Denis. Anne's beauty and her goodness of heart, together with her vivacity of mind and many lovable qualities that had endeared her to the high as well as the low, had won for her a place of gentle worship in the hearts of the town.

In some way which no one seemed bent on questioning, the more intimate details of the preceding night's tragedy in Bigot's palace began to pass from mouth to mouth. It became known that Bigot had sent to the convent for Anne, and that her visit with David, and subsequent happenings, had proved such a grievous blow to her that she was now too ill to rise from her bed. And Bigot, according to the few who had seen him, was so deeply grieved and shocked that he had refused to leave his apartments.

That he had lost Anne in an hour when she had seemed to be hopelessly his prize had not lessened Bigot's certainty of possessing her. In a few days, and possibly in a few hours, his opportunity would come again, and this time there would be no Robineau to stumble like a fool between him and his desires.

There was one heart in Quebec in which grief and despair were overwhelmed at times by a smoldering fury and that was the heart of Nancy Lotbinière. Only her father's restraint and his grim assurance that she had no proofs of the things which she might say restrained her from disclosing to the public the suspicions which for a long time had been so insistently a part of her. It would be far better for David to go through with his experience, and then return to his wilderness, than to make Anne St. Denis's name a common thing tossed from mouth to mouth throughout New France, the Baron said. And Nancy conceded this.

And then came the climax to the tragedy. Through the streets and in the public places the town criers read in loud and official voices the news that Lieutenant David Rock, traitor to the King, was to be drummed out of the army and whipped through the streets of Quebec at high noon of the following day, the twenty-fourth of March, in the year of Our Lord and His Gracious Majesty, 1755.

When Anne St. Denis heard that news it seemed to her that death would be a welcome deliverance from her agony.

In the late hours of the night she rose from her bed of sickness, dressed, and waited for the dawn.

And scarcely had that dawn given way to the clear sun and bright sky which heralded with almost a touch of spring the twenty-fourth of March, than another shock ran through the city of Quebec with an even swifter thrill than that which had been roused by David's capture.

A duel had been fought in the first light of day, a duel between Captain René Robineau and Captain Jean Talon. Talon, notorious for his killings, lay dead at the Intendant's palace. And Robineau had gone—no one knew where.

By mid-forenoon of the following day the ancient city of Quebec was prepared for one of those unhappy spectacles which were not infrequent in New France at this time, and which persisted in official and popular favor until nearly half a century later.

The whipping at the tail of an ox-cart was supposed to have its humorous as well as its distressing side, and because of this degradation of being made a laughing-stock and a creature of shame, men of spirit preferred death rather than suffer its indignity.

David Rock, upon whom this punishment was to be inflicted, stood in a different position than had any of those who had recently preceded him, as his case was a military one rather than of civil authority, and was attended by certain preliminaries which could not fail to leave an abiding effect. His crime and the punishment which was to be its price was loudly heralded by public criers; military officers were commanded to have their companies and regiments on parade at the "drumming out," and a special guard was detailed to escort him outside the city, from which he would be forever banished when the infliction of justice was at an end.

In his cell David knew of the show which was being prepared as the grand finale to his ruin. From the hour in which he had spoken his last words to Anne, and had seen Deschenaux take her away white and half fainting, his resentment and despair began to give way before an inversion of feeling which left him strangely and stoically calm. This calmness at times became an almost half-mad exultation at the thought that not only he, but Anne St. Denis as well, was about to suffer on this

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day when the monstrous plot of the man who had so successfully posed as her friend arrived at the culminating point of its triumph.

He was not afraid of the lash. What was there about pain to shrink from? The forests were not afraid of either hurt or death! But they shrank—shrank in horror and fear—from the debasement of that thing within them which was called the soul of man. It was this soul that had writhed in David until the truth had come like a revelation that only the guilty could be debased. Only the coward and the liar. That was why no amount of torture or vilifying could rob dignity and pride and defiance from the face of a brave Indian dying at the fire-stake of his tormentors.

And then he thought of Carbanac—Carbanac the murderer—who had walked so like a god through the streets of Quebec, his back torn by the lash, because there was no guilt on his conscience!

Could Carbanac with his heart crushed by a wife's faithlessness do more than he, who had all his forests and all the open skies of the world waiting for him?

At last the hour came.

And David was given a military coat with glittering buttons and fine appointments. It was brought to him by two guards who were accompanied by an officer and an escort of half a dozen soldiers. One of the guards unlocked his cell and the other helped him on with the garment while the soldiers formed in two stiff and wooden files. He did not look at them as he stalked between.

The thought came to him even then that it was Carbanac who was doing this over again: Carbanac the honest man, the man whose calloused hands had choked the life from Nicolet, and his lips set in a grim and mirthless smile as he looked straight ahead to where the spirit of Carbanac was leading him.

For the first time in days he saw the sun when he came up the dungeon steps into the great hall. It was this sun which struck him first. And in some unaccountable way, along with this sun, a tatterdemalion of a dog had found his entrance into the proscribed limits of the Palace. He was a very beggar of a dog, a vagabond with wiry hair and uncouth tail and joints, and yet there was something in the manner he held his head and in the bright directness of his eyes as they looked out of his whiskered face that made David think more than ever of Carbanac.

For this dog, like Carbanac, was not a coward though he was in a strange place and pursued by enemies. A moment before David had heard his howl as a guard struck him; and now, in passing, he held out a hand and before he could withdraw it the mongrel was at his side and had given it a swift and friendly touch. Then came a kick from behind, and after that other kicks from the guards in the hall until the animal was driven to an exit which took him from the human enemies among whom he had come quite unintentional of criminal intent and with all the good-humor and comradely curiosity of his humble breed.

The dog and the sun, but especially the dog, had robbed David's face of the extremity of its bitterness, and like a flash of strange warmth the unexpected caress of the animal's tongue had passed through him and left a glow behind.

They were approaching the main doors of the Palace, which opened on the parade, and David allowed himself to look about. No need of keeping his neck so stiff, he began to think.

There were only guards and a few soldiers in the hall. From outside he heard a murmuring commotion which could only come from a great crowd. Then he passed through the open doors and stood on the stone square at the top of the Palace steps, with the city of Quebec looking at him.

Even then he did not at first sense the spectacular setting of Bigot's drama or the overwhelming conspicuousness of his own figure, for coming toward him up the steps, courageous and undaunted, seeing only him, wagging his disreputable tail only for him and blind to all the power and pomp and threat of dire calamity about him was that masterless pariah of a dog again!

Standing alone on this palace stage six feet above the crowd, as Bigot had planned that he should stand, his scarlet coat a vivid mark for all eyes, his wild blond hair shining in the sun and his face alight with a smile of welcome for the dog, no thought of the immensity of the scene occurred to David. Bigot's deadliest enemy could not have conceived a completer anticlimax to military glitter and pompous strut, for in these moments the people were not thinking of the whipping-cart and the lash but only of a dog and a man. And many years were destined to pass before the scene wiped itself out of the memory of the city, for as they looked, and even the soldiers held their breaths in wondering speculation, the vagabond dog laid himself down at David's feet and gazed with unexcited confidence out over the heads of the assembled host.

A breath ran through the crowd, a great sigh of movement and voice, a thrilling, growing unrest of scarcely expressed thought, and then the momentary spell was broken by the closing in of a thin cordon of soldiers, and when the cordon opened again the dog was gone. But David was no longer the man who had come up from the dungeon cell any more than the crowd was the same crowd that a few minutes before might have roused into shouting itself hoarse for his death.

He was amazed at his own calmness and at the interest rather than fear and horror with which he looked down upon the closely drawn lines of soldiers and the people packed in the streets and square beyond them. Immediately below him at the foot of the steps were the ox-cart and ox.

Slowly his eyes traveled over the sea of spectators while a red-faced and blatant-voiced officer half-way down the stone steps read aloud the brief details of both his crime and his punishment. He scarcely heard a word. He was looking at the women and children, hundreds of them. Why should they come to see him whipped, he wondered? He could excuse the small boys. As a small boy he would have been there himself. But the women! Yet deep in his heart he was praying, above all other things, that Anne St. Denis was among them. He wanted her to look upon his degradation and punishment. He wanted this picture and all that was to follow to burn itself so deeply in her brain that it would remain with her through all the days of her life.

The voice on the step had stopped and now came a slow beating of drums. It was a solemn and terrible sound and sent a shiver through David. It was like the melancholy sobbing of the tom-toms in a wilderness camp where there was mourning for the dead. And it *was* for the dead, the sombrous lament of the drums which he had heard more than once as they led the way to a military grave.

Adjusting their own movements to the gloomy booming of the drums, two officers advanced up the steps toward David. They were like important owls, he thought. They paused, one on each side of him, and stood for a few seconds like wooden images until at a sudden signaling crash of the drums they began to take methodical and deliberate turns at tearing the brightly polished brass buttons from his coat.

Curious turnings and twistings came in David's brain. He wanted to laugh and he wanted to strike out with his two fists. There was something childishly funny in all this ostentatious play, this ripping off of buttons, as though it was a mighty religious sacrifice to some god or other. He pitied the buttons. He saw them rolling one after another down the stone steps, bright and glittering in the sunlight. He heard the coat tear where bits of cloth came with the buttons. He noticed that one of the officers had short and stubby fingers and the other long and bony ones.

All this struck him as funny. But at the same time there was something growing in him which made him want to smash out with his fists, something which he held back with an iron grip.

His coat was taken off after the buttons were gone. Then his shirt, and he stood naked from the waist up before the crowd. And all the time the drums were beating their slow and solemn death-march.

Still he did not so much as clench his hands. People looked at him and wondered. He was a splendid figure on the steps, finer in the strength and youth of his unclad shoulders than he could ever have been in a uniform. His hair was blond and his skin as white as a woman's. He was not afraid or cringing. Many swore afterwards that there was a smile on his lips and in his eyes as the officers tugged at his buttons. Others said the smile was still there when he walked down the steps and allowed his hands to be tied in the iron rings in the block at the tail of the ox-cart.

Suddenly he found that he had company at the tail of the ox-cart. The vagabond dog was there.

The dog scurried under the wagon when the ox began slowly to move, and continued to travel under its protection, so that David could see a part of his angular and half-starved body at times. The man who said the dog was not thinking would have been a fool. He had found a friend. In the friend he had found a master. And in some very accurate way he had reasoned that he and his friend were alone in all this crowd, except that the ox and the cart were not inimical to them.

His sharp ears heard the first falling of the lash on David's back. But he heard no word or cry from the man he had adopted. The sound of the lash was not new to him. It sent him farther under the cart and nearer to the plodding heels of the ox. Undoubtedly that swishing beat of thonged leather was intended for him and he was of a strong mind to keep out of its way. Now and then he glanced back to see that David's legs were following.

The cart jolted and creaked over cobblestones and frozen ruts and climbed a long and winding hill. The crowd was a streaming mass on both sides and behind, and many of those nearest the cart pointed out the homeless cur tramping along under it; small boys began to call to it and throw bits of frozen earth. A new kind of curiosity and with it a sense of antagonism began to seize the dog. Rock-like clods fell about him, one or two struck him, and when a boy ran in close and poked at him with a long stick he bared his fangs and snarled and dropped back nearer to the legs of his friend.

He began also to take a new and keener interest in the whip. There were intervals when it was still and when he could hear only the jolting of the cart and the growing voice of the pursuing mob; and then it would start again, with sharp cracking sounds which seemed to be reaching out for his own quivering flesh. Something happened after a little which turned his brain red. A heavier and more accurate clod struck him and he dodged back quickly, and in that moment he saw the whip. Its snarling lashes cracked like breaking sticks in mid-air and fell whistling and hissing upon the back of the man who was his friend.

For an instant he hesitated, and in that instant the black man who was wielding the whip sent his arm backward and forward swiftly and the red-hot tails of the scourging thing wrapped themselves about the body of the dog. They were no swifter than the mongrel himself. The crowd heard the sudden horrified yell of the negro. Many saw the dog leap. And when the animal had been kicked and beaten and furiously lashed until it was lost in the mob those same people saw blood running down the black man's arm, just as it was running from David's back.

For an interval there was rest for David, until they reached the streets of the higher town. He had felt his nerves beginning to

crack. But now they were set again—and the dog had helped. The dizziness which had begun to cloud his brain disappeared. No one had seen him flinch and his chin was even higher as the ox-cart lumbered into the fashionable streets of Upper Town. Here would be his friends. Openly as well as from behind curtained windows they would be looking at him. The lash was falling again when they passed Nancy Lotbinière's house. But there the curtains at the windows were drawn tight. God bless Nancy Lotbinière! It was her little message for him, letting him know that she might be praying for him but that her eyes, and no eyes of the Lotbinière house, should look upon his shame.

There was a horrible and sickening pain to the fall of the knotted lashes now. They seemed to burn through his flesh and bones into his very soul. Hot flames racked his body, yet like an Indian he stalked in his torture.

Down Saint Louis Street into the great square in front of the Governor's palace plodded the ox at the head of the cart. A thousand people had gathered to witness the end of the barbaric circus which had begun with the common people at the end of Palais Street.

Here, as with Carbanac, would come the last scene of the whipping and in this instance the banishment of the criminal from the city. David wondered why he felt no shame, no sense of sweeping humiliation as he stood calmly with the eyes of the Upper City on him, so straight and unfaltering that no one guessed his brain was dizzy or that his nerves were strained to the edge of the snapping point. He was facing the west, and illimitable distances lay before him, miles upon miles of forest terrain which one can see to this day from the top of the Big Rock. Of all the hundreds gathered about the square, only he saw the forests or was thinking of them, his forests, his home, where lay everything that he loved or ever would love from this day on.

When the lash fell again he did not take his eyes from them. Something seemed to be reaching up out of the dark masses of the far wilderness to comfort and strengthen him, and while many grew sick and turned away as the black man's arm rose and fell, he stood like the heroic Indian he was thinking of, with all of that Indian's glorious heritage of life and freedom filling his staring eyes, in which vision, in spite of his last supreme courage, was slowly but surely fading away.

And he was standing thus, his back running red in the unclouded sun, his blond head still high, the lash cutting its last marks upon his flesh in a crescendo of furious vindictiveness, when Anne St. Denis saw him from the open inner edge of the square.

The crowd had made way for her. It had parted, amazed and speculative at this slim, furiously fighting slip of a girl who forced her way through them. Many recognized her. But the news traveled more slowly than did the girl herself, and not until she had darted through the thick line of soldiers which guarded the square did David hear the sudden murmuring of voices which came like a great sigh from the crowd.

For a few seconds Anne hesitated in the open space which was the heart of the crowd as if blinded by what she saw, and now the eyes of the people were on her and no longer on David. The black slave and his victim were unconscious of this fact. The whip rose and fell, and to give his final assault a more spectacular effect Bigot's merciless barbarian made each back-lash of the whip snap with a report that was as loud as a pistol-shot. His ebony skin, naked to the waist like David's, gleamed with a shining perspiration; his thick-lipped face was twisted in a paroxysm of joy as he inflicted the climax of punishment on one of the white skins he hated, and David's back was redder in the sunlight, so red that a scream such as the ears of Quebec had never heard until this day came from Anne's lips as she hurled herself upon the black monster and his whip.

It was a cry not only of horror and madness but of rage and vengeance. Her hands caught the curling lashes of the whip and so furiously and unexpectedly had she come that the weapon was torn from the black man's grip. At the cry David had turned, and now he saw the whip used even more furiously than it had been employed on him, and the terrified slave was fleeing from it. The sigh that had passed through the crowd grew into a low rumble. Bigot's executioner stumbled and fell, and Anne overtook him again, lashing his face until he screamed in agony.

The crowd's rumble grew into a roar. Its edges swayed, its mass undulated in a great wave. Where the black man darted into it the people closed in like a destroying avalanche. But it opened for Anne St. Denis—Anne and her whip. It made a path for her, and the people who forced themselves back from the edge of this path saw the strange madness in her eyes and heard her panting breath as she passed them, clutching tightly to the whip that had stained her own white hands with the blood from David's back.

Even those who knew her made no effort to assist or stop her, nor dared to speak. But outside the farther edge of the crowd a man was waiting, a man with the collar of a long coat pulled up about his throat and wearing a battered hat that almost covered his eyes. He ran toward her as she appeared, and with the girl clutching at his arm and still holding the whip they hurried down the cobblestoned slope of the hill past the Golden Dog, with the more curious and less sensitive of the crowd beginning to follow. But at the turn of the street a carriage was waiting, and into this the man thrust his companion, following her quickly, and the carriage disappeared at a swift pace in the direction of the Ursuline Convent.

There were those who did not follow the whipping who saw the carriage go down Fabrique Street that day at a gallop; there were others who saw it turn on Saint John, and continue again at a gallop down Palais, until the horse that drew it was halted where Nicolas and Lacroix came in at an angle near the Intendant's Palace.

Five minutes later Bigot alone in his apartment heard a knock at his door, the door which only a few used, and with that knock the voice of Anne St. Denis asking him to let her enter. Joyously he unlocked the door and Anne came in—Anne with the whip in her hand, the whip that was red with David's blood; and behind her, no longer hidden in the long coat and battered old hat, closely followed Captain René Robineau.

Only in rumors and strange stories that crept out long afterward did Quebec or New France know of what happened in Bigot's palace that day. When Anne had finished, David's vengeance had been paid in full. Three times Bigot seized the whip that was in her furious hands, and three times Captain Robineau's sword pierced his clothes and entered his flesh until in mortal terror he gave up his grip. At last one would not have recognized his face, and not until then did Anne sway back against the wall and sink sobbing and broken to the floor, her strength gone.

It was Robineau who picked up the whip and completed the work, and could Quebec have seen his face when it was done, alight once more with the flame and pride of the ancient Robineau honor, it would have marveled at a second and greater miracle which had come to pass with the whipping of David Rock.

The world might have changed again for David outside the city wall if he had let it. As the gate closed behind him, and the crowd was held back, he found Doctor Coué on the other side waiting to meet him. There were several others in his company, but David did not know them. He accepted their presence in a cold and unemotional way, and in a small house a few steps distant his lacerated back was dressed by the little surgeon who had come with Monsieur Lotbinière to play their

trick on Peter in the dueling-wood many weeks before.

The more poignant of David's emotions had snapped. He felt his pain dully. He was not conscious of a thrill at the significance of the unexpected scene which had occurred in the square. Anne was no nearer to him than when she had left his prison cell, and her act had not inspired him with hope, regret, or gladness. He had only felt for a few swift seconds an immense and overwhelming satisfaction that God had answered his prayer and had let her see him at the tail of the ox-cart.

Even that emotion had burned itself out now. It was not the first time the little surgeon had witnessed this numbing of senses in the body of a strong man fighting against a mental inertia which in a weaker spirit would have meant physical collapse. He performed his work quietly and gently and with the thoroughness of a master. It took him the better part of an hour and not until he was finished did he offer advice or give instructions. David was to remain where he was for a little while, until friends called for him. Monsieur and Mademoiselle Lotbinière were coming for him at four o'clock and would see to it that his journey up the river was a comfortable one. Mademoiselle was preparing now and wanted him to know that she was planning to accompany him the entire distance to his home on the Richelieu.

This intimation of Nancy's plans sent the first shock of interest through David. It was an unpleasant shock. It did not show in his face as he thanked the doctor and watched him depart. But as soon as he was alone he began to act. His belongings had been brought to the cottage, which was apparently tenantless except for himself. He saw that a few necessary things were in a small pack, put on warm clothing, found his powder-horn and bullet pouch, seized his old rifle and sought the rear exit from the cottage.

He moved quickly, and all the time a warmer glow was growing in his heart for Nancy, the first reawakening of the soul which had been lashed out of him. It was *she* who had done all this, and not Anne. In his heart he was blessing her. But he did not want to see her. His one desire, consuming all other thoughts in its demand, was to get away—alone.

Striking back from the cottage and away from the gate through which a few years later the dying Montcalm was to be carried from the Plains of Abraham, he experienced little difficulty in reaching unobserved the neck of woods which fringed the old meadows of Abraham Martin's farm, and thence achieved the brush-grown ravine which so successfully sheltered Wolfe's Englishmen on that fatal September day, 1759. From here his descent to the river was easy, and Sillery Forest lay ahead of him, and beyond that the hidden trails of a wilderness so vast that as yet no man had found its end. But until he had passed the Mission at Sillery, hiding himself well in the woods in circling it, he did not feel himself safely beyond the environs of the place he had grown to hate.

A last time he looked back, standing on a forested pinnacle which in a few moments more would blot out from his eyes forever the city on the rock. In the bright sun undimmed by mist or cloud he could see the battlemented heights, and his eyes rested where he knew the Convent of the Ursulines lay hidden behind the grim, dark streak which marked the fortress walls. It seemed years ago that he had come in the cold and melancholy gloom of evening, and had listened to the welcome of the bells. Since then hope had lived and died for him. An eternity had passed and what he had dreamed was scattered dust.

He had found, at last, what he had truly expected to find, and what little old Fontbleu the miller had told him that he would find. The city which he hated now with a smoldering fury had robbed him, beaten him, dishonored him, just as it had done these things for Carbanac, and he gave voice to the curse

which was in his heart. The city—and Bigot. The city—and Anne. He clenched his fists. It had been his hell and its people had swarmed like devils to see him suffer. A traitor! He was that now, if never before; its deadliest enemy, an avenger praying for the power to destroy, vindictive, implacable, malevolent in his bitterness.

And then something broke in him which was not the man who hated with a passion born of despair. It was what was left of the boy, a broken sob, a great breath of grief and frailty which came from him before he could stop it.

It was the boy of Sunset Hill, the boy of the flower-strewn bottom-lands and of Grondin's Wood, the boy who had listened to the stories of the old mill-wheel and his mother's prayers, the boy of the Richelieu struggling in him again and finding its voice in that sob which came as he looked back and cursed at the great city on the rock.

And then, looking down, he saw something coming up the steep path which he had followed, a creature with its head close to the ground, nosing his footsteps with the surety of a four-footed hunter—*the dog*.

He waited, and stood without sound or movement until the animal was very near. The lash, the boot, hunger and wild yearning were all in the story of the dog's approach. David noticed these things now. The dog might have been a powerful beast if his body had not been thinned by starvation. But there was a ferocity of desire in the way his loose muzzle nosed the scent of friendship in the snow and frozen earth which was greater than any hunger of the body. Not only a dog but a dog's soul was coming up the craggy ascent, and unconsciously David named him then and there by calling softly, "Here I am, Comrade!"

They went on together, striking into the untrailed depths of the deeper timber where there was no chance of meeting people he did not want to meet. On the sides of sunny knolls the snow had begun to soften in the warmth of the sun. This was the year of the early spring of 1755, when birds returned to their northern haunts a month ahead of time and the first wild flowers bloomed when in other seasons their awakening roots had scarcely thrust green shoots out of the earth. And its first warmth came with the dawn of the day of David's whipping.

By mid-afternoon Quebec seemed more than a few hours away. His back hurt him, but its hurt was not comparable with what was building in him. His mind was clearer and the torment of hatred that had scourged him like a fire was softened by the stillness and sunshine and softly whispered confidences of the forest, and by the *pat, pat, pat* of the friendly feet always close at his side.

He shot half a dozen squirrels, and the familiar voice of his rifle added to the readjustment of his nerves. Toward evening he found a hollow so densely filled with the lacy tops of spruce and balsam that the snows of winter had failed to penetrate to the cloister-like refuge under them, and here he prepared to spend the night.

With this night, its cheery camp-fire, the thickening of darkness and the sighing and whispering of the hundred tree tops that made the roof of his shelter, an easement of mind stole over David such as he had not known for a long time. Through many weeks past, while on his bogus missions for Bigot, his heart had eaten itself out with suspense and yearning and dreams of Anne. But tonight there was no longer a cause for any of those things. The thing was finished and he had lost. And now he began to understand why it was better to suffer a blow and have done with it than to see it endlessly impending.

He roasted the squirrels and divided them with Comrade, and after their supper made a hollow in the unfrozen balsam needles and folded his one blanket in it, ready for a bed if he grew sleepy. He had gathered firewood and fed it to the glowing coals as their flame died down, and in these flames and the coals he saw his future painting itself step by step ahead of him. And soon the thought grew on him, as if it were something new and strange, that everything the world had ever held for him was still his own—except Anne.

Slowly and at times illogically his mind struggled to convince itself, and in doing this began to conceive its plans. And David, the physical, gripped tenaciously at the straws it presented until, like a drowning man, he felt himself buoyed up by a force greater than the one which was bearing him down. He would go home, of course. And then, when his time came, he would do what he had always wanted to do, explore the unmapped and unknown mysteries of the farther wilderness. Quebec might die and rot on its rock, and even France herself might be driven into the sea, but all that could not change by so much as the weight of a hair what lay beyond the western frontiers.

He would join the Black Hunter. He would see the world as he knew that world. And there would be fighting to do, such fighting as Peter Joel had told him this land had never seen in all its ancient past. In time would come his day of triumph. For westward were vast worlds to conquer, and names to carve as great as any that had gone before. Memory of Anne should drive him on, for in his vindication and success would she reap her most enduring bitterness.

Yet he was not thinking now in the same terms of vengeance with which he had last looked back on the fortressed town of Quebec. Bigot was not New France, nor was Anne the beginning and the end of the world.

He slept a few hours and when it was light enough to see was traveling again with the dog. His back did not burn as it had last night, but it was stiff, as if Doctor Coué had covered it with an unbending board instead of soft bandage. This stiffness wore away, and with the warmth of another sun he felt infinitely better than yesterday. Not until midday did they find themselves something to eat, when David stopped at a habitant's cottage at the edge of a broad seigneury whose great buildings he could see several miles away, and purchased supplies to last to the Richelieu.

With calmer reflection he still did not regret that he had stolen away from Quebec without waiting for the support and consolation of the friends he had left. His desire to be alone was a growing one, and Nancy would understand and forgive him when in time he explained to her.

This day, struggle as he would against it, Anne returned to him again and again and a hundred times he saw the white vision of her as she lashed the black man and ran with the blood-stained whip from the square. She had pitied him, pitied him to such an extent that she had allowed a moment's madness to drive her to that unexpected act. Tenaciously he kept that thought in mind, telling himself that it could be nothing more than pity—and yet he had effort in keeping back another thought, the thing he was trying to destroy and believed he had destroyed, the consciousness of truth in the words of love and pleading she had spoken in the dungeon chamber.

The second night his restless sleep was filled with dreams of Anne, and always his visions of her were not of the glad and beautiful Anne of Sunset Hill but of the white-faced, death-stricken Anne whom Deschenaux had taken from his prison room. He awoke troubled and mentally unrefreshed. But his physical body responded more and more each hour to the clean, strong blood in his veins, and the third day he made thirty miles between dawn and dusk, and at night, for the first time, tried to make himself whistle cheerily as he prepared supper for himself and the dog. But in his sleep Anne came to him again, and he saw her as she had stood with the soul crushed out of her beyond his prison-bars.

As one day followed another his fight became a slow and deadly thing. It was the forest with its heritage of unbreakable mettle passed on

to him that made him win in the end, if his achievement could be called triumph. Definitely he cut himself away from everything that might have drawn him back to Anne. Rock by rock he built up the barrier between them and enshrined his old and sacred love in a temple which he knew he would never enter, and with this defeat of his hopes and triumph of his convictions a pride was born in him which was bound to endure to the end of his days. A pride in the thought that he had followed the Black Hunter's admonition to "go clean to the end," though Anne herself believed him guilty of a monstrous crime; pride in his strength, pride in the vastness and glory of his forest world.

He was coming home at a time that was ripe for the releasing of the new and harder passions for physical achievement that were born in him. The storm was about to break, a storm that had been smoldering like a great fire in the American wildernesses awaiting only the final impetus that would send it in an avalanche of fury and destruction over half a continent. And while it gathered, Mirepoix and Albemarle were still at play; Versailles was the bawdry show-house of a dissipated France; the King—a weak and dissolute wretch mocked at by the common people on the streets—ruled at the beck and call of his mistress, Pompadour. While New France was dying, Old France—still in that hour the mightiest nation in the world—was bleeding herself white through the weaknesses of the flesh.

That England was only a step behind her was England's luck and not England's pride. For these were also the days of the "unwashed and unsavory England of Hogarth, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne; of Tom Jones, Squire Western, Lady Bellaston, and Parson Adams."

While the men of the New World, inured to the pursuits of war and adventure, were ready for a mighty struggle, their higher-caste brethren of the Old dressed like women, wore beauty patches and carried muffs. Selfishness, fanaticism, and a morality lower than the iniquity of a dissolute Rome had honeycombed Europe with its rottenness, and Rousseau, crying his first half-mad alarms, preached the doctrine of a world about to vomit its spleen. Honor, if not courage, was dead in the courts that ruled the earth; and nations, like men, were struggling to deal death-blows in the dark, like common thugs.

These were the conditions which in March of 1755 had set rolling throughout the New World the plans for a monstrous war which had no official recognition, and of the two tricksters England was a step ahead of the stupid court at Versailles. Before Dieskau and his French regiments had reached the St. Lawrence, Braddock and the governors of the English colonies had made their schemes.

A gigantic fourfold blow in time of peace was to be struck at New France. An army was to move on Fort Duquesne. Another was to reduce Niagara. A third was to attack Crown Point and a fourth was to smash Acadia. New France was to be ground into dissolution like a kernel of wheat between the upper and the nether millstones—*before war was declared.*

It was the Richelieu, with its protectorate of fighting barons and its ears always open to the winds from the south, that learned the truth first, but only a part of the truth.

Word came that the English were preparing to move against the French in Pennsylvania but no news or rumor of the avalanche of death about to descend upon Crown Point and the Richelieu had crossed the frontier.

So when David came at last to his home he found a new Peter at the head of twenty stalwart men preparing to leave for the great adventure at Fort Duquesne.

Down through the forests you will go with David and the Black Hunter, to witness James Oliver Curwood's *smashing climax before Anne and David are at last reunited—in the last instalment* Next Month

The Rat (*Continued from page 29*)

lacquer and ivory, and his Persian rugs.

"I'm not really successful, you know, Aggie. A foothold gained is all I have. But that's something, after all one has been through, isn't it?"

"Oh, *isn't* it, Ralph!" said Aggie.

The helpless little dinner was served by the flushed little maid who had cooked it and after coffee, made rather nicely by Aggie, with a machine, on the table, they went into the garden again. Aggie wore a thin black dress and a white lace fichu; survivals, yet becoming. Her pale hair and face emerged from the leafy shadows with a moonlight sweetness and her unseen gaze troubled him a little; for it was as if, in the darkness, she might be reading things hidden to her in the light. He did not want Aggie to guess at the weariness, the disdain and passion that scarred his mind.

He asked her about Uncle Alfred. "How did you stand twenty years of him? I remember him as a most appalling old bully and bore."

Aggie laughed but shook her head. "Really he wasn't so bad, Ralph, poor old Uncle Alfred. He had a dreadful temper, of course; dreadful. But he suffered more from it himself than anybody else."

"He made you suffer from it, I imagine."

"Not after just the first. I got used to it in time. I grew very crafty, too, and cunning," Aggie smiled. "I knew how to circumvent him. No, I was fond of Uncle Alfred, Ralph. And he really grew quite fond of me, I think."

"'Do I stand and stare, all's blue,'" thought Ralph. And what about Ted Masters? Had she been able to weave him into the charming pattern of all for the best? Aggie was evading him, as of old. She would not own that things had been hideous, horrible; and something of his old testing malice came into his mood as he asked presently, lighting a cigaret: "Do you ever see anything of Ted Masters?"

In the slight silence that followed he was a little surprised at himself for having asked the question. It had grown so dark that he could only see of Aggie's face a moth-gray oval, impalpable among the shadows, and a clot of pallor where her hands were clasped in her lap. Hands and face were still. She was arrested; daunted, he imagined.

"No, never," she then said. "They live out in British Columbia. They are very happy, I believe." It was a moth-like voice; dusty, pallid; yet it launched itself with resolution on the darkness.

"Not quite 'all blue,' that," thought Ralph and he felt as if he were lying again in the deep chair at the Rectory, watching Aggie while he tested her with drop after drop of his corrosive acid. He felt sorry for her, yet she vexed him, and he wanted to see what she would do.

"Are they? Is he?" he commented. "Well, I'm sorry to hear it. Cursed hound."

Another silence fell, a heavier silence, charged, he felt, with a repudiation that only did not flame because the capacity for flaming had died with Aggie's youth.

"I always thought him a poor creature," Ralph went on, the memory of Aggie's wrongs giving an added edge to his voice, "and never could imagine what you saw in him. But I did not expect him to show himself so completely the coward and cad of popular fiction. What luck that Uncle Alfred didn't die fifteen years ago, for you'd have been married to Ted now if you'd had the money then."

Aggie now spoke; with difficulty. "He wasn't like that. You misunderstand. It was never money. He met some one he cared for more." And, actually, the old flame was in her voice as she added: "You have no right to call him a cad and a coward."

Antagonism rose swiftly in him at the sound of hers, though he was sorrier for her than ever, as he said, laughing bitterly, "My poor Aggie! How like you! I apologize. But I must just say, in self-exoneration, that I'm your brother, and fond of you, and have a certain sense of family pride; and I heard from the Jamiesons when they came home all the facts of the case. She was a plain, clumsy, common young woman and she had nine hundred pounds a year. Of course you made it easy for him and your generosity is romantic; but you can't make a romantic figure out of Ted Masters."

That was what she had done. He knew it as he listened to her careful breathing. He had been, he had remained, the romance of her life and she loved him now as much as she had ever loved him. It was fatuity indeed. It was just what might have been expected from Aggie.

She sat, now, silent, and tossing away his cigaret he got up, turning the awkward corner for them both with a cheerful: "Well, shall we go to bed, my dear? It's late, and I've had a tiring day."

A very tiring day it had been. He felt that fully as he followed her into the house, his shoes clammy with the dew. They had sat out too long and it was a devastating business, this meeting with the past and Aggie.

In the little entrance she fumbled for the candles and matches; he suspected, even, that she purposely delayed. Yet, when the light revealed her downcast face, he saw, with relief, that she was not crying. Aggie in tears would indeed have been a lamentable ending to the day.

She went before him up the stairs and led him into his room and there, looking away, her candlestick in her hand, she forced herself to speak:

"I do hope you'll sleep well, Ralph dear."

"I do hope you will."

The room was full of his youth; the scent of the soap; the scent of the clove-pinks; his mother's eyes glancing upon them from the wall. It was he, suddenly, who felt like crying. "Forgive me if I've been rough," he said. He leaned to her and kissed her forehead.

His kind words, his voice, were a release. He felt the gratitude, the devotion, soar up in her.

Her head bent to his, her candle in her hand, she stood quite silent for a moment and then murmured, hurriedly:

"I know it's because you're my brother; I know it's because you are fond of me. But we must never talk of it. I can't. It meant everything to me. And he wasn't like that; *she* wasn't. She was very young and sweet and good. He told me. I was already getting old; and he had waited so long. He had come to feel that I was his sister. Good night, dear Ralph."

And Aggie, having given her testimony, was gone.

Aggie's testimony touched, but did not convince him; it only convinced him that she was determined to see harmony where there was discord, and when, at breakfast, he found her restored and tranquil he felt a slight return of irony. It was really always the same old story. She evaded him. She refused to crumble. She got up again.

They walked about the village after breakfast and he could see, in greetings from neighbors on their way to church, that Aggie was securely planted on her old roots. Roots were never forgotten in an English village and Miss Barnaby of the Rectory was as real to them still as Miss Barnaby of the cottage.

"Do you ever go to church now?" he asked her.

Aggie said she did sometimes; but today was dedicated to him.

"Is it to give an example to the villagers, or social pressure, Aggie?"

"I don't think either of those reasons," said Aggie. "It meant so much once."

"I should think that would make it mean less now."

"It doesn't," she said, smiling; evading him. "Do you remember old Mrs. Wilsey, Ralph?"

He did. Horrible old creature.

And there she was, hairless, bloated and

leering at her cottage gate. He greeted her.

"They take an unconscionable time a-dying, don't they?" he remarked as they went on down the village street. "She was old when I was a boy. Do you remember that meeting for reforming the village charities poor father tried to address? All the well-to-do recipients of the endowments assembled in a fury at the idea that they were to be mulcted of their coals and blankets. How they howled and hooted. I can see Mrs. Wilsey's square, howling mouth."

"Father understood. He bore them no grudge for it. They have so little. It's that that makes them afraid and suspicious."

"Yes, suspicious of their best friends. They've no sense of honor. It's a depraving thing, village life," Ralph mused. "Craft, ingratitude and caution are the characteristics of the English peasant."

"Oh, no, Ralph. That isn't fair. They've had to be cautious, always, just as an animal has; and they can't always distinguish. But they are so kind. It's wonderful, their kindness to each other, often, and their patience and fortitude. Much better things are coming, too. Things are opening out for them. The Woman's Institute here has done so much already to break down old suspicions."

"Has it indeed? Do you breed rabbits, Aggie, and make raffia mats and get them to dance on the green?"

"That's the idea," laughed Aggie. "And it's all great fun. We all enjoy it. I'm secretary. It was nice of them to elect me, wasn't it? They wanted me to feel at home again."

It was again a hot day and when they came in from their little round Ralph lay down on the sofa, his hands behind his head. The drawing-room was on the shady side of the house in the morning and a peaceful Sabbath twilight filled it.

Ralph's heart was heavy, restless. The old furniture, the old photographs, old Aggie among them, it all made him miserable. That was what it all came to, he supposed.

"How you remind me of mother, lying there," said Aggie. She looked tired, her head leaning back against the high chair; but he saw that she was not in the least miserable. Her hands folded in her lap had a Sabbath look, too; thin, white, peaceful hands.

"Poor mother," said Ralph. "How many years was it that she was ill?"

"Ten or eleven it must have been. Poor darling."

"Yet I was sorry for father, too," said Ralph. "How she despised him—and let him see it."

Aggie flushed. Her flushes were no longer the rosy, girlish suffusions. Their heavier dye came from a more deeply involved heart, was more organic.

"Despised him?"

"You can't pretend you didn't always see it?—her contempt. She was a clever woman and he—well, we must own that father was a silly old sheep, mustn't we?" said Ralph.

"I don't think we must," said Aggie gently. She reached out her hand for her knitting, unrolled it, and began to knit with fingers that fumbled a little.

"Not even if it's true?"

"No; not even if it's true"

"Why not, my dear?"

"Some things are sacred"

"Some things may be; but silly father wasn't. Come, come, Aggie," he smiled rallyingly at her.

But, her eyes on her knitting, she shook her head. "What is sacred is that he was our father."

"Propagated us, you mean? In answer to that I can only repeat—poor mother!"

Aggie grew crimson.

"I apologize, Aggie!" Yet Ralph's compunction was filled with laughter; he had amused himself. "You don't understand the language of my kind. We are ruthlessly free from old constraints and don't find things sacred easily."

"Why should you?" said Aggie. "Sacred things are hard. That doesn't make them less true."

"That sounds rather clever, Aggie. You'll own, then, that it is difficult to think of father as a sacred object. I find it too difficult. I think of a sacred object as something which imposes itself; something that one is bound to accept."

Aggie sat silent.

After midday dinner a cheerful, chattering lady came in, all *endimanchée*, with a very smart plume on her head, ostensibly to see Aggie but really, Ralph felt, in order to have a look at him. Aggie would rather have liked him to stay and display himself but, after he had listened to Mrs. Bayliss for five minutes, he remembered that he had an important letter to write and went up-stairs to his room.

It would indeed be as well that he should write to Mrs. Grafton before he saw her again—it was next Wednesday that she had asked him to come and hear some Russian singers at her house—and his brow darkened as he sat down at the little writing-table in the window to consider the situation.

It must be a careful letter. He wanted to show Mrs. Grafton that he rather than she had the upper hand, for power rather than protestation would move her. Their intercourse so far had consisted in a duel of wits and since, with two husbands and many lovers to her credit, she had quite as much experience as he, the duel had demanded all his resources. Mrs. Grafton's present line was that she was tired of love, disappointed and *désillusionnée*, and asked only to devote herself to her darling daughter, a young lady heard of frequently by all her friends but seldom seen, and even if she consented to devote herself to him and relegate the daughter for a little longer, he knew, with a pang of presage, that she was going to make him suffer.

Sitting there in Aggie's cottage, between the white dimity curtains with the little balls along the edge, it grew upon him that he was suffering now. It was not only Aggie and the past that made him miserable; it was Mrs. Grafton and the present. He was in love with her; he was desperately in love with her, even while he could analyze her away into a clever little house and clever little dinner-parties, delicious dresses, pearls and permanent waving. There was not very much more to her. Her languidly appraising eyes were almost as much of a modern formula as the pearls; and the body, alert or lounging in its silken sheath, not one whit more white or shapely than those of the other ladies who smoked and chattered in her drawing-room.

But there it was; he was desperately in love with her and she was not a fruit for him to choose and pluck, but a rock against which he would dash himself; and he grew sicker and sicker as he thought of it.

Aggie's curtains flapped softly in the afternoon breeze and he heard Aggie conducting Mrs. Bayliss round the garden below. "I'm thinking of keeping bees down in that corner; everything about bees is so delicious, isn't it?" she was saying. Secure, contented Aggie; the untarnished image of Ted Masters in her bosom, and bees, downs, cows and Mrs. Bayliss to look at. As for himself, was he not becoming a battered old sensualist and must not all the zest and bitter-sweet charm soon go out of the game of love when one could see so clearly that it was no longer worth the candle?

He addressed himself anew to his letter, trying to make capital of his distaste and to infuse a deeper flavor of ironic detachment into his phrases; but it would not do. Mrs. Grafton would see through him at once. It was of no avail to pretend that he idly ranged at large, when she knew as well as he did that she had him trapped securely.

When Mrs. Bayliss had been gone for some time he went down-stairs with the letter in his hand.

"Can we post this when we go out?" he asked. They had agreed that a walk would be pleasant after tea.

"There's a post-box just across the green. Was it a *very* interesting person—the letter?" Aggie smiled at him from the tea-table. "I imagine an erudite French writer, old, with a long beard and a silk cap with a tassel on it!"

"Far from it. It is to a very persistent, very foolish woman I have to dine with on Wednesday," said Ralph. It gratified him to say this, but it did not really lighten his mood and Aggie's tone of happy banter altered as she glanced at his face and heard his voice.

"Mrs. Bayliss asked us to come to tea," she said. "They are at the Lodge, where the Melvilles used to be. You wouldn't have cared to go, would you, Ralph?"

"Not at all. Who are the Baylisses?"

"He is retired from something in the city; banking, I think. A nice, kind man. And there are several married children coming and going and all the small grandchildren. They would not interest you, but as country neighbors they are very nice; and so kind to me. Mrs. Bayliss has sent me flowers ever since I came."

Aggie's eyes, while she talked and poured out his tea, passed gently, solicitously over his face and he suspected, as he had suspected last night, that her intuition did not really fail her and that, with all her talk of success,. she blindly, obscurely, pitied him.

"Do you know," he said, drinking his tea—how he hated Indian tea!—"you've come to talk like an American, Aggie."

He had intended to say nothing to Aggie about her deplorable accent, just as he had intended to say nothing about the tea; but while he was controlling one distaste, the other came out.

"One does over there, you know," said Aggie. She smiled in answer to his smile; but she flushed a little, too. "Is it very bad?"

"Well, it depends on who is listening," he said lightly.

When tea was over they went out and posted the letter. Then they took the winding country road, bordered by low willows, that ran among the water-meadows. "Shall we go into the meadows? It's dusty here," he said. He was feeling angry and unhappy, but the meadows, mild and shining, like a Blake "Song of Innocence," soothed him a little, and leaning on the little bridge, he smiled round at Aggie as he said: "Poor, after your Canadian rivers, isn't it?"

She was aware at once of his wish to make amends and her face lighted to relief. Aggie was *endimanchée*, too; but her white hat became her; her smiling face was almost young in its shadow.

"Oh, they are so splendid, Ralph! I wish you could see them! Blue, with islands, and great birches growing along their banks. But we can do better than this in England, can't we? though I love the little stream and all the loosestrife and meadowsweet."

"Yes; it all goes together. It all brings back one's youth, doesn't it?"

"Doesn't it, Ralph! All the things we did here when we were young! River things; watching birds, and fishing—not that we ever caught much, did we! But one almost always sees a kingfisher here still, if one waits long enough."

A clump of meadowsweet grew just opposite, its feet in the muddy margin of the stream, its fragrant plumes of yeasty white lifted against the sky. Tall, kind, familiar flower, trustful and full of childish memories; it brought all sorts of associations to his jaded mind.

"It's just the color of your hair," he said.

"Of my hair! The meadowsweet!" How he had surprised and pleased her.

"It's rather like you altogether," said Ralph. It really was.

"Oh, Ralph, how dear of you!" Never had he given her so much pleasure.

She saw all in the flower that he saw. Tears of happiness came to her eyes and, as they moved on, arm in arm, she murmured: "And I was feeling so old—so stupid: as if I could never interest you again."

Well, neither could she. Poor old Aggie. His irony returned for her facile optimism. He had not meant that she was not old and stupid

in comparing her to the meadowsweet. There was something foolish about it, too. And he liked the clear, close outline of the modern woman's head; not looped, twined, helpless locks such as Aggie's.

The thought of Mrs. Grafton's head struck at his heart.

"How do you manage it, Agg?" he said suddenly, and something subterranean in his mood brought the old nickname to his lips.

"Manage what, Ralph?"

"Your trust; your contentment; your happiness. Standing in the mud as you are; sunken in this dull little place; withering towards the grave like the rest of us; how do you manage to grow so exuberantly?"

"But it isn't mud; it isn't dull to me," she said gently. They were walking on among the soft green meadows, and she held his arm, full of trust, and looked about her. "It all means loveliness," she said.

"I see that it does; to you; just as I'm sure it does to the meadowsweet. But how do you manage it? In a world like this? And after all the odious things that have happened to you?"

She was silent for a moment, her eyes cast down. And then, thinking intently, she tried to tell him. "It came to me, Ralph. It's not contentment, you know—not exactly contentment. But you remember how everything seemed lost; all the things I'd believed; the things that made life possible. For years everything was lost to me. And then, everything came back; only differently. I found it was all true; in a different way."

"What was all true, Aggie?"

"That God is our Father and loves us," said poor Aggie.

He was silent, glancing down at her, astonished; and then, as she forced herself on, listening with a growing sense of indignation.

"It's not that things seem like that, I know. It's all like a dreadful labyrinth, of course—life, I mean, and one can't see a step before one sometimes. But if one has faith—if one holds the thread, the clue—it always leads one out; something answers from within us."

He listened, his arm in hers; his eyes turned away from her, and he almost smiled to hear her. So that was it; and how it always came back to the same thing; to the craving for life that sent the very universe spinning on its way. Life would always thus justify its thirst for happiness, and, if the outer streams dried up, it would seek the inner mirage of celestial springs of water. It was at these that Aggie lapped. And she hoped that he might be brought to lap. She was sorry for him. She guessed that he was not happy. Her hope thrilled in her voice.

"My poor old Aggie," he said, gently and kindly, "don't you know enough about psychology to have realized that self-suggestion explains all such mystic experiences? Or—if one prefers the latest jargon—the father complex; the longing that's in all of us to get back to shelter and safety. If you want anything very much—and of course we all want happiness and safety—and tell yourself often enough that it is there for you to take, you'll have to believe it. Nothing else *can* seem true to you. People have suggested themselves into believing anything."

He knew from her silence that she was arrested, that the current was checked indeed. No doubt the commonplaces he uttered could not be entirely new to her.

She said presently: "But everyone's deepest intuition is the same: they all find the same thing."

"Of course they do," said Ralph, "because, being all the same creatures, evolved from the same protoplasm, they all want the same thing and look for it. That simple fact makes so many of the dictums of religion sound so childish. 'Seek and ye shall find.' Of course you will—if you seek with faith enough and shut out disturbing fact. That's the infallible recipe for arriving at happiness, and the infallible recipe, I should say, for evading truth.

"It's when we use our minds and look out at life that we find truth; and it's not a loving truth; it's heartless; blind and indifferent to us and to our longings. But when we shut our eyes and listen only to the rhythm of our heart-beats, we find what we want to find. The heart can only sing the song it's told to sing; over and over again; and the more you sink down into it and close your ears to the outer discords, the happier you will be."

His voice had dropped its veil of kindness, though its bitterness was not for Aggie, but for life, for cruel, hostile, mocking life. He had almost forgotten Aggie. Then he heard her speak.

"But outer reality—the reality we look at with our minds—isn't all reality," she said. "Reason doesn't always contradict the heart."

"No, of course it doesn't," he assented. Was poor old Aggie really going to try to withstand him? "We've been formed by reality. We are a part of the world we live in; our consciousness has risen from it and can know it, within limits. There are joys to be found in life that reason can approve. Joys of the mind and body. Art, thought, love. It's only when they fail us that we seek the mystic consolations.

"But we must be honest with ourselves, Aggie, and own that if nature can give us satisfactions, she can also deprive us of them. Death, disintegration, decadence, are as real as life and progress. We can eat, drink and be merry, practise the arts and love one another, but tomorrow we assuredly die; and when we die, whatever gods may continue, it's an end of us. We mean a great deal to ourselves but nothing at all to eternity. That's an intuition of mine that is quite as deep as any of yours, Aggie; and my reason approves it."

"I can't believe that," said Aggie.

He smiled slightly to himself in hearing her voice, for he had frightened her, badly, although she wouldn't own to it. "You can't because you won't," he said, "and I don't quarrel with you for it, my dear. Go on, by all means, and be as happy as you can manage to be. No one could grudge you the short-lived illusion."

Now she was silent, perfectly silent. Perhaps something else had come to her and chilled not only trust but even protest. She must now feel that it was not to loving-kindness that she had spoken. That would be good for Aggie, too, and give her a hint of the true character of the universe.

They were again approaching the bridge and when they reached it Ralph found that he felt very tired. He paused and leaned on the railing.

"It's very close and stuffy, isn't it?" he said. "Don't bother about me, Aggie. Go on, and I'll follow you. I'll rest here for a moment."

But Aggie, perhaps feeling that she, too, needed rest, did not go on, and they leaned together looking in silence down at the sluggish stream.

For a long time they leaned there, and presently a stout rat appeared round a corner and ran nimbly along the opposite bank. They were both so still that it was completely unaware of them and sat up to wash its face with its forepaws.

"See the rat," said Ralph. He was glad of a subject of conversation and pleased to watch the rat, though something in its aspect he found repellent, a creature of the darkness displaying itself brazenly in the sunlight.

"Isn't it a mole?" said Aggie.

Her voice was absent. She was not really looking.

"No; you can't idealize him. It is a rat," said Ralph.

He glanced at her, smiling. He felt more genuinely kind towards Aggie now that he had made her fortress crumble. His indignation against her fatuity was exorcised.

Aggie was willing to keep up appearances. She faintly smiled back as she said: "But there's no harm in a rat."

"A great deal of harm, I think," said Ralph. "They're most repulsive brutes. I wonder how this one comes to be here. There's a garbage-heap somewhere about, I suppose. See the gusto with which he licks his fat sides, thinking only of himself."

"Perhaps he is a mother-rat and loves his children," Aggie smiled on, if wanly. And Ralph rejoined, lightly:

"He certainly loves his life and wants to be happy."

The rat continued unaware of them. He washed his face and licked his sides and then galloped away along the bank again. A rat, it seemed, in a cheerful mood of adventure. At the base of the meadowsweet he paused. He sniffed about its roots; he stood up on his hind-legs to extend his investigations; then he dropped to the foot of a tall stalk and began to gnaw at it.

"Now I never saw a rat do that before," said Ralph.

"Perhaps," said Aggie, wedded to her maternal interpretations, "he is building a nest."

The rat gnawed with a will, his cord-like tail switching, at moments, from side to side, and snapping suddenly, the tall stem fell and all the feathery summits lay in the mud. Frightened, the rat scampered off and disappeared down a hole.

"Now why did he do that?" Ralph wondered. He felt disturbed by the incident.

"Perhaps he thought it would do for a nest," Aggie repeated.

Ralph dismissed the surmise. "A rat would know better. It couldn't be of use to him. It was malice; that's my interpretation; sheer malice and the love of destruction. Life shows other qualities, you see, besides the craving for happiness. It's a cruel thing as well as a greedy one."

"I'm sure the rat didn't mean to be cruel. Only human beings can mean to be cruel," Aggie murmured. To the last she would oppose him.

But something in her voice drew his eyes to her.

She leaned there beside him, looking at the prostrate meadowsweet, and as he looked at it, too, he remembered, suddenly, his simile of a little while before. He looked at the meadowsweet with Aggie, and he saw what she saw. If Aggie was like the meadowsweet, if Aggie symbolized the innocent greed of nature, what was he like and what did he symbolize?

Ralph Barnaby had known very unpleasant feelings that afternoon, but to see himself as the rat was the most unpleasant of all. He had a truth-loving mind and it did not flinch now from its contemplation. If Aggie meant life and the craving, creative element in nature, he meant death, the cruel element that denies and destroys. Both were necessary in order that the great show should go on; but he did not like the part he had just played. He did not like the rat. He turned away from the stream and they walked on. And while they crossed the meadows and went up the road to the village green, neither found a word to say. The rat had completed the revelation that he had made of himself to Aggie. What could she say to him when it had been betrayed to her that he meant to do her harm?

Well, it would be a relief, really, if she were done with him. It would be far better for her that she should never see him again. Their paths had parted long years ago and it was absurd to try to make them meet. It had been the absurdity, the falsity of their relation that had made him cruel. They had nothing in common, absolutely nothing. They had nothing to give each other.

He felt, during the hours that followed, while they faced each other over the cold Sunday supper, and then, in the drawing-room, made conversation, that Aggie, at last, saw as he said. In the shallow, listless tones he heard the note, strange indeed in Aggie, of convention, of a shield held up to keep him at a distance.

She was afraid of him; and all that she asked of him now was to let her alone. She should

be let alone. That promise he made himself, and her. Aggie in the future should be safe from him.

He, too, could talk of books and pictures and music.

But, as the evening wore away, among the family photographs, Aggie with her knitting, he with his cigaret, the self-protecting wrappings of the day began to fall from him and, with all their dead about them, he felt himself sucked back once again into the past that Aggie embodied. Gwen, and Margaret, Dick and Randolph, there they all were, and he was again a gloomy, ironic, tormented youth, lying in the deep chair, tormented already by the dread of the abyss opening under their feet to swallow them all up. It had swallowed them all up, except him and Aggie, and in thinking of his youth, and of death, he knew that he would have been willing indeed, as in the old days, to feel Aggie's gentle hand laid on his forehead.

For there was one thing in his life that Aggie could have understood and did, perhaps, understand now; one thing that he could never show her, or anybody; his loneliness; his dark loneliness and fear. The time might come, he knew it, lying there, while he and Aggie talked on in those listless tones, when love such as hers would be absolutely all that would be left to cling to.

Mrs. Grafton would not remain to close one's eyelids when one was dying; she would not even remain if one were ill.

But Aggie was not done with him. When they met next morning for the hurried breakfast before his departure, he found that the mask of morose civility he wore was inappropriate. Aggie might still be afraid of him; but she did not give him up. He had never seen her look so old; and yet a morning freshness, like dew, was on her.

What was it that had happened to her since they had parted? What had she seen anew or grasped afresh?—his need? or her own security? She had wept, he saw it, and she had lain awake; but she was like the meadowsweet; she brought balms and blessings from the night, and love shone on him from her eyes.

He felt that he blushed suddenly, and, trying to keep his footing, he remembered that poor old Aggie always got up again.

But, for the first time in his life, he had, this morning, a dim suspicion that his formulas were insufficient.

"Come again, dear Ralph, if you will," she said.

The motor-bus was rumbling down the road and the little maid, astonished by her tip, was carrying out his valise. He and Aggie stood between the rows of clove-pinks and violas.

"It's dull here, I know. But if you ever wanted a rest."

"And if you ever want to see any pictures—to do a play, or concert, my dear old Agnes." It was perhaps the first time he had called her by her name.

They kissed each other. And then, unbelievably, Ralph heard himself muttering: "Forgive me if I've been ill-tempered. I've had worries. I've been rather on edge. And I've always been an ill-tempered brute, you know, Agnes—like the rat."

It was unbelievable to her, too. Tears were in her eyes as she heard him. She shook her head, trying to smile; not knowing what to say. "But it wasn't ill-tempered; it wasn't, Ralph. There's where you made your mistake. I mean—*you're* not really ill-tempered, either." No; she did not know what to say.

Then, as he drove away, back to London and Mrs. Grafton, Aggie stood at the gate waving to him, and the pale hair, like meadowsweet, was the last he saw of her.

Whatever you did to Aggie she would still go on loving you. That was what she had to give.

Could it be reduced to the craving for happiness, he wondered? And thinking of himself, he saw a dark, scurrying form disappearing into the muddy river-bank.

The Dice of God

(Continued from page 23)

accept. The great river fringed with palm and papyrus lay smooth and green as agate under the June sunshine, only here and there a swift swiveling movement round rushes or rock betraying the powerful undercurrents that were sweeping down to the Falls less than a mile and a half away from the landing-stage. It being late August, the river was already far below its greatest level, and the hippos had come down from the upper reaches to gambol with their young in the shallows. And sometimes as the launch pushed nearer the banks, a crocodile would stir from a low branch, and slip with a stealthy plop into the flood.

Miss Haviland sat in the bows, looking extremely decorative against a bunch of dark red and blue cushions, and surrounded by an admiring crowd. Narice Vanne, Brunel close at hand, was amidships with the motor, taking a great interest in Anthony Tulloch's management of the craft, and if her crowd was small numerically, it certainly made up for itself by enthusiasm. Brunel said little, but looked volumes, while Anthony Tulloch appeared to have made a bet with himself that her detached gaiety should be turned into a more personal channel. They bantered each other like two schoolboys, and when Irish and Scotch wits get together, it is like two fine swords clashing out blue fire. Blake had not seen Anthony Tulloch in such spirits for many a day. Others noticed it too.

"I believe old Bad Luck's hit at last," said Mundell in an undertone.

"By gad, I should be glad!" answered Blake softly, and smiled at the river to hide the light that came into his eyes at the idea; but a moment later his glance returned to the group in the middle of the boat. Narice Vanne was laughing, and passing her fingers over her charming if slightly defective nose.

"Yes, it's been broken twice. Once hunting, and once tooling down a hill in Scotland on a motor-bike I didn't know how to ride. An old Scotch gilly picked me up, and when he saw the bloody mess that was my face, he inquired solemnly:

" 'Ha' ye got a mon?'

"As I speak the lingo, I realized that he wished to find out if I was married yet, and I told him 'No.'

" 'Weel—ye'll ne'er get one the noo!' said he."

The Belgian looked grieved and puzzled, but Anthony Tulloch gave a yelp of glee at this pretty specimen of Scotch philosophy.

Yes—that was the kind of a girl for Bad Luck, decided Blake. One who would drive away the black vultures of depression that brooded over him from time to time, pull him out of the pit with her bright sparkling ways—put a draft to his lips that knew too well the taste of ashes. It would be great!

"Tell me why you nickname him Bad Luck?" the soft voice of Anne Haviland broke in upon Blake's reflections.

Strange she should have asked at that moment! He didn't usually talk about his friend, but this was different—she was Miss Vanne's friend, and he might find out all about the latter from her, though there seemed little enough to find out about such a frank-eyed girl. But maybe Miss Haviland's sympathy could be enlisted anyway, and her good services obtained to further the romance.

"There's a certain amount of irony in that nickname, as with most things in this country." He spoke low so that Tony should not overhear him. "But here's Kandahar, and when we get out of reach of his very keen ears, I'll tell you all about it."

"*Do!*" she said pleasantly, and they found it no very difficult matter, while the others were making fires and unpacking tea baskets, to saunter off together, Miss Haviland picking red love-berries as they walked.

"It's ironical to call Tony's luck bad, for in a way he has the best luck in the country. Everything he touches turns to money. He came out here a poor man, one of Rhodes' great band of adventurers, and now he's worth a good deal more than half a million. He bought his ranch—which is the first in the country—at a shilling an acre, a hundred thousand acres, and now it is worth five pounds an acre. All his experiments in stock-raising and agriculture have done well, and on another farm he owns they've found the beginnings of a top-whole copper mine. Then he's liked equally by men and women and *that's* luck, isn't it?"

"Yes, indeed!" agreed Anne Haviland.

"On the other hand, the girl he was in love with turned him down before he got his luck, and that made him bitter towards women and life generally. He seems to get bad luck too in all the things he likes, cards, shooting, and sport generally, and then from the war, though he came back with a D. S. O and a C. M. G., he also got that fearful scar across his nose, and his leg was all shot to bits. He can't walk any distance now, or ski, or climb, or box, all things he was keen about. Thank heaven he can still ride and swim or he'd go mad, I expect. But he looks upon himself as a crock, and that's pretty bitter when a man's still young, and has been a crack athlete."

"He's certainly not a crock," said Anne Haviland, "and as for his scar, I think he's very attractive in spite of it and his limp."

"*We* think him hard to beat," averred Blake, "and I know if I were a woman he'd get me sooner than any Adonis." He shot a sudden question at his companion. "Don't you think that Miss Vanne is rather taken with him?"

"Narice?" Anne Haviland turned a startled glance on him, then smiled and shook her head. "Oh, no! you mustn't count on that. She's often taken with people."

"Do you mean she's a flirt?" asked Blake sharply.

"Oh, well—that's rather a hard way of putting it, Major Blake. Say rather that she is very fond of the society of men, and likes them better than women. There's no harm in that, is there?"

"N-o," pondered Blake uneasily. "No, I suppose not. Neither is it any reason why she shouldn't some day like the society of one man more than all the rest, is it?"

"I don't think the society of one man would ever satisfy Narice."

Blake gazed moodily at her. "Anthony Luck's not an ordinary man."

"No, indeed, he doesn't look it. Any woman would find him interesting, I should think, and no doubt Narice does, but——" She stopped, and looked about her in an unhappy, distracted sort of way.

"But what, Miss Haviland?"

"Oh," she said, half impatiently, "it's no business of mine, nor yours either! But if your friend has been badly hurt once, it would be a pity for him to——" She broke off again.

"To get hurt again?"

"To lose all faith in women."

"Ah!" A dark look passed over Blake's face.

"Not that she would hurt him *intentionally*," the other hastened to add. "Narice has the sort of good nature that never *means* any harm."

"And she's not going to mean it here, or do it either, if I can help it," said Blake grimly, but he had to say it to himself, for they were back upon the others, who for several minutes past had been hooting and hulloing for them to come to tea. He silently registered a vow to warn Bad Luck of what he had heard as soon as possible. He wasn't going to have old Tony falling in love with a girl who apparently was nothing but a heartless little flirt, for all her frank ways and clear-eyed looks.

They were all gathered round a table under the thatched shed put up for picnickers, and Blake observed that Anthony Tulloch was still fencing and frivoling at Narice Vanne's elbow. Her wit and gaiety clearly magnetized him, and Blake was bound to admit to himself that

Is your daughter proud of her mother?

EVERY now and then you see them on the street—the daughters who are proud of their mothers. You can tell it by the way they hold their heads, by their sedate little expressions. And you know their mothers by a certain dignity and lightness of movement that belong to women who are sure of themselves, proud of themselves, who know how to take care of themselves in every way.

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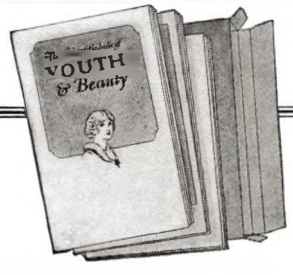

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even if she was not such a "looker" as the golden Miss Haviland, she was something even more fetching—devilish companionable. And, when she was laughing and talking, her face seemed all delicate curves and color, her eyes full of violet fire, and there was the dash and grace of a thoroughbred in every movement.

Still—Blake was not going to have the happiness of his best friend drowned in those violet depths, nor flung to the winds by those fine sunburnt hands now pouring out his tea. Not if Bill Blake could help it should Tony be broken twice on the wheel of a woman's vanity and caprice. As a beginning he proceeded, by the exercise of his whimsical bad manners, to edge Bad Luck away from the siren and get him busy attending instead to the wants of Miss Haviland—a far better occupation for him than staring into the depths of Narice Vanne's eyes.

And another thought flashed suddenly into his diligent brain—if Tony was by way of falling in love, why not with Miss Haviland? *There* was a woman now who, even if she hadn't the dark girl's vividness, possessed great beauty and, what was more important, a kind and generous heart. Of this she had given sufficient proof in her recent conversation with Blake, and he now studied her with the fresh interest of a newly hatched idea, as she sat leaning against one of the supports of the shed and looking up at Anthony Tulloch.

Her coloring was perfect; no berry-brown throat and freckles there, but a milky whiteness tinted most tenderly with the delicate pink of a wild rose. It was not indeed Miss Haviland's habit to brave the sunshine unprotected, but here in the shade she had unwound the swaths of veiling from her roses and lilies, and removed her hat from the pale gilt hair massed in shining coils and curls about her small head. Slung round her neck on a fine platinum chain, she wore a little flat diamond monkey of exquisite workmanship, with ruby eyes; he held an end of the chain in each outstretched hand, and his little tail dangled stiffly above the central shadow of her breast.

Yes—Anne Haviland was beautiful. Her features were almost classical in their regularity, but saved from coldness by the fulness and warm red of her lips, and her heavy-lidded, slumbrous brown eyes. No man, thought Blake, could look at such a woman without an extra beat in his wrist, and he knew that Anthony Tulloch was no bat where beauty was concerned.

What Blake began wondering now was how he himself had come to so rapid a decision that Miss Vanne was the more attractive of the two. The illusion could only have been founded on his experience at luncheon, when Narice Vanne's impulsive acceptance of his invitation had filled him with grateful appreciation, while the other's expression of haughty surprise chilled him more than he'd have cared to confess. But now he was inclined to admire Miss Haviland for her stand-offishness, while Miss Vanne's eager friendliness seemed only a further reason for the distrust that was rapidly growing in him.

"Easy come, easy go," quoth he bitterly. "A little facile jade!"

Yet within her radius bitterness did not last long. You couldn't help liking the little jade somehow, facile or not. She seemed to generate a sort of spontaneous happiness, and throw out tendrils of *joie de vivre* that entangled you. It wasn't that she was always laughing, either. On the contrary, she was often quite grave. She knew about things too, the kind of things men cared for—racing, games, politics—things that no one would suspect a woman painter of being interested in. And she was full of argument and repartee and fight. Never a dull moment in her company; wherefore Blake clung to it manfully, managing to monopolize her on the launch going home, to the exclusion of all others; and as the eight-and-a-half mile voyage drew to an end, he patted himself happily on the back.

Fortuitously enough, Anthony Tulloch appeared to have completely transformed his absorption from the nymphish lure of Miss Vanne to the more Helen-of-Troyish attraction of her friend. So all was well, and probably under proper manipulation—which Blake, always prepared to play Providence, would undertake—all would turn out for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

But it appeared that Tony meant to have a hand in the game too, for as they reached the landing-stage he called out suddenly: "I've been trying to persuade Miss Haviland that she and Miss Vanne ought to come up to our place, Blake, and stay a bit."

Miss Haviland smiled across half doubtfully at her friend and collaborator.

"We ought not to go anywhere we can't write about, or paint. Shall we be able to put Portulloch in the book?"

"Ra-ther!" cried Blake. "No book, in fact, would be complete without it."

"And I can promise you all the glowing distances and mountain-tops you want," said Bad Luck to Miss Vanne. He had managed, Blake hardly knew how, to slink off next to her again, and get ahead of all the other fellows in handing her out of the launch.

"That settles it, then," she laughed. "It's a bet!"

No sooner landed than the Mounted Policemen had to bolt for it to the station, to catch their last and only train back to Livingstone. Uttering hasty and reluctant adieus, together with many pressing exhortations to their newly-made friends to come up soon and be shown the glories of Northern Rhodesia's capital, they departed. But they hated to go, and worst of all they hated the sprightly content with which Blake and Luck stayed behind.

"If we can only scrap this fellow Morrison now—and the Belgian," muttered Anthony Tulloch in Blake's ear.

But the Belgian—hitherto a sufferer from *nostalgie* for his native land—now seemed more inclined to take root in the hotel than continue his journey to the coast. Morrison, a pleasant enough fellow, with sleek light hair and quiet manners, could not be taken active objection to, for, though he undoubtedly had a prior right to the society of the two ladies, he never pushed it and seemed pleasingly unaverse to exist merely as a member of the crowd about them. However, he asserted his position sufficiently to insist on the others being his guests to dinner, a return compliment to the afternoon's jaunt.

So they all sat down together again that evening, and over the meal, arrangements for the visit to Portulloch were furthered. Bad Luck's suggestion was that the whole party should leave by his launch next day, while the baggage came on by train. Blake had never known him in such a hurry about anything for years, and it was clear that it was Narice Vanne who inspired this spirit of expedition.

"She looks and smells like a bunch of violets in the wind," he had dreamily remarked to Blake just before dinner, and Blake, staggered and dumfounded at this explosion into poetry, could only stare. Now she was all fire and color, setting a light to the man beside her, so that he sizzled, and ricocheted, and went off bang brilliantly all through dinner, and the others were drawn in to scintillate with them.

Even the Belgian, seated on her other side, gave off a few sparks, and made it obvious that he admired Miss Vanne profoundly. Which was to the good, in Billy Blake's opinion at least, for he never moved from Miss Vanne's left elbow all the evening. A chaperon was not in it with him.

When Sir Anthony at ten o'clock announced that a beautiful lunar rainbow—one of the sights of the Falls—was due with the full moon, and suggested that they all go down to the gorge to see it, Brunel was the first to respond enthusiastically. Morrison frankly yawned at the notion, and spoke lovingly of bed. Miss Haviland had rubbed her heel and said she did not care to do any more walking. Only Narice Vanne cried out at once: "*I'll* go!"

"And I," repeated the Belgian firmly, and Bad Luck looked glum.

"That's o.k., then," reflected Blake, who had seen all the lunar rainbows he ever wanted or intended to see. "Brunel will play gooseberry far more effectively than I."

"I'll wait up till you come back, Narice," said Miss Haviland. "And perhaps Major Blake will keep me company. But don't be too long, and let us get some wraps first, for it's very damp with all this mist about."

While the two women were inside and the Belgian mooned up and down waiting for them, Blake thought it meet to get in a word of warning to his friend.

"She's got you going, Tony—but don't go in too deep."

Bad Luck turned on him a dark, astonished stare. "What the deuce do you mean, Bill?"

"Oh, nothing," Bill replied, squinting. "But don't go in too deep, that's all. You may have to swim home."

Anthony Tulloch looked as if he would have had great pleasure in pulling his best friend's nose, but fortunately at this moment Miss Vanne reappeared, swathed in a silky white shawl and looking ready for anything. They went off into the mists, the girl very slim and tall between the two men, and Blake noticed that Tony hardly dragged his leg at all. It was as if the limp had suddenly gone out of it.

The moment the party was out of hearing, Blake addressed his companion abruptly: "Miss Haviland, I am awfully worried about what you said this afternoon. Tony is my best friend. Tell me, do you really think Miss Vanne is just fooling?"

"I don't care to express any opinion on the matter, Major Blake," she replied rather stiffly. "Besides, I should think your friend is well able to take care of himself."

"Yes—I dare say he is—when he knows what he's up against. But he must know, or it wouldn't be fair. I can't let old Tony come a second purler over a woman!"

His evident sincerity touched Anne Haviland, and her beautiful face grew very grave in the moonlight.

"Then I think," she said slowly, "this visit to Portulloch should never have been arranged."

What can a man do when he wants like blazes to be alone with a woman, and another fellow, whose company she does not discourage, persists in being there too? It was an infuriating situation, and the more so to Anthony Tulloch in that he felt, rightfully or wrongfully, that the girl was using the other man's presence as a safeguard and a buffer.

She would never have dared to throw out the provokement and allure that Bad Luck felt her winding about him had they been alone together. She must have known that if she had, he would have possessed the right to take her in his arms and discover whether or not he had roused in her the same sweet madness as was beating in his veins. He realized suddenly that he had always wanted a woman like this, with the elements of mistress, wife, lover, mother, equally distributed in her, a vase containing both living wine and crystal water! It has been laid down by great thinkers that but for rare exceptions, there are only two types of women—the mother type, and the lover type. Anthony Tulloch knew in that hour that none but such a rare, rare one—half lily, half passion-flower—could fill his life, and he was tormented with anxiety to find out for himself the composition of Narice Vanne's nature.

Every moment, too, she whipped him into a wilder curiosity and desire, using the Belgian's ubiquity as a gate over which she could lean to throw the arrows that tormented her victim, to hold out that cup, of contents uncertain, with lovely hands and mocking lips.

They had walked a mile by now, and come to where the railway spans the great Batoka Gorge, which is the highest bridge in the world, and where everyone goes to watch the rainbows. Leaning on the parapet, they stood gazing awhile at the unearthly radiance of the tinted arch that curved over the entire breadth of the Falls, its ends piercing to the dark water

below—a sight almost stunning in its uncanny loveliness. But after a time it did not entirely satisfy the beauty-hunger burning in Narice Vanne. She wanted to get nearer, to feel herself caught in the glory of the rainbow itself, drenched in its radiance, drowned in its color.

"Let's go down to the Rain Forest!" she cried feverishly. "We shall be closer there—right *in* it—a glorious experience to remember all one's life!"

Now the Rain Forest is full of a fine spectral mist, composed of the spray from the Falls, that wets to the skin in no time, and calls for a mackintosh at least. None of them being properly attired for such an expedition, Bad Luck demurred a little, but only a very little, for he too thought it would be the experience of a lifetime, to walk with this alluring girl in the mysterious ghostliness of the forest.

Perhaps they were all slightly mad by now—the lunar rainbow sometimes has this effect on impressionable and temperamental people. Certainly no one in his sane senses would have looked upon the Rain Forest as a cheery night resort, inhabited as it is by snakes and monkeys and various strange creatures, winged and otherwise, that flit and dart and cry among the tall tree tops. But there was a spell on those three. Even the Belgian's native caution failed him, and as for Bad Luck, whither Narice Vanne led he was willing to follow.

So down the sloping narrow glades they trod, nearer and nearer to the thunder of the great chasm. The moonlight began to lose its brightness, filtering only dimly through the covering trees, but the spray's wraithy light guided them. Shroudy forms seemed all about them, moving amidst the tree trunks and feathery, swaying fern fronds.

They had long since fallen silent. People rarely talk when nearing the Falls. There is something terrifically silencing in that majestic pageant of sound, but it is a silence in which there is no peace.

Both Anthony Tulloch and Narice Vanne felt this. As they moved through the shivering, rustling woods, the blood in their veins seemed to rustle and vibrate in unison with the mighty forces about them, and they became conscious of a terrible aliveness. Sometimes their shoulders brushed, once his hand touched hers, and a fine silver flame seemed to leap between them. Only for the presence of the Belgian, there might have been a conflagration of souls in that place of mirage, or a consecration of the poet's dream—perhaps both! As it was, madness of the senses found relief in taking strange risks.

Disregarding the wet, slippery ground underfoot, they penetrated to the very edge of the great gorge, and leaned perilously over to bathe in that wonderful light that never was on land or sea, and at the same time become drenched with the fine permeating spray. Narice, in spite of bounding pulses, a fever of excitement, became presently aware of a deadly chill in the air. She had not known that during the winter month of August, the temperature near the river often falls to freezing point. Anthony Tulloch, however, knew it well, and would have thought of it before but for the midsummer madness in his veins. Now he too felt the sudden change in the atmosphere and realized that he was exposing this lightly clad girl to the risk of serious illness.

"Come along at once!" he shouted above the roar of the waters. "*Marchons!*" And taking her arm firmly, he led the way back.

The Belgian, not to be outdone, took her other arm in a businesslike fashion, and they marched along briskly, all of them by now thoroughly chilled and wet through; but just as they reached the edge of the forest and were able to hear themselves speak once more, Narice, happening to glance at her wet and ice-cold hands, gave a cry:

"My ring—my ring! It must have slipped off somewhere as we came along!" She released herself from the men and half turned to go back, but Anthony Tulloch barred the way.

"You mustn't dream of going back. Besides, we should never find it by this light."

"But I wouldn't lose it for worlds!" she cried.

"And you shan't," he assured her. "If I have to rake every inch of the path we've come, I'll find it for you tomorrow."

"Oh—will you?" She turned her face, pale and lovely in the strange light, to his, and swiftly he drew close, for the Belgian, a few yards off, was striking matches and peering by the flicker of them along the dark path, and for one moment they two were alone.

"I'd rake the earth to put what they needed into these little hands," said Anthony Tulloch, catching them to his lips, and in that instant he felt her trembling against him, thrilling, aflame as he was. "And for you, Narice," he whispered, and their lips drew nigh, but the Belgian chose that moment to turn back to them, and they fell apart.

"*Impossible de le retrouver!*" mournfully declared Monsieur Brunel.

"Impossible nothing!" said Anthony Tulloch boastfully. His heart sang aloud, the whole universe was his private possession. "I shall find it in the morning." A little sound from the girl brought him swiftly back to the material plane. Her teeth were chattering! "You're wet through!" Hastily he flung his coat round her and once more pulled her arm through his. "We must hurry back to the hotel like mad, or you'll be ill."

"I'm all r-r-r-right," she murmured faintly, but had indeed begun to shake and shiver uncontrollably all through her body.

The Belgian again grabbed her other arm, and they hurried her along at top speed back to the hotel. The gardens and verandas were deserted—not a soul about anywhere.

"Now, straight into a hot bath you go," Bad Luck commanded, relinquishing her. "Then to bed with a big dose of quinin and a glass of strong toddy. I'll send these things along to your room as soon as I can beat them up."

"Do you think I've g-g-got fever?"

"I hope not. Even so, you may dodge it if you strictly follow instructions. Good night."

"G-good night!" she chattered, and disappeared.

The Belgian also dispersed himself instantly, and Bad Luck sped on a tour of exploration. There was still a light in the kitchen, and after a good deal of bossing around, the explorer managed to get boiling water and lemons. Of quinin, being an old Rhodesian, he had plenty in his pocket, while for the potable essence of a good toddy he knew Blake could be relied upon. The only question was—would he already be abed and asleep?

But no, there he sat in his room, whisky and glasses on a table before him, and pipe in mouth, though in his eyes was none of the calm peace of nicotine. In fact he looked as worried as a turkey with a tin chicken, and his greeting to Bad Luck wore an air of dark foreboding:

"Oh—*there* you are!"

"Why!" exclaimed the other gaily. "Did you think I'd tumbled over the falls?"

"There are worse tumbles than that, my boy."

This mumpish rejoinder for some obscure reason heated Anthony Tulloch all up.

"Since when have you been wet-nursing me, Bill?" he rapped out curtly. "And what the devil do you mean by it?"

"I *knew* that was all the thanks I'd get," said the lugubrious Bill.

"Yes, it is. However, I came here for whisky and not for back-chat. Miss Vanne has got the shakes, and so have I for the matter of that!"

He reached for the bottle and began hurriedly fixing two raging glasses of strong drink, one for the patient, one for himself, his face meanwhile wearing an uninviting scowl that it might have been foolhardy to ignore. But once Bill Blake was sure of the right course, he kept to it with the persistence of a hungry fly.

"I want to tell you something you won't like, Tony."

"Better not," the other replied on a warning

note without looking up, but Blake stoically carried on.

"That girl only uses the title 'Miss' professionally, like an actress does. She is really *Mrs.* Vanne—a married woman."

Bad Luck finished mixing his drink, put it to his lips, drained it, and set the glass down before he spoke.

"Who told you that?" His voice was curiously composed, but the scar across his nose showed up as lividly as if it had just been put there with a paint-brush.

"Her friend Miss Haviland, who has known her for years." There was a silence, then the narrator continued heavily: "It appears that she and the husband led a cat-and-dog life and decided to part."

Another considerable silence, during which Anthony Tulloch flattened another drink. At last he said quietly:

"Ring the bell, Bill, and have this quinin and stuff taken to the lady's room."

He sat down again, and stared rather absently at the bottle on the table. Blake rang the bell once, and several more times, but to no purpose. Finally he took up the medicaments himself and departed, first to the notice-board in the hall to find out the number of Miss Vanne's room, then to her door at the end of a long corridor.

After a fair amount of knocking and waiting, he was rewarded by the arrival of Miss Vanne, not out of her bedroom, but from the direction of the bathroom. She came stumbling rather feebly along, wrapped in a blue dressing-gown, but the sight of Blake and his spirituous offering cheered her considerably. She stood there in the corridor sipping it rapturously.

"This *is* a bracer!" she giggled. "I shall be thoroughly laced!"

"A jolly good job too. It's the only possible way to keep fever and chill out of the system," was the virtuously Rhodesian reply.

"I feel better already since I boiled myself, and this will probably put the finishing touch to my convalescence—or to me! It's most frightfully kind of you and Sir Anthony!"

She smiled lovely, misty violet eyes of gratitude out of a white face, and Blake felt a glow of mysterious pleasure as well as a tinge of remorse. But both sensations vanished rapidly and completely when he got back to his room and found his best friend, apparently unconscious of goings and comings, still sitting there staring before him at the bottle. He shied like a maniac when Blake's hand fell almost caressingly on his shoulder.

"Let's get to bed, old man."

"Let's get to Hell!" muttered Anthony Tulloch, and rising went unsteadily out of the room, dragging his leg.

"I hear that the medical supervision and comforts supplied to her left nothing to be desired," smiled Anne Haviland next morning, when they, all but one, met for eleven o'clock tea on the veranda. "Nevertheless, she is sporting a temperature, and there's nothing for her but a day or two in bed."

Commandante Brunel had reassumed his air of nostalgia; Anthony Tulloch had on his poker face, with a pair of flint eyes in it, and even Blake's whimsical hardihood did not come quite up to form, but Anne Haviland's voice was soothing and serene, and "All her ways, like Death's, were calm and sweet." Neither did she seem inclined to let her friend's indisposition interfere with the projected visit to Portulloch, except to postpone it slightly.

"What I propose is that you go on ahead," she said, "and we'll follow as soon as Narice is better."

"A *bon plan*," agreed Blake heartily, "a very *bon plan*." Nevertheless, he fidgeted and cast a side-glance at Bad Luck.

"Except for today's part of it!" rejoined the Laird of Portulloch. "Why should we be bundled off in that cold-blooded fashion?"

"I don't believe Narice will get better while you are all about. Bed bores her, and she won't stay there if there's the least inducement to get up."

"I should like to see her again before we go," Bad Luck remarked quietly. "Just in case she changes her mind after all and doesn't come up to the ranch."

Blake looked sharply at those hard eyes, but Miss Haviland's laugh rippled lightly out.

"You've found out poor Narice's changeableness, Sir Anthony—but you mustn't rely on mine. *I* shall not let you off my visit, so I warn you."

"I don't want to be let off."

He looked at her steadily, and a most lovely wave of color swept into her face. "Perhaps it will be all right, after all!" Blake thought. "She'll get him over his jolt with the other girl!"

Abruptly the Belgian uttered some phrases in his weird English: "I shall go hon donight. I take de mid-night train. But again first I vish do see Miss Vanne." He turned appealingly to Anne Haviland.

"I'm afraid you can't," she answered. "Impossible for her to get up with that temperature, even to say good-by to you, Monsieur Brunel."

"Vill you ask her, pliz?" he persisted. "It is ver', *ver'* important."

"Of course I will—but really . . ." She smiled doubtfully.

"It is *awful*," she remarked to Bad Luck a few minutes later, "the way Narice makes captives, and I have to go about cutting them loose afterwards, and pouring oil and wine on the bruises."

"A thankless task, I expect?"

They had strolled away from the veranda and the others, and naturally their feet took the only road there was to go—the one to the bridge. After all, there was little to be done in that part of the world but gaze at the Falls, either from the Rain Forest, the Palm Grove, or the bridge.

"Yes, indeed!" Anne sighed ruefully. "Somehow the victims always go away blaming me instead of Narice. Not that I mind much, as long as I succeed in giving a little comfort."

"I should think you might comfort a man for a good deal, Miss Haviland," said Anthony Tulloch with deliberation, and again had the gratification of seeing that fair face suffused with color.

"What an awfully kind thing to say!" she murmured. "I'm afraid it is undeserved. But I do try, because in my own life I have so much needed comfort—and got so little!"

"I'm sorry," he said gently. "One scarcely connects sadness with anyone so radiant."

She sighed, fell silent, then said enigmatically: "Some sit so carelessly to the Banquet of Life. Others get only the crumbs that fall."

His face darkened, and the scar showed up. The fires that had raged in him all night leaped out once more. "You're right!" he muttered. "Some 'spoil the bread and spill the wine' lightsomely enough!"

She glanced sadly at the fierce moodiness of his face, and made an effort to distract him. "Tell me," she said cheerfully, "do you *really* want us to come to your ranch? Won't it give an awful lot of extra trouble?"

"No trouble at all. There are plenty of servants—only native 'boys' of course, but well trained ones, and it's a fairly comfortable house as farmhouses go." (It happened to be the largest and most luxurious in the country, but he was not the man to say so.)

"As long as I can have a little hut to hide in with my work for a few hours every day——" she began.

"You can have that, and everything else you want."

"Narice likes a place to herself too, though of course most of her painting is done out-of-doors."

"Of course." Bad Luck took out his cigaret case, proffered it, and lighted one for her before he added easily, "But I don't somehow think Miss Vanne means to come to Portulloch."

He was indeed pretty certain that she would not come, after the interview he intended to encompass with her before he left. The fragrant seductive memory of that "bunch of violets in the wind" drove him as a demon drives; and bitterness, disenchantment, disappointment of he knew not what exquisite dreams, ate him like an acid. He could think of nothing but revenge on that haunting, taunting woman.

When in the late afternoon Blake at a loose end and kicking his heels with impatience suggested that the launch was all shipshape for a start homewards, he was snarled at for his pains and told that *he* could go if he liked—and be damned to him! After which the Master of Portulloch disappeared from the hotel and did not turn up at dinner. It was almost nine P. M. when he suddenly limped onto the veranda, to be greeted with the news that Miss Vanne was so much better that she had yielded to Mr. Brunel's entreaties and consented to get up and say good-by to him.

"They are in our private sitting-room now," laughed Miss Haviland. "Poor Mr. Brunel almost in tears, and Narice sobbing too no doubt—but with boredom. She is one of those people who while far from suffering fools gladly, simply can't bring herself to say 'no' to them even when she means it."

Scarcely an admirable characteristic, though Anne Haviland described it more in fun than in caviling, and Bad Luck stood listening absently, leaning on his stick with an impenetrable expression on his face. He remarked briefly and quietly: "I think some one should rid her of the turbulent Belgian," and walked indoors.

He knew quite well where the sitting-room was situated, for he had made it his business to inquire first thing that morning, after getting in from his successful hunt for the lost ring. He had found it in the Rain Forest, almost at the very edge of the chasm, and it jingled in his pocket now, having been thrust there among loose sixpences and shillings. One swift summarizing glance at its solid masculine make, its coat of arms on a raised shield, its engraved inscription inside:

To—N.
Heart of my Heart

had been enough, providing the extra twist of the knife that firmed up his decision to do as he had been done by.

As he reached the sitting-room door the Belgian came out of it, and there really were tears in his eyes, if Anthony Glenpatrick Tulloch had possessed curiosity enough to observe the fact. But he happened to be too much preoccupied with his own emotions. Pushing past the other man, and slamming the sitting-room door behind him, he faced the girl who had just risen from her chair and stood smiling rather shakily at him.

"Here's your ring!" he said abruptly, and came forward with it lying on his palm.

She reached for it with an exclamation of joy, but as she touched it his hand seized hers, and roughly and brutally he drew her close, held her face up and pressed his mouth down on hers. For at least three seconds he held her thus, in a grasp of iron and unpardonable violence, kissing her. No lover's embrace this, but an onslaught as fierce and cruel as it was sudden, and kisses that were like blows bruising her lips onto her teeth.

Gasping and trembling with outraged astonishment, she tried at first to utter her indignation against those savage lips, and to wrench herself free. Then she became still, and cold as ice in his arms, and at once he had finished. Suddenly and swiftly as he had attacked, he now almost flung her from him.

"How dare you! How *dare* you!" She was white, with blazing eyes.

"How dare I—yes, how *dare* I?" he echoed the words with a furious rudeness and irony, his eyes as darkly agleam as her own, all the red-brown of his skin gone strangely sallow. With no other word, nothing but a hard derisive laugh, he turned and went from the room.

"I've had my revenge anyway," he muttered to himself as he slammed and stumbled his way down the corridor, dragging his game leg as

if it had been made of iron, "and she a lesson she won't forget in eternity!"

Less than twenty minutes later, a native brought Blake a message that the launch only awaited his company to depart. Bad Luck, having accomplished such things as he had designed, was now ready to set his face for home.

Portulloch was one of the show places of Northern Rhodesia. The homestead, occupying the center of a raised plateau, had been built by Baker the famous architect, on the same lines employed by the early Dutch builders—white-walled, gabled, green-shuttered, with wide stoops and tall chimneys. All round it lay scattered a wild garden, rich with the perfume of roses, and beyond that strayed the boundless rolling veld, a great sweep of colorful land with lazy violet hills crouching on the horizon.

Here, on the banks of the Kafue River, Bad Luck and Blake ran 5000 head of cattle and some hundreds of pigs, and grew mealies and cotton. They had a bacon factory, and the most scientific and up-to-date of dairies. An Australian cattleman managed the beasts, and half a dozen young Englishmen took their share in the farm work in return for their training. It was not only the show farm of this part of the world, but the most hospitable one, and its doors stood open to welcome visitors.

It is true that the railway station was some twenty-five miles away, but a perfect fleet of motor-cars overcame this difficulty—hardy little cars of an undistinguished make, but of most excellent capacity to negotiate the roads. All Rhodesian roads are rough, but most especially when they broach the very fringes of the untamed jungle, as did the Portulloch estate.

What made the place so fascinating was that indoors you had all the luxurious comforts with which wealthy bachelors know how to surround themselves—a marvelous library full of deep chairs, priceless books, and the latest periodicals; a first-class billiard room; a dining-room set about with fine old benches, *armoires*, and tables from an ancient Spanish monastery; beds with box mattresses, Irish linen sheets, and frilled pillow-cases—yet as you lay so luxuriously abed, reading the last novel or the latest Nash, you might hear the roar of lions, the *oomph* of the wild dog, the stampeding hoofs of a herd of zebra 500 strong, and sometimes the distant trumpet of elephant. And in the morning, to greet you, one of those crashing dawns, of color and fire and dew!

No wonder Rupert Morrison, sent by Anne Haviland to reconnoiter and report whether she would really be advised to come, and truly not likely to be in the way, wrote back so heartily:

"You will be in clover here, my dear Anne. I haven't known such a bed and such cooking since I left London, yet there is a freshness, a novelty about everything that will charm your heart. With the river at hand, and the forest at the very door, there is ripping sport on land and water. It is lovely game country and Tulloch has promised me a lion hunt before we leave. The agricultural side of the farm, too, is most interesting, plenty of jolly fellows about, and visitors always coming and going. You'll have lots to put into the book, so do hustle Miss Vanne up and come as soon as possible."

He read this aloud to his host before it was put into the post-bag, and Bad Luck kept an immobile countenance, while Blake felt in his pockets and made faces. Morrison could not be expected to know that relations were strained between Anthony Tulloch and Narice Vanne. Even Blake knew nothing of what had passed in the sitting-room that night, but he counted on Miss Haviland's beautiful and serene presence to drive away the devils of depression that were now Anthony Tulloch's daily companions.

But the hoped-for visitor tarried by the way. Miss Vanne, it seemed, took longer than expected to recover from her unfortunate go of malaria, and her friend would not leave her.

However, at last came tidings: the invalid was on her feet again, but had definitely decided against any further incursion into Northern Rhodesia, so Anne Haviland was coming alone.

Blake hardly knew whether he felt relief most, or disappointment, but Bad Luck gave no sign of either, only of a firm intention that the one who had accepted should receive the most royal of welcomes. A tremendous scrabbling of preparation ensued.

Blake and Morrison were to go as escort, and Blake tried to persuade Luck to accompany them, but was met with a curt refusal. It appeared that the Laird of Portulloch was "fed" to bursting point with the outer world, and did not care if he never saw it again.

Not only that, but it was no use pretending that this lone-hand affair of one woman coming to stay was not a very different thing from the merry party that had been planned with Narice Vanne as the central figure. Miss Haviland might be, and was, a charming woman, but the whole affair had turned somewhat flat and tasteless. That was what Anthony Tulloch was feeling, and Blake knew it, for he felt the same himself.

Then, too, having one woman alone on the ranch was a precarious experiment. Possibly she, like the Vanne girl, might be more (or less) than she seemed. She also, on closer acquaintance, might eventuate into a book with certain pages stuck together, and not for public reading. And supposing Bad Luck got involved with her—fell in love—married her—and it did not turn out happily?

Such was the dismal trend of Bill Blake's mind all the way down in the train.

Afterwards he wondered whether this dark mood of his was an occult forewarning of the bad news towards which he was traveling, for on arrival at Livingstone he found a wire to say that his only sister lay *in extremis* at the Cape. She was young and sweet and had come out to South Africa to be cured of the beginnings of tuberculosis, but results had not been good. The Cape southeasters seemed to have increased her malady, and now her husband in India had been telegraphed for, and Blake's message was that if he hoped to see her again he must come without delay.

The down train did not leave till midnight, and the intervening time was a nightmare, but fortunately there were a good many things to be stuffed into it, among them a letter of explanation to Bad Luck, and a trolley ride to the Falls. There were also Morrison and Miss Haviland to set upon the journey northwards, and afterwards he intended to find and have a talk with Narice Vanne, whom he had seen only for a few minutes at luncheon time. She proposed to stay on, painting, at the Falls, in spite of Anne Haviland's laughing remonstrances at being sent off unchaperoned to a stronghold of bachelors.

"You're not obliged to go," was the quiet reply.

"But I am, Narice. I feel it my duty to write up that wonderful ranch, and thereby induce hundreds of young Britishers to come out and start more wonderful ranches. Besides, I have a frank yearning for a spell of home comforts after the endless hotels and train traveling that have been our lot."

"That's all right. As long as you admit it *is* the flesh-pots that lure you—and don't pretend that it's art."

Narice Vanne's tone had been dry, her eyes austere when she said it, and Blake felt slightly astonished. In fact he was utterly unprepared to see the change the last two weeks had wrought in her. Fever has a way of knocking people sideways for a while, but a short bout of it should not be enough to turn a healthy girl into a ghost, with shadows lurking round her eyes, and faintly hollowed cheeks. Her manner, too, was subtly changed. Laughter seemed to have dried up in her. Most of her time was spent wandering about the Falls and on the edges of the gorge, and she was rarely seen except at meal times.

"I'm going to try for three good pictures before I leave," she told Blake when, after the others had gone, he sought her out in the Palm Grove, "and of course I must stay here to get them. It would be folly to go away."

"Portulloch would have done you a lot of good." Blake knew it was foolishness to persist on this subject, but her dimmed brightness moved him more than he could express. He longed to get things straightened out again, and bring back happiness to her eyes.

"It would have been folly," she repeated. "Besides, I must do my job—follow my star, such as it is!" She stared at her canvas with somber, dissatisfied eyes. "To say nothing of earning my living. I am not a rich woman, like Anne."

"Rich!" echoed Blake, much surprised.

"Oh, well—what I call rich. She's got several thousands of pounds anyway, and has never had to live from hand to mouth like I do." She was silent a moment, making little flicks and dabs at her canvas, then added with rather a wan smile: "On the other hand, she cannot claim with me the exquisite freedom of the wild ass."

"Are you so free—and is it so exquisite?" said Blake slowly. He was thinking of her husband, and perhaps she was too then, for a faint color came into her cheeks.

"I have only one tie in the world, and I do not let that bind me too much."

"I believe you!" thought Bill Blake cynically, but he only said inquisitively, "What do you think of all the time you're at work?"

"Oh, lots of things—and I add couplets to my Ballad of Life. Here are my two latest:

"Life's a swindler—jew it,
Life's a bank-note—blew it.
Life's a wild rose—smell it,
Life's a hell-cat—bell it."

She laughed, but it was only the ghost of her happy, ringing laughter of old.

Blake was detained down country for over a month, during which time his sister Pearl Trafford crept unexpectedly but slowly back from the gates of death, and at the end of a few weeks was able to be removed to the Karoo, where the high fine air is of inestimable value to "lungy" people. Having installed her in a sanitarium there, with her husband, now arrived from India, in charge, her brother was at length able to think of his own affairs and consider a return to Rhodesia.

Bad Luck had been in constant touch with him, and from the unwontedly cheerful tone of his letters, there was only one theory to be deduced. Miss Haviland's visit to the ranch was proving an unmitigated success. And that there was even more to it than that, Blake had a pretty shrewd premonition, so that the portentous news which reached him by letter on the last day of his stay did not altogether stagger him with surprise. But it filled him with a curious sense of unease. He had felt it coming all along, had even given it a shove onwards himself, yet now that it had come to pass, it seemed unreasonably soon, unconsidered, almost dangerously precipitant.

". . . Miss Haviland has done me the great honor . . . We shall be married quite soon . . . The settlements are being fixed up at Bulawayo."

"Pretty nippy work, by Jove!" ruminated Billy Blake. "And why 'settlements'? Shouldn't have thought a woman who had managed to collar Anthony Tulloch would worry much about settlements!"

But that was just where he slipped up in his judgment of women. Settlements, it seemed, were never out of place, however charming the woman or eligible the man. Anyway, that was what his sister laughingly told him. He was glad he had got the news in time to talk it over with Pearl and Tim, who were close friends of Bad Luck, and both deeply intrigued by the forthcoming match.

"Is it the Anne Haviland who writes travel books?" asked Pearl. "There was one about Russia, another on America, India, and so forth."

"I believe so, yes, though I can't say I've

ever read any of her priceless works myself."

"India! Yes, of course." Tim had been wrinkling his already much sun-wrinkled forehead. "But wasn't there quite a good scandal about that lady in Calcutta at the time?"

"Scandal!" Blake gazed at his brother-in-law like a petrified man.

"Something about an engagement to a wealthy youngster who mysteriously got shot just before the ceremony?"

"Sounds pretty hard lines on them both!"

"On him certainly. But if I remember rightly, *she* came out of it with twenty thousand pounds' insurance money, which he'd settled on her. That was the scandal, you see. The insurance people put up a kick."

"Rather a queer sort of story!" A bleak expression came into the face of Anthony Tulloch's best friend. "Are you *sure* of your facts, Tim?"

"It was a queer story, I'm sure of that at least, but of course it may not be the same woman—probably isn't. Tony would hardly fall for the adventuress type. Yet"—he frowned thoughtfully—"the name seems to stick in my head somehow."

"When did this highly romantic episode occur?"

"About June, 1914. I remember because I was in Calcutta at the time, and there was a lot of talk about it. Then of course came the war, and the story got swamped in the general rumpus. However, it would be quite easy to dig up facts, if anyone wanted them, because of the lawsuit. The insurance company fought like tigers, but the lady won and got away with the boodle."

"Most interesting," commented Blake, squinting fearsomely. "I think I should like the official data, Tim, if you can get them."

"Right-ho! I'll drop a line to old Quentin at Goona. He was mixed up in the case, being an old friend of the youngster's family."

Upon which unsatisfactory enough arrangement Blake departed for the north, but it didn't make his journey of eighteen hundred-odd miles any pleasanter to have this story popping in and out of his mind all the way. Not that he really considered it likely to have been Anne Haviland. And not that it was anything seriously against a woman if she had benefited by a man's death. After all, that kind of thing happened innocently enough every day in the week.

Still—there had been something fishy. Tim had been pretty emphatic on that point—and the lawsuit! Such things didn't harmonize well with Anthony Tulloch's clean record and fine old family name. That was his pal's opinion at any rate, and the result was a wearisome, worrisome journey on the train.

At Bulawayo more surprises awaited him. The first man he ran into at the Grand was Rupert Morrison, and the first news he heard was that Miss Haviland had left Kafue and arrived back at the Falls Hotel. In answer to his flabbergasted stare, Morrison's face assumed a slightly prim expression.

"Hardly what you'd call *comme il faut* if she'd remained at Portulloch under the circumstances."

"*Comme il faut*—my Lord!" stuttered Blake. "Is *that* what we've fallen to?"

"I don't understand you." Morrison spoke stiffly. "My cousin happens to belong to a world where the *convenances* are respected."

"*Convenances!*" Blake was grinning like a Cheshire cat in pain. "We don't use 'em out here—one of the advantages of living on the veld—yet somehow we manage to live pretty clean."

Morrison smiled in a conciliatory fashion. "Why, of course, my dear fellow, *entendu*." He seemed to have grown very Gallic all at once; still, he evidently meant only to be amiable. He repeated, with perhaps a faint tinge of irony: "Understood that you are all above reproach, morally and socially. As for Tulloch, not a nicer fellow living. Still, there *are* certain worldly customs to be observed, and if Anne prefers to observe them by being down at the Falls with Miss Vanne until she's married

—well, I don't see why you should object."

"When's the kick-off to be?"

"I believe the wedding date is not yet actually fixed."

"Well, I'll go and have a drink anyway," Blake decided glumly, and did not ask Morrison to join him. He felt a sudden distaste for that smooth-surfaced man of *convenances*.

This was perhaps slightly unjust, as he was more than half inclined to think himself, after three gins with lime and soda. And at a later stage of his journey, when he sat on in the Falls Hotel veranda with Anne Haviland and watched "the smoke that sounds," he almost recanted altogether. She was so sweetly, radiantly happy, so serenely sure that her leaving the ranch to come down here was the only possible thing to do in the circumstances.

"And of course," she said, blushing adorably, "there is nothing to prevent Tony coming down as often as he likes to see me."

"Nothing but two hundred and sixteen miles," replied Blake dryly.

"It *is* a good distance, but I don't think that's what keeps him away." She hesitated, then added wistfully, "Such a pity he doesn't care for Narice."

So that was it. Bad Luck was keeping away, and would keep away until his wedding-day, on account of that slim, dark silhouette of a girl coming up the veranda towards them now. Narice Vanne had plainly regained her health; there was color in her cheeks and lips once more, and vigor had come back to her swift, swinging walk. But the violet eyes held a strange look of sadness, and the smile with which she greeted Blake seemed to accentuate it. She shook Blake's hand warmly, and with a touch of her old gaiety.

"I'm *so* glad you got back before I went. I've finished my two pictures of the Falls, and am working now on a last one of the gorge. As soon as that's done, I shall trek. But I want your opinion of them first, and——" She hesitated, then under cover of the rather boisterous arrival of Nibby Brookes, with a bull pup, added quickly, "And I want a word with you, Major Blake."

This wish, however, was not to be gratified immediately, for Anne Haviland never left them alone for a moment, until the time came for Blake to resume his journey homewards. Even then, they all accompanied him to the station, and but for the accident of Nibby Brookes' bull pup starting to worry Anne's skirt, and the consequent fuss of getting it away from him, Blake and Narice could not have exchanged a single sentence. She snatched the opportunity rather breathlessly.

"There's something I want to say—yet I don't know if I can. After all, it is not my business, and it's so mean to give away another wom——" She stopped, and Blake stared at her keenly. There was a look of terrible earnestness in her face, and a haunting ghost looked out of her eyes.

"Is it Tony?" he asked quickly. "Something he ought to know?"

Hot red anger came into her face. "He doesn't deserve to be warned."

"Oh, yes, he does!" said Blake firmly, like a man saying his creed. "If you think Tony a rotter, you never made a bigger mistake."

But Anne having rescued her skirt, rebuked Nibby and turned towards them. Narice had only time to utter a low, cryptic phrase:

"*They are not playing fair with him.*"

"That beastly puppy!" Anne joined them, looking sharply from one to the other.

A whistle blew, the train began to move, and Blake had to leap for it, but leaning from the window he called significantly to Narice Vanne: "I shall be down specially to see you next Monday."

Is one of these glorious women playing a subtle and dangerous game, and will Anthony Tulloch discover it in time? You will see, and dramatically, in the second half of Cynthia Stockley's *novel* in March.

The Exquisite Perdita

(*Continued from page 37*)

within has always predicted to me that my life could not be a happy one. How should it, situated as I am? What is your thought, my friend?"

"Why, this. At the time of the Duke's pursuit of you 'twas freely talked of by the town and nothing more unlikely than that it escaped his wife's ears. We may conclude then that malice is the mildest word to express her feelings. And as for him—did any of that family ever pardon an injury? I fear, child, we sowed trouble when we indited that terse little billet, and that you will harvest it unless you walk like a fair Vestal. And that's much to ask of a stage favorite."

"Was there a word more?" cries Perdita.

"Only one. When I made my bow—'By-by, Mr. Sheridan,' says the Complete Minx. 'Pray inform Mrs. Robinson of the pleasure and instruction she has furnished the royal family with this night.' That ended it. But those two are on the *qui vive*, my dear."

"You alarm me dreadfully, but what can I do or undo? You know better than any other how careful I am. If the Prince condescended to admire me 'tis not my fault. As likely as not he'll never see me again or think nothing of me if he does. Do you mean you think the Duke will have me lampooned—or a clique made to ruin me with the public? As for the Duchess, one would suppose she should be grateful to me for despising her husband's libertine attentions."

"She should. She ought. But do women ever do what they should or ought, and would they have eyelashes a yard long and use them to such purpose if they did? Indeed you're a damnable offender, and you shall pay dear if they can compass it."

"Mr. Sheridan, for heaven's sake, say straight out what you mean. I entreat you, my only friend. Who else must I turn to!"

He looked at her, veiling earnestness with laughter in true Sheridan fashion.

"The Prince, Perdita—the Prince! I declare if a princess ogled me from the royal box I won't answer for myself. Royal eyes have a magic. But if a Prince Florizel became a rival to his wicked Uncle Humgruffin—why then—why then—the little earth pipkin between the two big iron pots runs a mighty chance of smashing into smithereens. You have too much sensibility, madam, for a King's mistress. You are a romantic. For such a post it needs——"

But she interrupted in a flash. "Mr. Sheridan, I'll be no man's mistress. If I could resist the temptation to hear *you*——"

She stopped, horrified at herself, and colored painfully. Extraordinary man! There was no exultation in the look he cast upon her.

"If!" he said. "That was a saving if. When you have been longer in the world, Perdita, you will know that no man—no woman resists a real temptation. 'Tis impossible. We follow always what most delights us. The only temptations are those we succumb to. Ponder this and you will find it true. You loved the answer of an untroubled conscience better than me, and certainly I own it worth more. The applause of the public for a virtuous actress. The company of the strait-laced grimalkins who would turn their backs on you if—ah, no. You loved twenty things better than me. You never loved me. And to be honest, I never loved you. For I loved your chance in life better—your reputation, my wife—fifty trifles. You stare at me with great eyes and don't comprehend a word I say. Wait till you stand alone between God and man, each tempting you to some purpose, and then—by your decision I'll tell you what you really are. I swear I don't know now."

He picked up his hat, looking her in the face with smiling lips and eyes that did not smile. Presently he added:

"And I have another temptation now, which being one I shan't oppose with my weakness. Politics, Perdita! What, will they laugh at the Drury Lane director in the House of Commons? Let them try. Fox and I——" But he broke off, laughing again. "Beware of the Prince, madam! The shepherd will soon perforce be off duty, and I know none other to be trusted with the crook. Shall Fox be your Lubin? Good-by."

She felt herself repulsed and could not understand him. He kissed her fingers lightly and went off. She pondered much over that scene for a while.

It was not more than two or three days later that my Lord Essex was announced to visit her, and it may be imagined with what eagerness she flew to the glass to cast her eyes over her morning dishabille and judge if she should fall before her appearance on the stage. Indeed, she had no cause to fear. Perdita in simple white and blue ribbons was no less an epitome of youthful beauty than Perdita in pink satin and spangles.

Lord Essex was all embarrassment as he responded to her curtsy—a manner very unlike that of their first meeting. He cleared his throat, he hummed and hawed, hesitated, apologized, and still delayed to speak his business. Beauty naturally concluded it was but one conquest the more and prepared her weapons for a rout that should leave as little wound behind it as possible. The opening was exactly what she expected.

He hoped she would pardon him—er—er—that she would undertake—er—never to mention what he had to communicate—er—that she would consider the unusual delicacy of his situation. Here a long and nerve-racking pause. That she would pardon him beforehand, condescend to hear, and then act as she thought proper. Another pause.

Used to these hesitations and the delicacies of indelicate situations, this went on so long that she became a little weary with the delay and, anxious for the inevitable to be over, marked it by glancing at the clock. He took her meaning at once.

"Madam, a thousand pardons. I grow tedious—but really——"

He paused again and considered, then tremblingly drew a small letter from his pocket and offered it. She took it, almost equally astonished as he was embarrassed; it was addressed "To Perdita."

She opened on the brief but warm love-letter she expected. It was signed "Florizel," but since her success more than one aspirant had adopted that signature. With a studied carelessness she swept my Lord with her eyelashes. "Well, my Lord, and what does this mean? Yourself?"

"Upon my honor, no!" he cried earnestly. "I should not have dared on so short an acquaintance. Can you not guess the writer?"

"Not in the least. May I ask whose Mercury you are? I own the part seems to me a little undistinguished for a gentleman of your Lordship's rank."

The fine curl of her lip added sting to her words. The young man colored scarlet.

"I hope I shall not forfeit your good opinion," says he. "I am well aware I risk it, yet could not refuse, for my commission is from—the Prince of Wales."

She did not believe it. There were a thousand reasons why it seemed impossible, utterly incredible, and she suspected a trap. She folded the billet and returned it.

"My Lord, every successful actress is in the way of such things, and since men hold the agreeable creed that all's fair in love and war, women must defend themselves as best they may. Pray tell me from whom this letter really is."

He shifted from one foot to the other like the veriest prentice boy before his inamorata.

"Can you suppose, madam, that any man, and especially one of rank, dare assert his Royal Highness had signed a letter like this unless it were true? Your innocence alone can account for such a strange suspicion."

Her silence gave him courage to proceed.

"And surely there is no insult in this letter. It is but a wish to make the acquaintance of one who charmed him and all the world on the stage. His Royal Highness simply expresses the hope that such an opportunity may be given him. He is a great lover of the arts. And if he expresses a warm admiration he only does what thousands of his future subjects agree in. I see nothing in it to offend even such delicacy as yours."

She stretched out her hand for the letter and read it again, then sighed a little.

"Life is very difficult. One knows not whom to trust. It may be as you say, and if the letter is really the Prince's—sure, to meet His Royal Highness is an honor that every subject must aspire to. Yet——"

"There's no 'yet,' madam. It *is* an honor and one, let me tell you, vouchsafed to few. May I hope to be the bearer of a favorable answer?"

But there she stuck. No, she would not write. But *if* the letter were from his Royal Highness, then my Lord Essex might inform him that Mrs. Robinson was truly sensible of the honor done her, and that her gratitude was deep and sincere. More she could not as yet say—nor would his Royal Highness's generosity expect it.

Lord Essex overflowed in thanks and praises of such charming affability. He rose with alacrity, having attained quite as much as he expected, and departed with the respect he might have reserved for a princess of the blood and a smile unperceived by the pensive Perdita. Her agitation, which was unnecessary if there were nothing behind it, discounted her formality and the doubt which must be expected in any case. We may imagine how light-foot he returned to the young eager lover who thus ventured on his first open essay in the mazes of love, and almost risked his liberty in doing it, so strict was the watch on him.

And Perdita, left to herself, sat with her chin in her hand tortured by guesses and regrets. Was it truly from the Prince? Even then she could not be sure. Men of fashion were equal to any plan of daring to attain their purposes. False marriages, abductions, violence were the order of the day, and an actress fair prey. It might even be some scheme of the Duke of Cumberland. Every terror was alert in her.

But yet—if it *were* the Prince—then, oh then, there was much to consider! The honor—the overwhelming, astounding honor to be beloved by the first Prince in all the world, and to be known as the woman whose spotless chastity repelled what half—nay, nearly all the women in the world would scramble to attain. Roman notions of virtue rose in her mind. She saw herself a Lucretia, a Vestal. And here a swift side thought: what a position on the stage were it to get about she had refused the Prince! The crowds—the admiration—curiosity! Yes—Lucretia. She saw herself in dignified calm avoiding the burning glances from the royal box, while all the world leaned forward to intercept a glance, a breath. She saw the tears in his eyes—his despair.

And then reason interposed with—suppose he never wrote the letter at all! Suppose if he had, it was a boy's whim.

She knew not what to think, and sat there reading and rereading the letter and a hundred things in it which the writer had never imagined himself, and finally roused herself, so perplexed and distracted that all who saw her concluded Mr. Robinson's peccadillos had reached breaking-point. And who could wonder? She was indeed almost overwhelmed by the magnitude of her conquest.

Let the moralist bring the figure of Mr. Robinson awfully on the scene. Yet he cannot present it in the majesty of a justly indignant husband. Though it would be sorry work to depict the reasons why his wife must unalterably despise him, they were many and various and Mr. Sheridan, no overstrict censor of manly morals, had again and again urged her to quit him if she hoped to retain either peace or self-respect. And 'twas not this only. Her

future loomed dark before her, if she was to be drained of every profit her exertions brought in. Indeed, this young creature was formed for better things and had shone like a star in a clear sky but could shed only scanty beams amid the clouds that obscured her.

Her beauty was the least part of her talents, for she possessed a kind of sensitiveness of spirit that made her quick and ready in talk and writing, and herself aiming always to express her thoughts in verse and prose of a high if not the highest order. 'Twas not for nothing that Burgoyne hailed her "Perfect as woman and artist," that St. John asserted "Nature had formed her queen of song," and Tickell, himself a poet, saluted her, "the British Sappho," but that was later. At present it must be owned the world engrossed her.

Therefore she sat with the Prince's letter before her, almost tortured by fears and hopes as she read its glowing words.

But for that last interview Perdita would certainly have consulted Sheridan. Now she felt it impossible. There was a sense of removal, separation, new interests developing in which she had no part. Politics! She scarcely dwelt on that side of his words because it really conveyed nothing to her. The country was governed by the King with the two Houses under him, but how she had never troubled herself to think, and that Sheridan should have any concern with such things was too fantastic to take any shape in her mind.

She had a small card-party next evening when she wore a satin dress flowered with silver of her own designing, a sacque, now little worn, coquettishly panniered and poufed, and certainly as the hair-dresser shook the last cloud of powder over her hair and disengaged her from the powdering gown that she might study the effect in the glass, the thought crossed her mind that if Prince Florizel should stand beside her in his blue velvet and orders, they would be as charming a pair as any made at his French Majesty's porcelain manufactory at Sèvres. She sighed and went down to her guests.

An unexpected one arrived during the evening. There was a thundering rat-tat-tat at the door that sent the wild echoes flying down the street—a mimic thunder proportioned to the rank of the guest. Could it—could it?—her heart almost stopped beating and she trumped her partner's lead and never heeded the wrath in his eye. Steps on the stair, the man hired for the occasion throwing the door open with the fashionable bellow:

"His Lordship, the Earl of Essex!"

Indeed her heart fluttered scarcely less on this announcement as she rose, and Mr. Robinson, who was at home for a wonder, slouched behind her to meet the distinguished guest.

He had paid her the compliment of coming in a dress of extreme elegance—a lavender satin court suit embroidered in oak leaves and acorns of silver, and silver-hilted sword, and was exceedingly gracious both to Mr. Robinson and Mr. Fox, who was taking a hand at cards extremely at his ease, with a bottle and glass at his side.

The manners of the period, exceedingly ceremonious, possibly from being overstrained with standing on tiptoe, had a tendency to relapse very suddenly and surprisingly into the coarse and familiar, and with none more so than the famous Charles James Fox, and ladies who objected to this descent were forced to be extremely select in their society. Naturally Perdita could not set up this barrier, and herself fastidiously refined in her notions, she suffered very frequently from the opposite in her guests, and would sometimes make some blushing excuse to leave the room when a story came out painfully distasteful to her delicacy.

There was nothing of this in Lord Essex. He took his place naturally and agreeably, but when Fox led the talk to a lady very notorious at the time and popped out an anecdote which set the men guffawing, he frowned and markedly diverted talk and thought into a new channel. This happened more than once, and she looked at him gratefully and with a sense of protection about her.

At last the Prince was spoken of, and then indeed he had his opportunity. He spoke with delight of his accomplishments, his exquisite manners—"as polished as they are fascinating," he said with a meaning look at Mr. Fox lounging back in his chair with open shirt bosom and a stain of claret all down the front.

"He is the very prince of good fellows," he continued—"laughter-loving, witty, amusing, but always the prince behind the exquisite courtesy which endears him to all who have the happiness to approach him. Do I speak too strongly, Mr. Fox?"

"By no means, my Lord. His Royal Highness is all you say, and his talents are such that, with no disrespect to our present sovereign, I foresee a very happy and united England under his rule. He has a breadth of sentiment which even extends itself to admiration of the love of freedom displayed in the American Declaration of Independence. He has brains, not too common in his family."

"And a heart—a heart of gold!" interpolated Lord Essex, not without a side-glance at Perdita's listening eyes.

"Why, as to heart," said Fox, "surely hearts went out of fashion with our last monarch. Can anyone imagine the age of Mr. Walpole, of Doctor Johnson, of our frigid, rigid poets and their prim couplets with a heart? No, no. The women have hearts, happily for us. But a man—I won't grant his Royal Highness a heart, except indeed a manly fidelity to his friends, until I have seen him through his first love-affair."

"I guarantee his first to be his last!" retorted my Lord Essex. But Fox only burst into a loud guffaw and reminiscences of the last Prince of Wales so unedifying that Perdita sought the shelter of the window-curtain, where Lord Essex joined her.

It was a thrilling, vibrating conversation. First he dwelt on the elegant taste of her dress, which no one else had taken the trouble to remark, then on the beauty which set it off, then, alluding in passing to Mr. Robinson with a delicate cynicism which set him on the outer orbit of the planetary system, he drew his chair an inch nearer to hers and asked if he might have the honor of an interview next day for a purpose he was unable to explain at the moment. She agreed, all trembling, and with imploring eyes bade him avoid the subject, and they returned to the others.

But the subject of the Prince could not be avoided, for all the world was talking of him at the moment. He was about to be set up in an establishment of his own, and the income to be allotted, the palace, the officers to be appointed, were a subject of immense popular interest. And so far he had won every heart, and the highest, most generous expectations were based upon the son of the whole nation. Litanies of praise resounded everywhere, and not least in Perdita's drawing-room where she sat, elate but shy, to hear, and said never a word herself. She did not observe, so engrossed was she, that Mrs. Armstead was not in attendance for full fifteen minutes after she reached her room.

When Lord Essex came next day his manner was much more assured than on the first visit. He was gravely impressive as he drew a letter from his pocket.

"I must tell you, madam, that His Royal Highness was deeply distressed and wounded by what I told him of the reception of his letter. But the Prince's heart is eager and trusting and he values those qualities in others. He has desired me therefore to convey another letter to you without any comment from myself, and begs you will consider it with compassion for his sufferings. And having placed it in your hands I will do myself the honor to bid you farewell and request permission to return at the same hour tomorrow for your reply. I need not tell you His Royal Highness risks much in this correspondence." He bowed and retired, and Perdita was alone with her letter.

She read it in such agitation that whether joy was mixed with it she could not tell. An ardent yet respectful love-letter. Should he offend her chaste self-respect, there was no happiness for him in the future. If she could accord him a smile the loneliness, the heavy duties of his position might be endurable. Not otherwise. The letter was short, but she knew that for one line many a woman would give the chance of her life's honor and happiness. She sat and dreamed over the palpitating words.

Visions of the future crowded on her. Now she saw herself as a truer Pompadour exercising a virtuous influence over a young king, and felt it within her to be his faithful stay and counselor in matters of State as in those of the heart. Sure she had talents that would open to admiration, given the opportunity, and, with the unalterable passion which she believed herself capable of inspiring, what might she not do for this royal lover who so generously threw his heart at her feet, and through him, for many? Would not this atone for the fall in chastity which imperiled her own soul only?

And again she recalled Lord Essex's hint of the marriages of the dukes his uncles. Might not a true passion lead this ardent lover into a left-handed marriage—the love-resort of fettered royalty? And if the offspring of such a marriage could not inherit, certainly he had many brothers to succeed him, if he should judge love worth the sacrifice. She entirely forgot Mr. Robinson in these gossamer dreams, and with him, many other solid obstacles.

Again she read the letter. "My fate is in the hands of my Perdita; my life hers to preserve or ruin. Your Florizel."

There was a touch of poetry in that signature which raised it to her lips and bedewed it with her tears.

But why recapitulate? Are not these letters all written by the same quill from the wing of the god who laughs and flies, and are not the contending emotions they inspire the same also? In a word, Perdita thought and felt exactly what any beautiful woman of twenty eager and full of sensibility must think and feel when she has won the prize for which ninety-nine women out of a hundred would pawn their immortal souls—the heart of a ruler of men.

But as yet she returned no answer. She trembled virginally on the edge of what must sweep her away either to Paradise or Hell, and besides a horrid doubt assailed her whether he, so splendid, so highly placed, might not already have repented of his magnanimity of love. Suppose she wrote and the letter was returned silently or with scorn? She sat that day and the next in a turmoil of agitation and at the playhouse many remarked her abstraction, and one at least among them guessed the cause.

But the next day she lived again. My Lord Essex reappeared with another letter from his Royal Highness all fire and honey. He protested his agony of fear lest his adoration might offend so flawless a purity, and besought the lady if she would not longer torture him to be present that night at the performance of the oratorio that he might by some private signal convince her of his love.

"His Royal Highness is half distracted lest he should have offended you, madam," cries my Lord. "Nobody is better aware than he of the unblemished correctness of your behavior on the stage and in the great world. And such is his regard for you that nothing but a certain expression he caught in your beautiful eyes t'other night would have emboldened him for this declaration, believing it told him that he was not wholly indifferent to you and half promised compassion."

"His Royal Highness can't be indifferent to any of his subjects," panted Perdita, her color coming and going. She knew best the meaning of her glances and could scarce deny it.

"That loyal affection he will always hope to deserve and retain," replies Lord Essex gravely, "but Mrs. Robinson's sensibility will assure her that in the solitude of his great position he, more than other men, needs the love of a true woman to be his support, a bosom to which he can confide his inmost thoughts, a heart——"

"A wife," Perdita faltered.

"Alas, madam, what are royal marriages! Some day doubtless one will be proposed for him, but not for his own sake. 'Tis the nation makes the alliance, not he. He is but its representative. Her person, her disposition may, probably will, be utterly repellent to him. What shall he do if there be not some good woman dear to his soul to make a true home for him where his sensitive feelings may expand and his love meet with a faithful return? Envied by all, there are few men so solitary as he. But judge for yourself. Go, I beseech you, to the oratorio tonight. Later meet him, hear his pleadings and form your own decision. But let your heart guide it."

Indeed Lord Essex pleaded so well for his master that had the lady been less engrossed 'twas the toss of a button that he might not plead his own cause as handsomely.

Was it possible to any woman, be her purpose what it might, to stay at home from that oratorio? I dare swear there was not a prude in England but would have gone, if only to observe the course matters were taking. And then some little token of grace might cheer his young heart or soften the rejection which, possibly, she might be compelled to inflict.

Perdita thought she might venture herself in precincts hallowed by St. Cecilia and accordingly did so.

After all, to judge for oneself—where is the harm? And suppose her cruelty should break his heart? A responsibility to the whole nation appeared to her to weigh upon her slender shoulders. It was perhaps with this sense of responsibility that she chose for the occasion a dress the most elegantly genteel of her wardrobe, a white satin with silver tissue, and palest pink and green feathers which gave her beauty the appearance altogether of a rose unfolding in delicate leafage, the more so as excitement and agitation had given her a flush of the most attractive delicacy.

Here I will permit her to speak for herself. There was a time when she kept a brief sentimental record of the matter.

"I went to the Oratorio, and on taking my seat in the balcony box, the Prince almost instantaneously observed me. He held the printed bill before his face, and drew his hand across his forehead, still fixing his eyes on me. I was confused and knew not what to do. Still the Prince continued to make signs, such as moving his hand on the edge of the box as if writing, and speaking to his brother the Duke of York (then Bishop of Osnaburg), who also looked towards me with marked attention. So marked was H. R. H.'s conduct that many of the audience observed it. Several persons in the pit directed their gaze at the place where I sat, and on the following day one of the diurnal prints observed that there was one passage in Dryden's Ode which seemed particularly interesting to the Prince of Wales, who—

"Gaz'd on the Fair
Who caus'd his Care,
And sigh'd and look'd, and sigh'd again."

So far Perdita, who, however, omits to tell us of another diurnal print which describes "the beautiful Mrs. R. who contrived so to *basilisk* a certain Heir Apparent that his fixed attention to the lovely object became generally noticed and soon after astonished their Majesties! The dart-dealing actress received a hint to withdraw, which she complied with, though not without expressing the utmost chagrin."

Which account is true? Both and neither, says the observer of human nature, who may, however, own to a sympathy with their Majesties' alarm and their futile precautions. It is certain the charmer did not wholly discourage her adorer. She knew neither herself nor him as yet and floated on golden clouds of apotheosis, secure that she could return safely to earth when she pleased.

Here, the moralist, pausing, must blame her severely. In the first place, she should not have attended the oratorio. In the next, she should not have noticed those flattering attentions.

In the third, she most certainly should have discouraged them with chilling reserve. In the fourth—for this is the corollary of the others—she should not have been a woman. Being one—consult the diurnal prints!

A few days later came a passionate request for a meeting, strengthened by the gift of a most beautiful miniature of the royal lover. Never was an attractive face more attractively set forth than by Mr. Meyer's art, and within the handsome case was a heart cut in paper on which in a princely hand was written on the one side, "*Je ne change qu'en mourant*," and on the other, "Unalterable to my Perdita through life," the one language confirming the other in its fond asseveration.

It was then that with fears, doubts and joys indescribable, Perdita ventured to return a faintly encouraging answer to her enterprising wooer. Oh, the tremors, the anxieties it caused her! Sheet after sheet of paper fluttered to the ground condemned for a word too much, an implication too little. Those few phrases were the labor of days, love's labor, and not lost, if one may judge by the delighted return.

'Twas a magic of wooing, it seemed that every circumstance of romance attended it, and day by day the pair became more beautiful in each other's eyes as the suspense prolonged itself. For Perdita insisted they must be known to each other by intimate interchange of thoughts before any meeting took place, and it was extremely difficult for any person to see how this meeting could be arranged, since the Prince, though soon to be set free from supervision and placed in an establishment of his own, was under the strictest watch and ward, and the rather because Queen Charlotte's eye had remarked Mrs. Robinson at the oratorio with sternest disapproval—and she also was closely observed.

But not by her husband. His devotion to drink, to cards and the two latest sirens proclaimed itself more loudly daily, and was plunging her into money alarms which would have half broken her heart but for her preoccupation. She heard on a side-wind that he had been threatened with an execution in the house, and that news reaching Sheridan he strongly advised her to place her jewelry and other little effects of value in his wife's charge, who had most kindly written to say she would be responsible for them. In the care of the silent and invaluable Mrs. Armstead they were sent to Great Queen Street, and in addition Mr. Robinson was informed that Sheridan was under the painful necessity of lowering Mrs. Robinson's salary for a time. He fortunately believed this and was filled with such righteous indignation that he threatened to call Mr. Sheridan out on the strength of it.

Yet to all this Perdita could scarcely lend an ear. The Prince pressed for a meeting and she had agreed. That was her world. Every expedient was revolved. He pelted her with daily letters.

That daily letter came to be the sunshine of her day. She saw his face from the stage or in Hyde Park with eager, passionate eyes on her and it became the very sunshine of a life not otherwise happy.

And the spring drew on with its soft languors, its blossoming hopes and beauty. The theater was closed; her days and evenings were idle, except for the society at her house and elsewhere. And there his name was preeminent. The younger women in London cared for nothing so much as to talk of their Prince Charming, and Perdita, listening unnoticed, knowing his heart was hers, warming a precious letter in her bosom, slipped softly, slowly into the moonlit deeps of such a seduction as few women were exposed to. One night when her guests were gone, all the women having talked themselves half amorous of a Prince whose glance darted not only courtesy but admiration to every pretty face, she caught up her pen and wrote:

"I will meet you when and where you will. These months have taught me all the delicacy and fidelity of your heart and mine responds to it. But O I beseech you consider before the thing is irrevocable. Consider the anger of

your Royal parents. Consider the scandal to the nation if any hint of our meeting should be breathed. In such a case the man usually has nothing to lose, the woman all, but in your great position this is not so. Consider therefore, Sir, for yourself. And for me. If I forsake my husband and my profession I shall be entirely thrown upon your mercy and though I know your honor and could gladly trust to that, will not every temptation of beauty strive to lure you from me? Will not the people heap me with calumny and abuse? What—what if you should ever change to me? O, *that* I could not bear. Death—instant death would be my sole refuge. Once again I entreat you to judge for us both. Consider—on my knees I beseech you."

So Perdita, in the high-flown language of her heart and of the time. In the manner of the time also she bedewed the words with tears; the large starlike splashes paled the ink here and there in a very touching manner and bespoke the agony of terror, the vertigo of fear which seized her poised on the brink of the irrevocable. She was, however, careful that they should fall on the paper rather than her handkerchief. Her dramatic instincts were as much nature as tuition.

The Prince, also in the manner of a time when the tear of sensibility bedewed every manly cheek at every event a little out of the ordinary, added his contribution to those of Perdita and in the same feeling manner moistened the paper of his reply—otherwise all joy and gratitude.

"And indeed, madam," said Lord Essex, presenting it gravely, "I rejoice that you have come to a decision; I could not have been answerable for the consequence had this suspense and suffering of my master been prolonged. Yours has been a triumph of chastity. I doubt if there is another woman in the world who would have permitted such a lover to sigh so long in vain. You are at least certain of a heart tried and tested."

Perdita might have added "By six months' endurance?" with a question-mark. But the current was sweeping her away.

The way was found. Even royal vigilance could not supervise all the moonlit acres of woodland and garden at Kew and it was agreed that Lord Essex should row the shy beauty across the Thames to her lover's arms.

The arrangements concluded, my Lord paused and said slowly:

"And if you knew, madam, what I suffer in doing this—if you could guess what my own growing agony has been in conducting negotiations for another—with whom no man dare compete—what I have suffered in seeing your perfections daily . . .

But here my Lord Essex's eyes also were moistened with manly tears, which he hastily stanched with a lace handkerchief, and retreated leaving Perdita pale and aghast at the power of her own irresistible charms. This last disclosure completed the alarms of her position. She could not wish herself less lovely, and yet . . .

On reflection, and considering the length of the coach drive which she must needs take with my Lord Essex to Brentford, Perdita decided that it was necessary Mrs. Armstead should accompany her. In justice to the Prince as well as herself it would be madness to risk her reputation with a declared admirer. She would not have chosen Mrs. Armstead, for her position made her intervention too much in the style of the comedy of intrigue to please her mistress, and there was also a quiet, self-contained power about the woman which Perdita instinctively felt to outmatch her own impulsive flights if the two were tested. She did not know whether it covered thoughts friendly or unfriendly, almost feared to probe it, and yet in her sore need for a confidant was driven to test it, though deferring the risk until the last moment.

On the morning of the awful day, therefore, she sat before her glass while Mrs. Armstead, grave and reserved, brushed out the shining waves and curls of dark hair which so gloriously crowned her fair face. She noticed in the glass, and not for the first time, the beauty of the silky brown tendrils brushed back so demurely from Mrs. Armstead's white brow and the fine accurate shaping of her features, not strictly handsome but full of character and intelligence. It could only be fully admired by those whom intellect captivated—she was not everybody's money, as the saying runs, but Perdita had intellect enough herself to realize that any man or woman who did admire Mrs. Armstead would do so on grounds neither she nor they need be ashamed of.

Two or three times the words she wished to say died on her lips, but at last she got them out with what indifference she could muster.

"I am going down to Brentford today, Mrs. Armstead, and wish you to come with me."

"Yes, madam. At what hour? By coach?"

"Certainly. I dine at the inn on the island between Brentford and Kew."

Her voice stumbled over the last word. All the world knew the King's country palace and that the Prince of Wales and Duke of York were living at Boner Lodge, Kew, while the separate establishment was pending. But Mrs. Armstead's face in the glass was perfectly calm and indifferent.

"Do you make any stay, madam? I ask that I may know what garments will be needed."

"I cannot tell my plans yet for certain. You had better bring what we shall want for a few days. And——"

"Yes, madam?"

"My Lord Essex drives down with us. And——"

No, no. She could not bring herself to say more then. It must come later, but it should not be until it must. Who could tell what might happen to dash the painted bubble to mist? What had there ever been in her life to lead her to believe that happiness and prosperity were for her?

She said no more except to give a few directions which Mrs. Armstead received as though journeys to Brentford with his Lordship were an every-day occurrence. The coach was at the door at the time fixed, and the two women got in, the man having his orders to drive to Lord Essex's house in Mayfair.

Not a word could Perdita say. Mrs. Armstead sat with her clear, sensible glance fixed on the crowded streets—eyes whose observation nothing escaped, lips which gave little passage to her thoughts. She respectfully made way for Lord Essex when he entered in his many-caped coat, the very latest traveling mode in cut and texture. His face of dismay when he saw her tickled her immensely in secret. She knew as well as Perdita how, with all devotion to his young master's interests, he had counted on that charming tête-à-tête on the Brentford journey.

They reached Brentford about four o'clock and a boat was ready to waft them to the inn on the island, a favorite resort for the better class of holiday makers, but empty so early in the season except for one pensive angler. Dinner was already ordered and after resting nominally—for agitation kept her in such a state of nervous excitement that she could neither sleep nor rest—she joined Lord Essex in the little private room he had ordered.

Words cannot describe the strangeness of her feelings. When she stepped into that boat by the riverside it seemed to her that she had broken entirely with her old life. She saw it receding, drifting away with the bank they had left, becoming misty and indistinct. Had she ever been a part of it? Should she ever be again? And a voice in her heart answered—never.

She stood by the window and looked out. The sun was westering deliciously upon a long reach of the Thames, sinking in a soft radiance that filled the air with gold dust. On the water was a reflected dazzle which almost hurt the eyes, but there was a lovelier peace in the reedy shallows where the bulrushes stood over their own image shimmering beneath them. That quiet was heavenly. A longing pained

her like a stab in the heart to share it—to have done with all the fever and fret, the pride, the fear, and lie beside that liquid tranquillity, dreaming the world away, beyond all its temptations.

She knelt by the window and leaned out, bathing her tired spirit in the large splendor of earth and sky. How if she should send word to Lord Essex that she was ill—that she could do no more? That she had resolved to end the matter, that—— But no. What could she say! Life throws a thousand strands over one, each thread less perceptible than the spider's—each in itself breakable at will. But when the prisoner of life wakes and would rise and tear himself free, the limbs of Hercules are powerless in the lightly woven mesh. She had no courage, no strength to return.

But she knelt there till the last moment, embracing the wordless beauty with her own spirit. She had a heart easily touched to fine issues if too easily discouraged, an unhappy blend for the career she chose.

A lonely pain possessed her—no one understood, no one cared. Yes—Sheridan once, long ago. But now he too had drifted as far away as that boat she saw receding into the sunset. The sun was sinking fast—the night was at hand, and change, change terrible and inevitable was upon her. What strength has human effort opposed to this? She dropped her head upon her hands.

Presently a quiet step came up beside her.

"His Lordship has sent me to say dinner is ready, madam! Shall I arrange your hair?"

It was Mrs. Armstead, and in the shock and passion of the moment the poor Perdita caught her hand.

"Oh, Mrs. Armstead, I'm terribly alarmed! I need sympathy and help more than words can say. If I had the courage——"

But the other woman's calm checked her. She was as politely unresponsive as the wood of the mantelpiece—perfect in her duty to the last pin, but evidently and firmly resolved to be drawn into no responsibilities.

"You are shaken and tired with the journey, madam. Permit me to bathe your eyes and put a little essence on your forehead. But I never saw you in better looks. Madame Duvernay has certainly exceeded herself in that India muslin gown. It becomes you to perfection. Do you go on the river after dinner? Will you have your black hat?"

It was the voice of the world breaking on a mood of heaven, but it caught and held Perdita. The other was effectually routed. She accepted all the attentions, decided on her satin cloak and hood, and went down the stair divested of every thought of appeal or refusal.

They were less than ever possible at the well-spread, well-served table, with the little glittering wine-glasses and the generous vintage which Lord Essex insisted she must sip. He was plainly but perfectly dressed for his work in a fine blue cloth, which set off his effeminate complexion and fair hair to perfection. Something of "the minikin finikin French powder-puff" about him on the surface but a steel spring under it for all that—a man to conceal his strength purposely in weakness for ends quite definitely seen by himself. He made not the faintest allusion to that past speech. It had been made and there it rested for use at some future time if needful. At present it was to be entirely ignored.

"You look a little pale, madam," he said presently. "It is more than becoming, as everything is with you. Yet let me remind you that his Royal Highness is young and full of joyous gaiety. The pensive strain pleases him as a minor chord in happy music. It must not be the theme. It must only embellish it. He is quickly wearied of anything pensive except as a matter of sentiment."

This jarred upon her. Hitherto her world had considered what would be agreeable to her. It must be her study now to please another. Again she had the sensation of an iron hand closing softly but powerfully upon her. She tried to be gay.

"You have told me the Prince is my devoted

admirer, my Lord. If so, may I not believe that I shall please him as nature made me—grave or gay?"

Lord Essex was sipping his claret, leaning back luxuriously in his chair.

"Undoubtedly, madam, undoubtedly. Any man must feel it so. But may I point out that a prince is a man plus his princedom? It is another point of view from ours. A prince may be a devoted lover as a prince. Indeed, with his Royal Highness his devotion is almost a madness. Yet—he is still a prince, accustomed to be worshiped, courted, obeyed. The world arranges itself for a prince. You will feel this instinctively. Your tact is too fine to permit me to doubt it."

The cold fear closed about her heart again. They had written daily—yes—but she had never spoken to the man to whose pity she was now to trust her all. Suppose she were but a passing lust, an incident; in his great life of splendor and power would love truly count for anything? But my Lord broke in again.

"I know I need not suggest the utmost discretion. You will find yourself courted by hundreds who have interests to make and favors to ask. Resolve at once that none shall find you use your influence in that way. It will injure your own position, which should be—but I intrude——"

"Oh no, no!" she cried, now thoroughly alarmed. "All you say is valuable. If you will but instruct me—but not yet—not yet. He may not like me when we meet. I may not answer his hopes. The thing is not irrevocable yet. Indeed—indeed it is not."

Looking at her he understood her high-strung nature and the momentary deep repugnance to the part she was called upon to play. To him it seemed a small matter—except for the power and influence it opened up—but he saw very well it was no gay coquettish trifle to her and liked her the better for it. He turned the talk resolutely, and when dinner was done, and a soft dusk had come with the hint of a young moon on the river reaches, he pushed his plate aside.

"Now I shall fetch your cloak and row you awhile up the river where we will watch for the signal from the Kew bank. It will compose your spirits."

He was wise in silence, and helping her into the boat with a cloak about her and the hood shading her face, he set himself to the sculls and with long, smooth strokes pulled her up the dreaming river.

The daylight faded mysteriously; the lights of the little houses twinkled remote. A vast peace possessed earth and sky. Suddenly, it seemed after a long interval, he spoke.

"The signal!" Turning the boat's head, he pulled downward and to the Kew bank. She looked and saw a handkerchief fluttering among the trees by the great iron gates.

As the bow grated and Lord Essex, springing out, lifted her to earth, nothing was to be seen in the blackness of the shadows. Suddenly two men emerged, young, straight, tall, the foremost of the two with eager hands extended. She moved forward in a dream, clutching Lord Essex's arm.

"Your Royal Highness, I have the honor to present Mrs. Robinson!"

She heard that, she heard some words from the other, but then he and Lord Essex had vanished mysteriously away, and a strong arm was about her waist, a glowing cheek pressed to hers.

"Perdita, my heart's love, my angel, my adored. You have braved so much for me. You shall never regret it—never. A life's adoration is too little to repay it."

She clung to him in a terror of joy—the only real thing left in all her vanishing world—young, passionately beautiful and her own. O golden moment—the one sure foretaste of Heaven! Yet a foretaste only, for the dark river ancient with its knowledge of passing love and certain death and sad forgotten things flowed silently beside them.

It is universally agreed that in all the world at that time was no Prince so accomplished. The mind leaped centuries backward and beheld Prince Hal and Harry Hotspur in considering him.

What was there this beautiful youth could not shine in if he would? His graceful manners had none of the *froideur* of his family. On the surface, all quick, bright impulse, brilliant, with gifts to attract the people as well as their masters. A good shot, a fine rider, an exquisite dancer, the women were mad for him, the men enthusiastic.

If he loved to be in the public eye, that surely was more royal than to closet oneself at Kew and be plain "Farmer George" with a dowdy German Charlotte. If he yearned for freedom, expense, dash, glitter—surely a young man in his position must do the like. There were and would be, for a while, excuses for any madcap pranks he chose to amuse himself with. He was the nation's spoiled child in an age which took an early crop of wild oats as a virtue, and was all for Charles Surface provided he carried his vices with a dash.

He doted on Perdita, and to her he appeared more than human—so easily did all his splendors sit upon him, so unconstrained and unaffected was he in all their intercourse. Essex's warnings were forgotten. Difficult to please? Not he. He delighted in her whims, her little coy retreats, and joined in her sentimentalities with a zest which to her mind united them for eternity.

No day was endurable to either when they did not meet, and as the playhouse was closed she was free to choose her own hours and his.

Therefore this young party of four people, all much of an age, met frequently in the delicious shades of Kew and when they thought themselves out of ear-shot of the staid royal dwellers they became so adventurous as to indulge in music—Perdita breathing her soul to the moonlight like the nightingale, and the Prince supporting her. "He sang with exquisite taste," says she, "and the tones of his voice breaking on the silence of the night have often appeared to my entranced senses like more than mortal melody. Often have I lamented the distance which destiny had placed between us. How would my soul have idolized such a husband! Often have I formed the wish that that being were mine alone to whom partial millions were to look up for protection."

Days marvelous, never to be forgotten. There was at all events one empire which, happen what would, she could never lose. She was a part of his youth. When he remembered that youth in days far and incredible as yet, he must remember her also and those dawns and darks divine by the river.

Grave considerations now loomed on the horizon. The Prince was placed in control of his own establishment, and was no longer under formal supervision. His attachment to Perdita increased daily and the question for them both was, how far could her position be defined?

It was broached one evening at Kew when they sat beneath the great trees reflecting their glorious foliage in the Thames. The Duke of York and Lord Essex sat a little way off and out of sight discussing Newmarket and horses.

Her cheek leaned against his shoulder as he looked down at her with a passion inexpressible in words. Indeed, at this time he loved her with every ardor of which he was capable.

"My Perdita must surely come to a resolution soon," said he. "We can't delay. The scenes at the theater are what I cannot and will not endure for my beloved. Insolent curiosity! I would have struck every man dead there if I could, even the first time I saw you; and *now* unbearable! And we shall meet more happily when you have your own establishment. You have had time to consider, angel of my soul, and I wait your decision."

She clung to his hand in replying. "I am so full of fears. My very soul trembles at so momentous a change. To give up my art—my home. Oh, what shall I be then?"

"The worshiped and adored of a man who is

able and willing to protect the woman who trusts him. Your incessant fears are almost a reflection on me, Perdita." There was a pique in his tone. "What is it alarms you?" he insisted. "It can't be the revenue you give up at the theater, for I shall naturally provide for every expense, and you know you have my bond for twenty thousand pounds on my coming of age, which, apart from my love for you, surely provides for all events. If you fear my love may change I can only repeat 'unalterable to my Perdita through life.' I know my own heart and its tender fidelity. Yours appears more doubtful. Is it that you object to leave your husband? If so——" He withdrew his hand and his eyes and looked moodily at the dimpling river.

Quick terror seized her. If he, her Prince, her lover, were offended, all would be lost.

"Adored of my soul!" she whispered. "Do not wound me by such talk. Money? When did I ever value it? Your love, your love, is all I prize in this wide world. But when I think of all the beauties who will crowd about you for a look, what hope have I to retain your heart through all the long years? Yet, if you leave me, death is my only prayer."

"What more can I do than protest and vow that the years to come shall show my fidelity! And if I've protested it once I've done it a thousand times. Why so exacting, Perdita? Is all the trust, all the risk to be on my side? You know what I have risked in meeting you."

If the poor fond wretch had preserved a remnant of wisdom she might have weighed the risks thus: On his side a reprimand. The King himself could venture no more. On hers, her career, her good fame, all possibility of a reclaimed husband and home, the very bread she ate—all flung into the gamble for a young man's heart exposed to ruinous temptation and trials, whom she herself had proved inflammable as tinder. But how could she be wise? Already she had adventured so far that now her terror was lest the adorable despot in whose hands she had placed her all should be offended with his slave.

It was in that moment she first understood that Essex was right. She must not so much as hint at any will of her own or any faintest hesitation at obedience where her lover was concerned. Henceforward it must be her anxious study to strengthen every bond, yet give them the semblance of a garland of thornless roses all sweetness and perfume, the soft fetters of love—and love alone.

"Beloved, you shall decide my every motion," she said with earnest fondness. "Your will is mine. I take it extremely good of you to be so solicitous for me. What would you have me do?"

He kissed her for her sweet submission, the little cloud of ill-humor quite dissipated, and it was resolved that the house in Cork Street already mentioned between them should at once be secured for her and information be given to Sheridan next day of her intention to quit the stage almost instantly. To all he proposed she hurriedly agreed. Not again would she risk that cloud on his brow. He made ample amends for the little spurt of temper, placing on her finger a diamond in witness of his truth.

"Our wedding ring!" he said fondly. "And who can tell, my Perdita, that fate may not open up some possibility of a private legal bond, whatever it may be in public? My Uncle Cumberland has married the woman of his heart and——" She started so suddenly at that detested name that he felt the thrill in the hand he held and clasped it the more tenderly. "The very thought overjoys my treasure. I know—my own heart throbs to it!"

E. Barrington *has never written with more brilliance and feeling than when*—in March—*she shows you Perdita established in her great, garish house as the Prince's favorite—the envied of all, yet a prey to what vanishing dreams!*

The Magician of Pell Street

(*Continued from page 53*)

the laws of gravity, and not much to choose between them, well, it was lovely that he should be so.

At the end of her program, when she and François sat down at one of the tables, she was faced by a dilemma. She was determined to marry Danny. Another look at him between dances had made her soul go down on its knees. She wanted not only to live with him, but to live like him. But she also knew that if she wanted him she had to go after him herself. It is only the feminine man that hunts his mate; the masculine man—and Danny was pure male—had to be hunted.

Obviously she must meet him as soon as possible. She knew one of the women at his table, a certain Laura Ballisten, sometime exhibition dancer and now mistress of a Wall Street broker. She could bow and smile at Laura and then Laura would bring him over to her table. For he was interested in her now. His eyes were set on her face. That would certainly bring her in touch with him, but on the other hand it would give him a false impression of her if he met her first as the friend of a woman like Laura; who, in point of fact, was not a friend of hers. Theodora had always despised her, because she had used her dancing not as an end in itself but as a side-street leading into Wall Street.

But while she sat pondering, the thing happened without any effort on her part. Some friends of Laura's had come over to Freddy's table and were occupying the attention of both her and the other woman; and Freddy came over to congratulate her and brought Danny with him. He slowly sat down beside her, and she began to dig her claws into him. She told him that she was English, too, and complained that she never got back there for more than a few weeks at a time and then but once or twice a year, so limited is the market in England for first-class exhibition dancers. She alleged that she hungered for the English countryside.

He sympathized with her particularly on hearing that she had been in the States for nine years. There was, of course, nowhere like England. He had come over just for the wedding of his younger brother, who was at Washington, and had married a Southern girl, and he had hoped to get back last week, but he had run across poor Freddy in New York. At that he gave her a long scrutiny, which she returned steadily, though not without a painful effort; he was so touchingly good.

Then he told her in undertones that he was trying to get Freddy home. They were all wrong 'uns, weren't they, the people Freddy was in with over here? They were just taking his money from him, weren't they? She nodded gravely, and professed an even greater horror of Freddy's friends than she really felt. She felt justified in pretending to him to be better than she was, because she knew that she would become much better than she was if only she could get him.

And in a week she got him. She and he together settled Freddy's business and put him on a liner for Southampton with a loan from Danny in his pocket.

Then they rode together in Central Park. They went out together through the manicured countryside of Long Island and played golf at Piping Rock. They impaled bacon and beefsteak on the end of peeled wands and held them over a camp-fire on a hilltop by the Hudson. Seven days after they met he asked her to marry him. They agreed not to marry till they got back to England, for Danny hated New York; and that they could not do till she had worked off the remaining three weeks of her contract at the Rigoli. She worked as in a dream, her trained body carrying on the business, but her mind forever absent. There was nothing real but Danny.

And in another fortnight she lost him. Danny, who she had thought was above all things the kind of man who does not leave women, left her. Two things happened to upset him. First of all he discovered that Theodora had been married twice before, and that her first husband had been the iniquitous Joseph, dancer and the husband of four wives.

He was lunching with her at Sherry's when a dark man, with oily hair and oily eyes and a body supple as spaghetti, pushed by their table on his way to the door and, catching sight of Theodora, raised his eyebrows far too high and bowed extravagantly. She had returned his bow only a little less extravagantly, and they exchanged a laughing look as if there was some joke between them. Danny, who disliked the look of the fellow, had acidly said as much, and she had grimly replied that there was. She had married him when she was eighteen and divorced him when she was twenty.

This shocked Danny beyond belief. He had been aware that Theodora Dene was only her stage name, that she was really Mrs. Marshall, and that her husband had been a Chicago lawyer who had died of influenza; but he had not known that Mr. Marshall had had a predecessor. He was revolted to find that this previously unsuspected person was a professional dancer—this particular dancer and the husband of four wives.

And Theo could not right herself with him, chiefly because she was so much in love with him that his censure robbed her of speech and reason and everything else except tears and a sense that he would be angrier still if she shed them in a public place. So she did not tell him—and indeed it would have been difficult to explain such subtleties to Danny—that at eighteen she had never known a gentleman and that consequently Joseph's externals had not revolted her, and that she had mistakenly taken his willingness to stoop from his stardom to marry a gawky little chorus-girl as evidence of a noble and loving nature; that her marriage from the very beginning had been loathsome to her; and that she laughed up at her former husband with that air of sharing a joke because she was too proud to let the man she despised know how he had hurt her.

Instead, she was unfortunately inspired to dilate on the fact that she had reaped some benefits from the experience, because Joseph taught dancing marvelously, all his four wives having emerged from the state of marriage with him as head-liners. This, to Danny, who attached no importance whatsoever to dancing, seemed flippant and indecent.

The tears burned behind her eyes because she understood perfectly everything that he was feeling. They ate and drank and talked very little, and went back silently to her hotel; and there, since it was not her lucky day, Schnarakoff the *costumier* was waiting with the frock she had ordered for tonight's new dance. Danny had to be left alone with Schnarakoff, a plump, effeminate person, while she went into the bedroom and tried it on.

Gloomily Danny sat wondering why the woman he loved need have so much to do with that kind of person, until various things, revolving round the central fact that Theo was not pleased with the results of Mr. Schnarakoff's industry, began to happen. To Danny it simply appeared that the door opened and Theo shot into the room, in an extremely tawdry dress, and shrieked and screamed insulting phrases at Schnarakoff, at the same time picking up portions of the skirt and the bodice and holding them away from her body to exhibit the defects of the workmanship, so that she exposed her underwear and even her flesh.

He did not realize that it was precisely the tawdriness of the dress about which she was complaining; he did not realize that her temper was entirely justified, since the dress had not been made according to her instructions, and had been delivered too late to allow of any alterations before that evening's performance; he did not realize that she was giving way to her temper because shrieks and screams were

literally the only language of remonstrance likely to make the smallest impression on the case-hardened Mr. Schnarakoff; and as for exposing herself in front of him, the *costumier* had seen almost every English and American actress of the last twenty years in all possible stages of undress, and a modest woman might as well blush before a bed-post.

Danny failed utterly, in fact, to understand that Theo was being as quietly sensible, as soberly devoted to the maintenance of the workaday world, as he was down in Hampshire when he called an unsatisfactory gamekeeper into the gun-room and gave him a fatherly talking-to. He thought she was mad. He was sure she was undesirable. He got up and went out, and refraining from going back to his hotel in case she telephoned him there, wrote her a letter from a club saying that he was sure they were not suited to one another; and by what seemed to him good luck he found a cabin vacant on the Olympic, which sailed the next morning at eight. The best of men do this sort of thing if they are frightened. And Theo was left to tread her path that led her ultimately to the magician of Pell Street.

Doctor Paulton was back in the room. She cried out vehemently, "Have you found out what's the matter with him?"

He shook his head. "Haven't finished yet. Come to get a new laryngoscope gadget. Left it in my bag in the hall."

His glasses twinkled as he repassed through the room, and she realized that her face was wet with tears. Well, she did not mind. She meant to use this inquisitiveness for her own ends, if the worst came to the worst. But she didn't really like him. She wished she hadn't been obliged to have the prying little creature. This was another of the hateful consequences her visit to Chinatown had brought upon her.

The only mitigation of the whole affair was that she had not premeditated that visit. Even though she blamed herself for it more than for anything else she had ever done, even though she was whipping up her sense of guilt to its height as if her torture might serve as an expiation, it still seemed something that had happened to her rather than something she had done.

It had occurred one day about six weeks after she had been deserted. She had risen from her bed frenzied and exhausted, since as always now she had lain for hours in the night moaning, "Danny, Danny, Danny." And all the morning she had spent, as she spent most of her days now, walking up and down her room. Sometimes she would pause and clench her right hand and drive it downwards as if she were stabbing him. Then she would sob, and stoop, and open her arms widely and welcomingly, as if a big man were casting himself at her feet for forgiveness, and then, as if she were taking his head to her bosom, she would kiss an invisible mouth. Whereat, because there was nothingness there, she would weep and rage and walk again, and stab again.

About one o'clock the telephone rang. She opened the bedroom door and called to her maid to answer it, but there was only silence, and she remembered that she had sent the maid out shopping. The bell rang and rang. She could not answer it, for just now she was very much afraid of people. They were apt to say, "You're not looking well," and since she was a truthful person she always wanted to reply, "Yes, I've been jilted." She felt a coward for not saying it. But on the other hand she could not give Danny away as a jilt. She would still have struck anybody who said anything against him in her presence. The bell continued to ring, till she ran into her bedroom and put on a hat and coat, and went out of the hotel.

She walked about the streets of New York all that day. When nightfall came she was somewhere down on the East Side. She had eaten nothing all day, and she made her way to a delicatessen store she saw across the street.

It was a clean little shop, full of the wholesome sweet-sour smell of newly baked rye bread, and the man behind the counter was a jolly person with twinkling eyes and close black curls that seemed to roll in the same curves as his full, smiling mouth. There were strings of little Hamburg sausages everywhere, even round the cash-register, and she ordered one in a rye roll.

But soon Danny came back to her thoughts, and stretched on the rack of her co-equal love and hate of him, she sat tracing the dark veins on the marble table-top with a taut finger.

There came suddenly a shout of laughter from the back of the shop and an outbreak of dispersed giggles, as if the original great, hearty chunk of laughter had splintered into fragments that had flown all over the room. She looked up and saw that the door into the rear had swung right open, and she could see the jolly storekeeper in his clean white apron sitting at his supper, with his fat young wife beside him and any number of bright-eyed little youngsters swarming round the room. The very newest one of all had crawled to his father's side, unsuspected because his head did not show above the table, and had shot up an acquisitive fist and stolen a whole dill pickle off the plate. He had got his little face right into it before it could be taken away, and he was now full of repentance, wailing and spitting at the nasty, salty greenness.

They were all laughing at him except the mother, who with a lazy smile picked up her baby in her great white arms and let him stand on her cushiony lap, nuzzling his disappointed face against her straight, lustrous black hair, while she raised his petticoat and playfully patted his rounded, bloomy little hindquarters. Her movements were very slow. She was indolent with happiness, creamy with content, as if she knew that so far as any human being can be safe she was safe, since so long as one of this company remained alive she would not be alone.

Theodora put down some money by her plate and hurried out into the street. She looked at her watch and almost whimpered when she saw that there were still some hours to fill in before she need go to the cabaret. There had come on her suddenly a delusion that her face was lined and sallow. When presently she found herself in a broad street where there were clanging street-cars and crowded pavements she felt unable to cope with the noise and the jostling of the people, as if she had all at once grown old.

She began to look down the side streets for a way of escape, but they showed only a straiter dinginess till she came to one which seemed to have more than the others of light and color and less of screaming children and waste paper. She had a vague impression that it had an unusually large number of chop-suey restaurants, but she walked along it with her eyes on the pavement, and it was some moments before she realized the special strangeness of the place.

People came slipping past her and she noticed that whereas the people in the streets she had left were moving with haste, these people were moving with speed. She raised her head, and saw that they were all little yellow men. She looked around her and saw that she had come to a part of New York which had been squeezed into queer shapes and painted queer colors by a yellow hand.

There were steps running down to caverns of brightness in the basements. There were little shops that looked like ordinary general stores until on looking closer one saw that there was something alien about every item in the muddle and litter that filled the windows, and that the dusty yellow paper books that hung on lines across them were printed not in our print, and from them came trails of pungency that did not seem to melt away, but rather to remain suspended in the atmosphere, doubtless in the shape of some magic charm.

Everywhere, on the doors and windows, on the sign-boards, there were the Chinese characters, those frenzied yet serene symbols that look like the writings of demons that possess the secret of beauty. Down on the

street level these demons were content to cover every inch with their signature, but up above they took even greater liberties with this bit of America, twisting the houses into fantastically jutting gables, painting them scarlet and gold.

Theodora had never been in Chinatown before. It pleased her enormously, with its unfailing queerness of detail. At a street corner she halted before a bill-board covered with long scarlet and white strips blackly inscribed with these Chinese characters.

"I wonder what they are?" she said to herself. And as if she had spoken aloud a silky voice said in her ear:

"Only leal estate advertisements, lady."

A little yellow man was standing just behind her. She thanked him and walked on till the street ran into another, on which the East had laid its hand with even more changing power Here the houses rose into high pagodas.

Entranced, she walked along until the sight of the harsh lights of occidental New York at the end of the street dismayed her and she stopped. She did not in the least want to leave this fantastic place, but she was very tired. She had paused in front of a doorway which had a public look and she peered into its shadows to see what kind of place it might be.

A voice said: "The lady can go in. It is a joss-house. Velly intelesting. Stlangers are invited."

A little yellow man was standing at her elbow. He might have been the same one who spoke to her at the bill-board, but she was not sure.

She followed him up the flight of stairs that was within the doorway. The place might or might not have been what he said it was. She was not afraid. She was wearing nothing valuable, for nowadays, tarnished by her sense of rejection, she felt inferior to her bright jewels; and she had in her bag only a hundred dollars or so. And indeed she did not care what happened to her possessions or herself.

It was, however, a place where she was obviously safe. Behind a padded door there was a large dark room, dense with pungency, unlighted save where on a dais at its end there sat the immense image of a goddess. She was in a blue dress with blue rays of painted metal coming from her head, and she meant nothing. It was impossible to say whether her hand was raised to invite or repel and her smooth, oval face was blank as the kernel of the stone of a fruit. There were benches all over the room on which there sat isolated people who were mere contemplative humps. She could not tell if they were white or yellow. She moved across the floor, which seemed to be furred with aromatic dust, to a seat at the side of the room with its back to a shuttered window, which faintly admitted the lights from the streets in thin bars of brightness.

Nothing happened. She began to see that the goddess had meaning; that if her face was blank as the kernel of the stone of a fruit, the name of that fruit was peace. But peace was a lie. She thought of the different kinds of ill luck she had had with Joseph and Marshall and Danny, and she fell to weeping silently.

The little yellow man was standing in front of her. (Was he the same?) He asked: "Is there anything the lady would like?"

It seemed a queer offer in a place that was something like a church. "Anything I would like?"

His hand flashed suddenly into one of the bars of brightness admitted by the slats. In its palm a pyramid of white powder lay on a square of paper. It must be cocaine. Well, why not? She stretched out her hand to take it. But that way was not for her. Just as her body which was hard with years of dancing could not have suddenly become soft and obese because she had wished it, so she could not though she chose break her strong habit of decent living. Her hand dropped.

And the yellow hand flashed back into the darkness. She could not have sworn in a court of law that it had ever been there. The silky voice continued: "A cup of tea?"

At that she nodded. A tray was presently set down beside her and she drank what seemed like hot water pervaded by a smell that seemed at once poignant and tenuous, like wood-smoke. It certainly seemed a queer thing to do in a place that was so like a church. Either nobody or everybody was watching, she was not sure which; in any case she did not care. She felt a little better after that and tried to rest, turning her eyes from the lying goddess of peace and staring into the darkness. But like all darkness it presently began to be painted with portraits of Danny. She closed her eyes; and saw those same portraits on the inside of her lids. She covered her face with her hands.

The silky voice addressed her. "There is a magician lives close by. Would the lady like to come and see him?"

Theodora lifted her head. She was the sort of woman who could never resist going to a fortune-teller or clairvoyant and going in a condition of implicit faith. But she was almost too tired to move.

The voice persisted: "There are no people so good as our people at magic. He is a velly powerful magician. He will tell you evlything you want. He will do evlything you want. He lives quite close to here."

She dragged herself to her feet. Sitting there in the darkness only meant seeing more and more of Danny. So she followed the little yellow man out of the room, down the stairs, and along the streets. It affected her with a faint flavor of the disagreeable that whereas before he had followed her, now she was following him. She felt in some way degraded. But it would be worth it if this man was good.

The little yellow man stopped at a green doorway and looked up at its top stories as if he himself were afraid. "Evlyone has heard of the magician of Pell Stleet," he said solemnly.

It was evidently high up in the building. Well, that made it safe. If she was attacked she could always jump out of the window.

They went up flight after flight of stone stairs, past doors through which escaped those solid, undispersing trails of pungency, and came at last on the top floor to a high, wide black door written over from top to bottom with scarlet Chinese characters. The little yellow man tapped a delicate tattoo. The door swung outward and disclosed a screen of polished wood carved in the likeness of a branchy tree. Down in one corner behind the red-brown leaves there peered the face of a yellow hag, so much less lovely in its substance, even so much less human, than the wood.

The hag made a clicking noise, the trunk split down the middle, the tree swung backwards in two halves, the outer door closed behind them with a sucking noise, and they were in a hall hung with turbulently colored panels of embroidery. Geese flew against the setting sun, a dragon spat fire and writhed a polychromatic spine up to the ceiling, giant warriors whacked at each other with swords as thick as men. Theo was staring at the setting so intently that she did not know when it was, or where, that the hag and the little yellow man withdrew.

Her mind recorded that all this would be frightening if she had any longer cared what happened to her. The silence throbbed every minute or so, as if some one were very slowly and softly beating on a huge gong with a muffled stick, and every thud seemed to thresh down sleep on her brain. She sank down upon a low stool at the foot of the panels, and her head drooped down lower and lower, till a sound, a silken crepitation, brought her to her feet. Though her mind had abandoned fear her body was still capable of it.

The panel over which the geese flew in front of the setting sun was being held back by a hand stiff with rings. There leaned out presently into the light a girl. Though her dress was Chinese she was white, a marvelous creature of rose and gold. Her face was insolent with pampering; she held herself stiffly in her incredibly gorgeous coat; at her young uptilted breast she held a baby swaddled richly like a kingly doll. She set a hard appraising

stare on Theodora and her clothes, but there was nothing of envy in it. Whatever anybody had, she had as good. But a shadow of fear came over her face, and she backed into the shadow as the panel by which Theodora had been sitting began to roll up like a blind.

Behind was a dimly lighted room, dominated by a great golden Buddha thrice life-size, that sat on a dais at its end. Theodora uttered an exclamation of rage because the room seemed to be empty, and she was sick of all these preparations that led to nothing. She walked with savage, raiding speed towards the dais; and halted suddenly when she perceived that at the feet of the image there sat a cross-legged Chinaman. Till one was close upon him his yellow face and golden robe made him melt into the Buddha.

They faced one another in silence. Behind her rolled down the panel.

"What can I do for you?"

Jeering yet hopefully she asked, "What *can* you do?"

"Shall I tell you the future?"

"If you can."

A crystal ball ran down his wide sleeve to his lap.

For a space she watched him hungrily. But what could he see that it would be any good for her to know? There might be happiness for the fat wife of a storekeeper, there might be happiness for the kind of white girl who would live with a Chinaman. But for her there could be no happiness, because of the vile cruelty of Danny.

She shrieked: "Don't tell me my future!"

The crystal ball ran back into his sleeve.

She mounted the dais and stood over him, shaking with sudden frenzy. "Can you work spells? Can you kill people?"

Blandly he replied: "Last moon a man died in Peking because of me, here in New York."

"Can you kill me a man in England?"

"It will cost much money."

"How much?"

"Ninety-five dollars."

She found she had ninety-seven dollars with her. Her bag smelled oddly, as if it had been touched by hands steeped in some perfume she had never known. Yet surely it had not been out of her possession.

Slowly he counted the bills. With slowness that tortured her he took a black lacquer box from the shadow of the Buddha, and drew out a silver bowl with a flat rim in which there were stamped deep round depressions. He took out three black candles and stood them in three of the depressions. He gave her three slips of thick, yellowish paper and a red pencil, and said, "Lite his name. On each of them."

She knelt down and put the paper on the wooden steps and wrote, "Danny Staveley," "Danny Staveley," "Danny Staveley."

He took them, and then was checked by a thought.

"Is he middle-aged or young?"

"Young for a man," she said bitterly. "Thirty-five."

He pondered for a moment and opened the box again, and took out another candle, and another slip of paper. "In that case we must do more."

She wrote the name again. "Danny Staveley."

He lighted the four candles, and at each he burned a slip. The greasy fragments of the thick charred paper clung about the wicks and made them flicker. He shook his hand over the candles and from a ring there fell a white powder on each flame. They blazed up green. Outward the charred paper flew, as if it had been blown. The flames died down. Again—surely it could not be from the same ring?—he scattered a powder on them, and they blazed up red. The room became a cavern of shifting glows and shadows, and she thought of how she had dreamed of sitting with Danny by some English fireside in such ruddy light as this. Because of his unreasoning cruelty she was working a spell of hate in this evil place instead of being a kind lover in a quiet home. Her unspent tenderness had soured to a

corrosive poison within her; she felt her venom eating into the coats of her soul. All her capacity for love was forever wasted. And life would not come again.

She thought again of the fat woman in the delicatessen store, and the insolent girl with the richly swaddled doll at her young breast. Since the flames seemed to die she moaned, "Go on! Go on! Kill him! He has killed me!" Without haste he shook more powder from the inexhaustible ring, and the flames shot up purple. They burned so high this time that they coalesced into a ring of fire that mounted and mounted till the heat scorched her intent face. Then they went out; and the lights in the room went out too; and there was night.

The darkness did not endure for more than a moment. When it was lifted the candles had gone, and the silver bowl, and the lacquer box. Only the magician sat there at the feet of the god. His face was blank with a dismissing blankness. The panel was rolled up again.

As she reached it she turned. "Is that all?"

"That is all. It will be necessally that at each new moon for twelve months certain things are said to the stars. That shall be done."

"You are sure he will die?"

"He will die. The doctors will find no fault in him, but he will waste away. And in the thirteenth month he will die."

She breathed a deep sigh of satisfaction, and went. The wooden screen and the outer door were both open for her departure. She was alone when she got out on the pavement. For the first time since she arrived in Chinatown the little yellow man had deserted her. Suddenly she was not sure if she liked the place. She was sure she did not like the pagoda roofs any more; it seemed as if the houses were grimacing at each other up where they thought they would not be noticed. She was not at all sure if she liked what she had done. Suddenly she began to run, pushing past the little yellow people, and she ran and ran till she found herself out in the avenue where there were streetcars and houses that were ordinary all the way up, and big white people.

If only she had never left that sane, that safe New York! If only she had waited! But how could she know, she who had never said anything in her life she did not mean finally and forever, that the heart of man is more fluid than water, that it flows up-hill as well as down-hill, that it strays into fidelity as unaccountably as into infidelity? She could not have imagined anything more unlikely than the happenings of a month later when she had gone over to London with the musical comedy that Al Guggenheim suddenly elected to produce there instead of in New York.

The day after she arrived she arranged to lunch at the Embassy Club with a friend, and she was waiting for her friend down-stairs on the big plush sofa beside the bar door; and wishing she had not had to cross the Atlantic because the Englishness of everything, the accents of the people passing by, and their high, fresh coloring, reminded her of English Danny. Some one large and fair came and sat down on the other end of the sofa; and it was Danny.

They faced each other whitely. Theodora closed her eyes and whispered, though she had never before used the words, "Mary, Mother of God, pity me, pity me!"

And Danny said, "Oh, Theo! I've just booked my passage back on the Berengaria to go and look for you and tell you what a brute I was . . ."

There followed perfect happiness, till about a week after their marriage, when Danny began to cough.

She could not think why Doctor Paulton was taking so long. She rolled over in bed arguing the matter out as she had done a thousand times before. There might be nothing in these things; but on the other hand the astonishing fact that she had got Danny again appeared to indicate that there was something in them. For it still seemed to her, who never reversed a considered judgment, utterly miraculous that he should have come back to her after he had left her, and she was inclined to believe that this miracle might have happened because at the moment of their meeting she had called on Mary the Mother of God.

Her rationalism argued that people would not have constantly used these words throughout the ages if there had not been some practical use in them; and there obviously was, since her recitation of them had led to this inconceivable spectacle of a human being going back on a vigorous decision. If there was good magic there could be bad magic. And why else did Danny cough? Still, there might be nothing in these things; but on the other hand . . .

The argument went round in her mind like a wheel, until she avidly laid hold of the one aspect of the situation which gave her hope. Since the spell had been laid for money it might be lifted for money. If Danny's cough did not stop she must go to New York and buy off the magician of Fell Street. It would be a very difficult business. The raising of the money she would find easy enough, for there were possessions of hers that Danny had never seen, jewels she had bought with her savings to dodge the income tax, and never wore because of her profound indifference to personal decoration. But it was going to be the most difficult thing in the world to get to New York.

She could not go without him. She could not accept a dancing engagement there, for her public appearances seemed to him the most shocking violation of their intimacy. The trip would be expensive, and she was always urging economy on him. He loathed New York. Perhaps he would let her go alone, if she told him all about it. But she could not tell him. No one could expect that of her.

Doctor Paulton came in, with Danny behind him, fixing his tie.

"Nothing at all the matter, Mrs. Staveley, I'm glad to say. Your husband's a very fit man."

"Then why does he cough?"

"Oh, there's a slight chronic inflammation. But that's nothing. I'm sure there isn't anything behind it."

She stared at him with wide eyes. She heard also another voice: "The doctors will find no fault with him, but he will waste away. And in the thirteenth month . . ."

"Really, Mrs. Staveley, there's nothing to be alarmed about. I expect he's right himself—he probably does smoke too much."

"But he's smoked ever since he was at Eton. Haven't you, Danny? Why should it suddenly hurt him now?"

"I couldn't say. These things start quite suddenly. I can't find any fault with him."

She shuddered. That phrase decided her, and she began feverishly: "Well, that's that. But to tell you the truth I wanted you to have a look at me as well. I don't feel fit. I'm nervous. I'm terribly nervous. I want a change. I want to go back to New York."

It did not sound convincing, but then she did not mean it to be. She was addressing herself not to Doctor Paulton's reason, but to his twinkling and inquisitive glasses. She was aware that his soul was licking its lips and panting: "I always thought this marriage couldn't last. Danny Staveley and this neurotic little dancing-girl. Bound to be a crash some time. I wonder who's in New York?" She knew that she had only to continue to press her point, and he would say: "Let's have a look at your eyes. Yes, you are a bit anemic, aren't you? I'm not sure if you aren't right. The sea trip would do you good. And the New York air's wonderful. Yes, try a little holiday over there."

She was just opening her mouth to set this train of events in motion when Danny, setting the bow of his tie in her dressing-table mirror, murmured indolently, "We could get off any time after next week."

"What, Danny?"

"I said, we could get off any time after next

week. I must go to that dinner they're giving to old Lantry on Friday. After that I'm free."

She was dumfounded. She could not speak. The love that welled up in her whenever she saw Danny doing something characteristic, something that marked him off as unique among human beings, suffused her and came to her eyes in tears. One of his moments of divination, she perceived, had come to him now. He knew that she was really, seriously, painfully sick in her soul, and that for some reason this trip to New York was the only medicine that would cure her; and so in spite of what seemed to him the extreme unpleasantness of the enterprise, he had quietly yielded to her. All her maneuvers with Doctor Paulton had been unnecessary. She was reminded of the first night she ever saw him, when she had tortuously plotted and planned to meet him, and he had simply walked over to her table with his friend. For some reason she felt abashed.

She dropped back on the pillows, and conveyed to Doctor Paulton that that was all she had wanted of him. She longed for him to go. Suddenly she felt equally disgusted with herself and with him. She was ashamed because she had proposed to make use of his prying quality for her own ends.

As soon as she and Danny were alone she said softly, brokenly: "We'll go on one of those boats with a good swimming-pool. Then it won't be so bad for you, will it?"

He answered mildly: "It won't be bad at all. I dare say I'll like it. I'll go down this morning and see about cabins."

The way he was not asking her one question but was simply doing the thing she evidently needed, made her whisper to herself, "Oh, you darling! You darling!" But the next moment she stiffened with fear. If Danny's intuition had told him a part of the truth, wouldn't it tell him the whole? Wouldn't he know that she was a criminal who had planned his death? She slipped out of bed and ran into the bathroom with her face turned from him.

That dread transfixed Theo with horror again and again during the next few days. It came to her on the deck of the Berengaria when it was slowly riding into New York harbor like a great lady, letting the common little wenches of ferry-boats and tugs scuttle out of her way, towards sky-scrapers that stood in the October sunlight like clusters of lilies.

She hardly saw them, for the magician had come between her and all beauty. Her thoughts were intent on the jewel-case she carried in her hand. The diamond and emerald necklace alone ought to buy him off, but if that was not sufficient there was also the string of rubies. But she hoped she would not have to give them to him, for she had tried them on after she had taken them out of the bank, and had found they suited her; so she wanted Danny to see her wearing them.

When the people round her exclaimed at the sky-scrapers she looked at them blankly yet piercingly, considering them as a screen behind which lay Chinatown. It struck her suddenly that though Chinatown certainly existed there, the magician might not. He might have died. He might have gone away. In that case her diamonds and rubies would be worthless. She shuddered; and Danny slipped her hand into his and pressed it. She knew the same alternation of joy and panic. She had a magic-working man, he knew things that were hidden from all, she was frightened, therefore he knew she was frightened! Yes, one could have gloated over it till the end of time, had it not been for the thought that if his divination had torn the outer veils aside it might yet tear another, and see why she was frightened . . .

The double feeling came to her again that night. They were staying at the Vanderpool, and Danny's brother and his Southern wife came to dine with them. Theo might have been very happy. New York had lifted her up, as it always does the stranger, to that glorious stage just before drunkenness, when the mind seems standing transparent and

sparkling in a happy world like an ice peak in a sunlit blue sea. Snuffing up the old atmosphere she said in the old slang, "Yes. New York's all right! It's a good act, it gets a good hand!" and sat back to enjoy herself.

It should have been all right, for Danny seemed very happy at seeing his brother, who was very like him, though of course without that special adorable quality; and the Southern girl was innocently thrilled at meeting anybody who had been so famous as Theodora Dene. They were all getting on tremendously well together, and making plans to go on expeditions together, when Danny coughed.

Then Theo remembered why she had come to New York. She smiled fixedly at the little wife's bloomy smile, and thought desperately: "When will I be able to get off for an hour or two by myself? They are making plans to go up the Hudson—to go to Westchester County—and so on—and so on. But oh, when will I get away by myself to save Danny?"

She had to take her eyes away from the face of the girl, who had never been desperate, whose husband did not cough. She looked down on her lap, and a kind of darkness came over her.

Through this private night came Danny's voice: "I'll come out with you tomorrow afternoon, but I don't think Theo ought to. She'd better rest in the afternoon, or at most crawl round looking up her old pals. She's been run down, you know. That's why we came this trip."

Again it came, that mixture of delight and fear. Only this time the fear was stronger, for as they exchanged smiles she saw that behind his smile lay misery, just as it lay behind hers. His divination was feeling after her guilt, like a grave hunting-dog dropping its muzzle to its scent, its ears going up as it realizes that there is danger. It would be just, it had been well-trained, it would destroy vermin . . .

But he trusted her. She stayed in bed all the next morning, saying that she had a headache. After luncheon he came in and sat by her for a little. The blinds were down, so that she could see only the kind, heavy stoop of him. He did not talk much, keeping up the pretense of her headache, but he took her hand in his. When the telephone rang and told him that George and Marie were waiting down-stairs he bent over her and kissed her very tenderly.

"Good-by, my dear."

"Good-by."

He said mildly: "You'll be going out, I suppose."

Her heart nearly burst, for she saw that he had said that to raise the occasion onto the plane of honesty, no matter what she might do. She answered gravely, "Yes."

It was necessary that she should get up at once so that she should find the magician at the first possible moment. But because, just after Danny had closed the door and got into the passage, he had given a short dry cough, she was in such a state that her maid had to dress her. The resemblance of that to another period of her life sent her into a paroxysm of weeping; by her own evil nature she had performed the incredible feat of making the days when she had got Danny, which should have been gloriously happy, into the same hades as the days when she had not got Danny.

She dressed and put into a bag that locked the diamond and emerald necklace, the rubies, her check-book, and also a pearl and sapphire brooch. She would give it to the magician if she had to, even though Danny knew it and might miss it and ask questions and know she lied in answer. She was going to save Danny.

Her nerves were so raw that the jolting of the taxi tortured her. She had forgotten that New York boasts the worst streets of any Western capital, and that it is slower to ride in its choked traffic than to walk. It seemed that forever she looked out of the window and saw the same pale people walking sluggishly on the broad pavements with the small mean shops behind them.

When the taxi stopped and she paid the fare she looked round and then turned back suspiciously to the driver. "Is this right?"

He was ruder than an English taxi-driver would have been, and kinder. "Sure! This is Chinatown. You paid me to bring you here, not to doll it up for you. Say, was you looking for somewhere else? This is where you said."

It did not seem possible that this should be where she had come that night. The lower parts of the houses had that dark, dingy, greasy look, like gravy left in a plate after a graceless meal, that makes squalid New York as squalid as magnificent New York is magnificent. The upper pagoda parts were tawdry as stage scenery dragged out into the daylight. There were Chinese people about, but they looked rather ridiculous in ill-fitting American clothes. There was one little yellow man crossing the road now, who might have been the little man who had picked her up in front of the billboard that night. As she looked at him he grimaced and a convulsion ran through him, so that he nearly pitched forward on his knees. She knew what that meant; she had seen a chorus-man do it once. It meant cheap, adulterated dope. This was a loathsome place, half a warren of mean vice, half a show got up for tourists. It was impossible that anything which happened here could possibly affect the stainless life that she lived with Danny.

It was in her mind to call the driver to wait and get back into his taxi, when the grimacing yellow man stumbled on the curb and made as if to lurch against her. She wheeled round and backed against the taxi; and wilted as if she had seen a finger pointing at her in denunciation. For there was the green door. The taxi-driver had brought her to the right place.

She waved dismissal to the taxi-driver, who started up, saying cheerfully, "One time they bumped off a society dame in that chop-suey over there."

There was of course a risk in coming here. But to save Danny she must go on.

The door, as on that night, opened at a touch. There seemed to be an unbelievable number of steps. She paused on each landing because her heart beat so. If the magician were dead or gone away there was nothing in the whole world she could do. Up the last flight she ran with her hands covering her face. When she was on the top landing she stayed so, rehearsing what she was going to say. "I came here six months ago and you laid a spell for me . . . I can give you money . . . Some money, not much . . . Oh, I can't give you all that . . ." She would of course give all she had. She would go home and get some more things if he made her. But she did hope she would not have to give him those rubies. She wanted Danny to see her wearing those rubies.

And when she opened her eyes it was as she feared. The black door was swinging open and the wooden screen that was carved like a tree was off its hinges and propped up against the door-post. Somebody had begun to take down one of the embroidered panels, so that it hung away from a nail at its corner. The plank floor was bare. Plainly the place was being deserted. The magician was dead or gone away. There was nothing in the whole world she could do.

"Oh, Danny, my Danny!" she moaned. "What shall I do?"

Desperately, not really expecting anyone to answer, she drummed with her knuckles on the open door. And the breath left her when from behind the panel that hung away there stepped a woman in a Chinese coat. That, indeed, meant little, for though she was white she was not the woman whom Theo had seen before, for she was old and rough-headed, and the coat was grubby. But still she might know.

"Where is he? Where is he?"

The woman opened a wide mouth and spoke in a tongue Theo was used to hearing from dressers: the voice, rich as beef-dripping, of the American-Irish.

"Where's who? Are ye one of Li Po's dubs?"

"I want the magician. Where is he? He isn't dead?"

"Sure he's not dead. It takes a lot to kill these Chinks. But—och, the fool!"

"What's happened to him?"

"'Tis a long story!" She leaned against the wall and settled down for a gossip. "He had a white wife, my own cousin's daughter she was, and him the finest traffic-cop in New York but dying before he had time to beat her up the way he should. So she came after me, which no girl should've done, and she had the good luck to catch the eye of Li Po before harm came to her. He went crazy about her and married her all proper, and loved her too much to smoke the pipe. That's how the Chinks keep us white girls if we're too pretty." She gave a tired old bridle. "That an' bein' good husbands. And Li Po was the best of the lot. Many's the time I've said to the little fool, 'Lily Murphy, you've had the grandest luck.'"

That mysterious figure with the richly swaddled baby—one had not thought of her as Lily Murphy . . .

"Well?"

"Well, the little fool's run off with a young fellow, used to be a steward on a liner, and they've gone off to Hollywood to try and get in the pictures!"

"But what's happened to Li Po?"

"Now that's the grand, tarnation foolishness of it! Here he is throwin' up a fine business and goin' off to San Francisco wid the kid to live wid his father's people, though he'd ivry sucker in New York waitin' on his doorstep, beggin' your pardon, you bein' one of 'em. But indade it does no harm me tellin' you, for the poor lad's that down and discouraged he wouldn't have the spirit to deceive you, if you put your money in his hands."

Theo stared at her. "Then——"

"Away in and see him yourself. He's sittin' around where he always did. You have a kind face on you, I'm thinkin'. If you maybe wouldn't mind lettin' him make a fool of you it might make the poor lad feel more like himself."

She stepped back and waved Theo in, hospitably, as one woman asking another to participate in the social pleasures of a family catastrophe, as it might have been to a wake; and said sadly: "He's a good enough guy. I'm wishin' he would stay right here. He's sendin' me money, for he likes the way I play wid the baby. But they'll be gettin' the money off me, the way I am. And I'll miss the baby. 'Tis a roarin' president of a boy. But away in and see Li Po."

"But——"

"Go in wid you, you kind woman," said the rough-headed ruin, and with a shaking hand held back the panel she had passed before.

The room was flooded with daylight now. Three windows gave a view of many roofs. It was a cleanly kept room with a felt flooring and plaster walls. On the dais at the far end was a yellow papier-mâché Buddha, turned away so that one could see the lining of newspapers that had been pasted inside its hollow back. In front of it, in ordinary American clothes, sat a little Chinaman, a sad little Chinaman, who looked so like a sick monkey that she found herself foolishly wishing that Danny was there, because he was so good with sick animals. He was sitting on the black lacquer box he had used for his spells.

He did not look up till she had come right to the steps of the dais. Then he said wearily but politely: "I am velly solly I cannot do any magic for you today. I have gone out of business. A family beleavement. But there is a good magician, a velly leliable magician, in the next block——"

She choked with tears.

"Oh, your wife's left you! That lovely, lovely girl!"

He made no inquiry as to how she had heard. Only his eyes rolled for a second, as if to marvel at the way that these Occidentals ran up and down the world, even breaking into the quiet landscape of Oriental emotions. Gently he said, as if to soothe her by a matter-of-fact statement of his tragedy, not out of any personal feeling but merely to increase the amount of serenity in the universe: "She thought she

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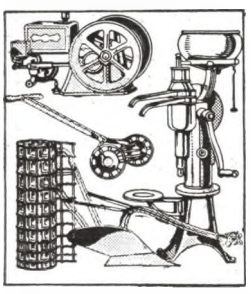

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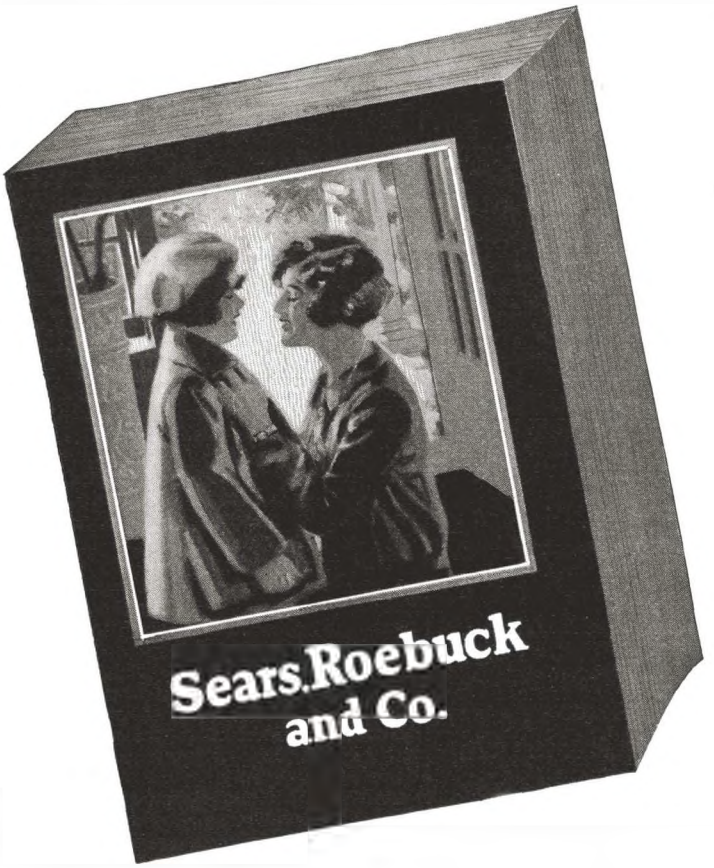

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was like Maly Pickford. He thought he was like Ludolph Valentino. The lest seemed to follow." Then he turned his head away from her and looked out on the roofs.

It was a movement of dismissal, but only from the conversation. She knew he would not mind if she stayed there for a little, so she went and sat down on the corner of the dais, and looked round the room. This was the place of which she had thought with such terror for so many months, this the man. Of course it was all a put-up job. The joss-house. Strangers invited. She'd say they were! The little tout. No doubt it had not even been real cocaine. And here, in this room, the hocus-pocus had come to a climax. What a parcel of tricks it had been! Of course they had taken her bag away from her while she was nodding under the hypnosis of the throbbing gong, and then cunningly asked two dollars short of all she had. And the spell had been the cap of all, when the East had put back its head and laughed silently at the West for its inability to hold its emotional liquor like a gentleman, and filled its pockets at the expense of the lurching Occidental.

That was all it had been. All. There was no magic. Of course there was no magic. Yet a real power of evil had radiated from that room. She should have known it was bogus, she, with her experience! Yet it had endangered her marriage with Danny. It had made her days poisonous with fear lest her darling should die and should detect her as the contriver of his death. Nothing that had ever happened to her before had such power to affect her life. Wasn't that magic?

And wasn't it magic the way Danny knew things? How did he know a horse or a dog was sick when he could not see it? How could he tell when you blindfolded him and spun him round, where the north was? How did he know when she felt fear, though he was stupid and she had an actress's art to help her conceal it? There was a magic of a sort, surely.

But now she saw what it was. There was the magic of strong feeling. When he was in the city Danny could not do any of those queer things—save those that concerned her. He could only do them in the country, because he loved it. He gave himself up to the country as one abandons oneself to a lover. He soaked himself in its manifestations. His mind never slipped from it to his personal concerns. Therefore his nerves were sensitive to magnetic waves that others, thinking of what they would eat or read or wear when they got home, did not feel; and he could find the north; therefore, too, he could notice a faint, unwonted quality of melancholy in a whinny or bark when to the groom a beast seemed well enough, and Danny would be able to reckon, in the unconscious processes of his primitive mind, when the beast's ailment would declare itself.

And he was wise about her for the same reason, since he loved her as he loved the countryside.

And she had interfered with his magic. She had hated, and hate has its magic too. Lord—how she had hated! It was the venom she had felt in this room that had been magic. Yet honestly she had to admit that in this Danny had not been guiltless. He had left her when he knew that he had made her love him. Yet she perceived suddenly that though Danny was to blame for what she had done in the room, she herself was to blame for the power it had acquired to follow her outside the room.

She had never had any faith in the relationship between men and women. Dolorously she had believed that love was an illusion. She had conceived of love wistfully as an occasion of tenderness and generosity such as she had never dared to indulge in in the world of wolves where she had fought for success. She had expected it to turn out badly. There had been a certain satisfaction mixed with her anguish when it had turned out badly and Danny had left her. That was why she had abandoned herself to it so utterly.

Then, when that satisfaction had been withdrawn by Danny's return, she had searched round for something that would support her convictions by ending this love, and she had found it in this hocus-pocus. Wasn't there a trace of meanness and hardness in the way that she had found what she wanted in something for which she could always lay the ultimate blame on Danny? Wasn't the root of the whole thing a meanness and hardness and vanity in herself? Why had she been so reluctant to believe in love if it wasn't that she had been anxious that the standards of the world of wolves should prevail, since it was there she had succeeded, there she was a star? She had always prided herself that she had kept herself aloof from that world, but it had got her, all right. She was to blame for everything. For now she saw that Danny had been right in leaving her. His divination had told him how utterly she had been spoiled by her life, how incapable she would be of enjoying happiness, how indefatigably she would twist and warp their common existence by her acquired habits of harsh and ugly thinking.

She must go back to him at once and start again.

But on the threshold she thought of the little yellow man, and turned about to see what had happened to him. It seemed possible to her that everybody in the whole universe had in the last moment known the relief of a flashing conviction of sin and seen the path to happiness. But he had not. He was hiding his face in his hands.

How it must hurt! She knew, she knew. There came to her a picture of the golden girl in the Chinese coat. Lovely she had been, but she must have been bad. For since she had run away with the other man so soon after, it could not have been joy in her husband and child that made her so insolent, but simply pride in her material possessions. There must have been disloyalty too. It was a mean little betrayal, in the way she had broken through the network of mystifications that it was her husband's business to weave round his clients, just to have a look at a woman's clothes.

"She'll never get on," she reflected. "I've seen her sort before. She'll think of her salary before her work, and she'll try to get on by double-crossing the woman above, and grouse if she's put through it. She'll never go in Hollywood."

She was like Danny, she knew things! She saw the girl white with new horse-sense, having learned just how much her stock in trade was worth, having learned the value of the little yellow man's kindness, coming back to the green door, coming up the stairs . . .

She crossed the room and stood in front of the man.

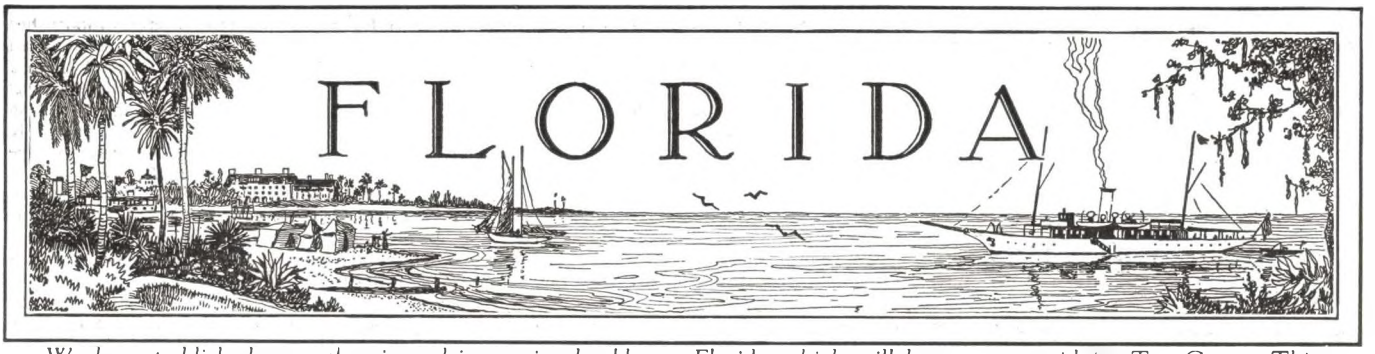
"Your wife will come back!" she cried. "She'll come back to you." He did not seem to hear, so she drummed on his bowed shoulders. "She'll come back—down and out! But she'll come back!"

He raised a face that suddenly became happy. He knew she knew. The practitioner of false magic knew the practitioner of real magic. Passion flamed up into his eyes, a merciful passion that overwhelmed all the vengeful conventions of a race, and he said, as if disclosing a plot against the law, "I will take her to a place where the dishonor of my house is not known."

Their hands met. She ran from the room, out of the door, down the stairs, into the streets. When she found a taxi, she pulled out her vanity case and rouged and powdered, in case Danny was in when she got back. The lights of the city seemed like a celebration. But he didn't like the place, so she must take him away. Wasn't there tarpon fishing in Florida? Only she would have to tell him about the magician. He would forgive her of course, of course, but it was horrible. Also—he might not forgive her.

When she got in he was there—sitting in an armchair by the window. The lights were not turned on, and she left it so, standing in the twilight behind his chair, nervously pulling off her gloves.

She said: "Danny, New York isn't what I



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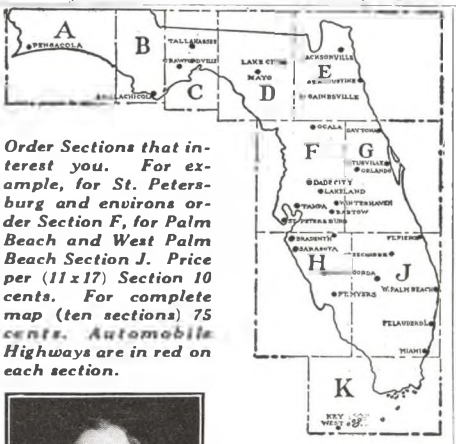

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By L. M. RHODES

State Marketing Commissioner

The Builder of the Universe, after forming the rocks, shaping the mountains, and filling in the valleys of North America, extended a semi-tropical peninsula across 500 miles of warm sea, imbedding in the Atlantic ocean in sight of its majestic beaches, a gulf stream to temper the sea breezes and guarantee climatic luxury forever. Nature dotted Florida with rippling lakes; traversed it with silvery rivers; flecked it with bubbling springs; filled its waters with numberless fish; covered its surface with responsive soil; stored away in its bosom hundreds of millions of tons of phosphate and other minerals; watered it with copious showers.—enough to give 56 inches of annual rainfall,—warmed it with generous sunshine; cooled it with health-giving breezes from tropic seas; scattered over its broad expanse three thousand different kinds of flowers, shrubs and herbs and over two hundred different varieties of trees.

Florida's fertile acres offer unlimited opportunities to the farmer. Here are groves and vineyards for the fruitman, unlimited pleasure and profit for the fisherman, water and grass for the stockman, profitable employment for the laborer, green pastures and markets for the dairyman. Florida is a refuge to the home seeker, a haven for the tourist, a paradise for the hunter, an ideal playground for the boatman and a winter and summer resort combined.

To improve these great natural advantages and develop these unlimited re-

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want. Let's go South. There's tarpon fishing in Florida."

She saw the great bulk of him shake with silent laughter. "What is a tarpon?" he asked teasingly. He was always amused by her ignorance of sport.

"Well, something that you'd like!" If she were not ashamed of the confession she had to make, she would have liked to go and sit on the arm of his chair.

He looked out of the window at the skyscrapers and their hard jewels of light. "Yes, I'd like the tarpons all right. I don't like this place"—he hesitated—"the less for what I did to you here."

"Oh, Danny, never think of that! I want to tell you——"

"But I do think of it. You must have gone through a deuce of a time. You feel things so." He paused and slowly refilled his pipe. "You must have prayed that I would die."

She stiffened. "Danny! What makes you say that?"

"Well, you must have. You were right too. You're cleverer than I am. You knew what a good thing I was chucking away. And you're a wildcat by nature. Of course you said, 'O God, kill Danny for me!' "

It was a pity that she was shivering so. "But, Danny, that's just what I did. I went this afternoon to see somebody I gave money to for casting a spell. I—I——"

He said, "I figured out that was what you were doing."

Though she was still shivering, she went round and sat on the arm of his chair. Indolently he muttered: "You'd better rest, my dear. Tonight's the night. We're going to Sherry's. And then to that place I saw you first. The Rigoli."

She whispered, her voice having left her, "I shall wear my rubies."

Less Excitement (*Continued from page 67*)

coupé. "What for?" he wanted to know.

"Because he——" flamed Jane and then checked herself. Jane had, after all, been born on Beacon Hill and though she had flouted most of its traditions, she still had a horror of publicity, in its violent phase. "You needn't!" she informed him, frigidly, and turned away.

She did not turn far. Jimmy's fingers closed on her arm.

"If you don't take your hand off me," blazed Jane, "I'll——"

"Call a cop?" suggested Jimmy cheerfully. He turned to the officer. "'Lo, Mike!"

"Oh—hello, Doc," said the officer. "I didn't know you, all dolled up." He jerked his thumb at Jane. "What's the trouble between you and the lady?"

"A patient of mine," Jimmy informed him. "I'm taking her to an asylum. I hoped to get her there before she realized what was up, but she——"

"An asylum!" gasped Jane. "Why——"

"Crazy?" suggested Mike.

"I'm not crazy!" stormed Jane. "It's a lie——"

"What made her get that way?" asked Mike, ignoring her.

"Too much jazz," said Jimmy. "She's one of those society girls who keep going every minute. They haven't the sense to see that——" He stopped, perforce. Jane was obligingly giving a demonstration. She fought and struggled violently, oblivious of the crowd of spectators that swiftly collected.

"Get back there!" snarled Mike at the crowd.

"You little idiot!" Jimmy snapped in Jane's ear. "Do you think for a moment I'd be fool enough to risk my professional future on a stunt like this if your father hadn't authorized it? I've got a commitment paper in my pocket, signed by him."

"You haven't!" Jane gasped incredulously.

"Absolutely!" he said grimly.

And, though it seemed unbelievable, she knew he spoke the truth.

"She's crazy—he's taking her to an asylum," she heard some one say.

She became conscious then of a jungle of peering eyes about her and shrank instinctively against Jimmy.

"I think she'll be all right now, Mike," said Jimmy quietly. "Much obliged for your assistance."

Afterwards Jane assured him that she had never believed for an instant he had any intention of placing her in an asylum. She said that she wanted to see just how far he would carry his bluff and so decided to go back to the coupé after all.

Actually she was dazed. So dazed that when, as he placed her in the coupé, her fur wrap slipped from her shoulders she made no effort to replace it. He did that, making it snug at her throat.

"I'm sorry," he said, as he threw his gears in and shot away from the crowd. "I never dreamed you'd pull a stunt like that."

Jane found her voice. "You—you aren't really going to put me in an asylum!" she protested

"I hope you won't force me to," he replied. "It depends upon you. If you will only listen to reason——"

"I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man on earth!" Jane put in quickly.

"My word—how you harp on that string!" he said witheringly. Then, with a grin, he added: "Besides, if I were the last man on earth you might not have the chance. Think of all the feminine competition there'd be!"

"You flatter yourself!" said Jane, with great disdain.

"What you really mean is that I don't flatter you," he amended. "How can I? From the first I suspected that you fed your ego on masculine attention and that your interest in me was professional, too. One more scalp to be secured."

"But think how quickly I got it!" suggested Jane, who was returning to normalcy. "Isn't that to be counted in my favor?"

"I played straight into your hands," he reminded her. "I sacrificed my own vanity that I might the better study your symptoms."

Jane's eyes widened. "What?" she gasped. "You mean that you actually pretended——"

"Oh, it was very easy to pretend!" he assured her.

"I—I hate you!" said Jane furiously. "I'll never forgive you for that."

"Nor forget me, either," he added cheerfully. "But that is not important at the moment. The question is whether you prefer to be put in an asylum—for your own good—or to listen to reason."

Jane shut her pretty lips firmly. She was mad clean through. She wasn't going to listen to anything he might say, she assured herself. She dared him to put her in any old asylum.

At the end of a minute she glanced at him, in spite of herself. It struck her then that he'd probably dare anything.

"How can I find out what you mean about being reasonable—when *you* sit there like a blooming idol made of mud?" she demanded hotly.

"I was waiting for you to cool down a bit," he replied. "There is no hurry, anyway. You seldom get to bed before four o'clock in the morning——"

"You sound like my father," interpolated Jane.

"I speak for him," he reminded her. "It is his belief that you, like most of your crowd, are living a good deal faster than nature ever intended you should. To keep up the pace you all resort to a drug or stimulant of some sort—and he thinks the time has come to take your favorite drug away from you."

"Drug!" echoed Jane indignantly. "I never used anything like that in my life."

"You're what might be called a darn little excitement-eater," he informed her. "And excitement is both a drug and an intoxicant. A four-alarm fire can make a man forget a toothache—or what your set calls a wild party can quicken a tired, listless deb until she positively scintillates."

"It sounds awful," Jane commented frivolously, "and yet even a wild party doesn't seem to get results with me nowadays. I seem to find it harder all the time to scintillate."

"That's logical enough—the drug is losing its effect. That's the way with drugs—or stimulants. You reach the point where you either have to keep increasing the dose, or make an honest effort to cure yourself."

"And the cure?" mocked Jane.

They had been running along the boulevard that skirts the Charles in Cambridge and had reached the Harvard boat-house. He turned to the right.

"A little less excitement," he said then. "Your father has tried to make you see the wisdom of that, but you absolutely refused to. You'll be twenty-one in February."

"St. Valentine's Day," Jane corroborated. "I'm a born valentine—perhaps that's the trouble with me."

"But in the meantime you're still a minor. He is pretty much worried over you——"

"He's got the paternal complex bad—why doesn't he take something for that?" demanded Jane disrespectfully.

"He balks, naturally, at the suggestion of an asylum," Jimmy went on. "But he agreed that if we forced your hand you might accept the alternative."

"And that?" asked Jane.

"A month or so of living the simple life with your Aunt Jane," he replied calmly.

"Oh, horrors!" protested Jane. "I'd rather go to an asylum."

"Why?" he asked, his eyes meeting hers.

"You wouldn't ask if you knew Aunt Jane. She lives like a hermit in a great big house with just two servants, both of whom remember Methuselah. She goes to bed every night at nine and gets up at six. The most exciting event in her life is planting a new bulb in her garden and then sitting down and w iting for it to come up."

"All of which sounds to me as being just what the doctor ordered!"

"Fine for the doctor—but the patient absolutely refuses."

"Then you prefer the asylum?"

"You wouldn't dare!" she said.

"I am going to take you somewhere tonight—it's up to you to say where."

Jane wished that women still used hatpins. Lacking one she relapsed into a silence that she considered squelching. He drove on unsquelched, however, until they came to Arlington. There he turned to her.

"We have come to the crossroads," he announced. "Which way shall I turn—toward Aunt Jane's or——?"

"How long do I have to stay at Aunt Jane's?" temporized Jane.

"At least a month—after that we'll see," he said. "You'll have to promise on your word of honor, of course, that you'll stay and not break any of the rules to be set down for you."

That was precisely what Jane had no intention of promising. Her nimble brain was working fast, seeking a chance to elude him. A winged inspiration came to her.

"I can ride horseback at Aunt Jane's, anyway," she murmured thoughtfully, as if accepting defeat. "But I'll need a riding-habit for that."

"I have some sort of a wardrobe for you in back," he said. "Your mother provided it. I'm not sure that it includes a habit, but I'll see that——"

"It's at Exeter Pool," Jane cut in. "I remember now I left it there when we closed the house for the season. It will only take a minute to get it—Johnson, the caretaker, is there and it's on our way to Aunt Jane's."

He gave her a glance which Jane met with her most angelic expression.

"Just what are you up to now?" he demanded.

"Me?" she echoed, shocked. "Why, you actually look as if you were afraid that I could put something over on *you!*"

"I can see you doing it if I give you the chance," he retorted grimly.

"Won't you even get my riding-habit for me?" demanded Jane, alarmed.

"Why—I'll do that," he acquiesced. "If you'll promise to be good."

"I'll be darned good," said Jane meekly.

But she didn't mean it the way he did. Her riding-habit wasn't at Exeter Pool at all. But her own car, a roadster her father finally had forbidden her to drive, was. Her father had given Johnson orders that it be jacked up. Jane, who knew Johnson better than her father did, shrewdly suspected that she would find it ready for use.

And just let her get her hands on the wheel—that's all she asked. Her car could make better than eighty—which was why her father had placed his ban on it—and this darned old coupé couldn't do sixty.

"I'll run down to New York and visit Sally Wilcox," Jane assured herself blissfully. "I'll have one wild time and I won't come back until the family sues for forgiveness."

This glorious vision mellowed her mood. Jane was no longer bored; the foretaste of her favorite drug made her feel like scintillating.

She glanced at Jimmy. "It's funny," she said, with malice aforethought, "but since you have acted so I find a revival of interest in you. Perhaps there is something in the cave-man stuff, after all."

Their eyes met, his suspicious, hers lovely and much too meek.

"Are you trying to vamp me?" he demanded.

"How could I—when you see through me so?" she protested.

He did not answer her, but the car spoke for him, moving erratically for a second. And that was one symptom that Jane, without being a psychiatrist, knew very well. A genial little glow ran through her

"It's too bad," she went on, deliberately bedeviling him, "that your interest in me is so wholly professional. Because now that I'm your patient I suppose there is always the danger *my* feelings will change. Patients often fall in love with their physicians. And I suppose I'll see quite a lot of you, now that you're treating me——"

"Oh, no, you won't!" he informed her. "Nature, not I, is to cure you."

"I'd *almost* rather have you," she told him. "Nature is a grubby thing. So darned aloof, too. Though I suppose you would be too."

Jane sighed. Jimmy drove furiously.

"Where is this Exeter Pool?" demanded Jimmy presently.

"You turn off about a mile farther on," Jane informed him. And added: "I do hope that Johnson is at home and not out feeding *his* ego on feminine admiration—he is rather an excitement-eater in that direction I fear."

This bothered her more than she let her voice reveal. If Johnson was away, in her car—— She strained her eyes as they swung toward the dark bulk of the house.

"There's a light in the garage," she announced eagerly. "That's where Johnson is, probably. Wait a minute while I get the key."

And before Jimmy could speak or move she swung out of the coupe.

The November night swallowed her, as dark as Jimmy's sudden suspicion. He started after her, or at least toward the lighted garage. A second later he all but plunged headlong into a sunken garden. He was checked, but only for a second. He tore around the obstacle.

A sun-dial intervened. It removed Jimmy's hat as he stumbled, and exposed his temper. "Confound it!" he said, in effect, but somewhat more forcibly.

Then he blinked incredulously. The doors of the garage had shot open, revealing the brilliancy of a car's headlights.

"Good Lord!" he thought. "How did she manage to get that car out so quick!"

The car shot out of the garage with a roar. Jimmy, abandoning his hat, raced toward his coupé. He never doubted that Jane was in the other car. And Jane was. But not exactly as she had planned. Or alone.

Jane had expected Jimmy would follow and she had realized that every second was precious. Yet she needed, she had assured herself, no more than a second in which to command Johnson to get her car ready to go, after which —about the time Jimmy arrived—she would demand the keys to the house.

Of Johnson's obedience to either command she had no question because she knew certain things about Johnson that her father did not know. One reason she had never told her father these things was because she scorned talebearing. The other reason was that Johnson, in turn, knew things about her that her father didn't know.

As for Jimmy, she had planned just how she might lose him.

Almost any house of any age has a past and the one that Jane had known all her life as the place where the family moved to, come May, was no exception. In the first place it was almost two hundred years old. Its first owner had been a sea captain—also a slave-smuggler, it appeared. Anyway, when Jane's grandfather had bought the house and engaged men to remodel it, a secret staircase had been discovered, masked by a panel.

Jane planned to smuggle her late slave in there, and then abandon him. Johnson would free him later, after she had got away.

It was, Jane had believed, a perfectly good plan. But like most plans, it was subject to change. As the car swung out of the garage Jane just managed to swing aboard. The fur wrap slipped from her shoulders, falling to the ground. "Don't mind it—drive on!" commanded Jane recklessly.

As she spoke she swung a silk-shod extremity over the car's door, followed it with another and ricocheted into the seat beside Johnson. Johnson ignored her absolutely. He did say something—but not to Jane—at the sudden appearance of another car, swinging in from the state road and bearing rapidly down upon them.

Johnson promptly slammed the brakes and managed to skid the car around, end for end, in a way that took Jane's breath away.

Jane herself drove recklessly, but denied it, and believed she proved it by her virtuous disapproval of anybody who did the same things she did with a car.

"Are you crazy?" she demanded sharply.

Again Johnson ignored her. He had not as yet even recognized her. He believed that she was one of his lady friends from the village, whose society he had cultivated at odd moments but whose presence at this moment was as inopportune as it was unexpected.

He switched off the lights and then, with a bump, left the drive and took to the turf. The November wind, keen and penetrating, was whipping at Jane, but she was too breathless with amazement to notice it. Pell-mell the car plunged, running without lights, down toward the shore.

The search-lights of the other car picked them up and Johnson bent low over the wheel, in a manner incomprehensible to Jane.

The fact was that he expected a fusillade from behind.

This would still have been incomprehensible to Jane. She believed she knew all about Johnson. But she didn't know the half of it. If she had been told that rum runners were in the car behind she would still have been bewildered.

"What do they want of Johnson?" she would have asked.

Johnson could have told her. They wanted two things. First, his life, and then a package that bumped around between his feet.

They wanted his life because Johnson knew a shade too much about them for their comfort and because he had been fool enough—as he was now realizing and bitterly repenting—to try to hold them up.

From the time when her family had moved back to Boston, Johnson had been getting what is usually referred to as easy money. A bit of money, that is, that required no effort on his part. All he had to do was to permit the smugglers of contraband to run their boats in shore and load their cars on the grounds. All with no great risk to Johnson, for the local chief of police was "in" on the deal too.

In the beginning, Johnson would have done even more for less. He believed his unofficial employers liberal. But then there were big profits in rum running, he knew.

As time went on he began to think more of these profits and it seemed to him that he was a piker to be content with so little. He mentioned that, tentatively, to the payer-off. He had received a quick and menacing glance —but he had got more, just the same.

Easy, easy money! Again Johnson had been content for a time.

Then he had begun to notice that packages too small to contain liquor were coming ashore. At first he was puzzled. Then suddenly he saw light. The gang was running in drugs. Each of those small packages was worth thousands.

"And they only pass me a hundred at a throw!" Johnson had assured himself bitterly. "The tightwads!"

This had rankled. But he knew that they were bad actors. So, though sore, he had kept silent until this same night a particularly heavy shipment of these small packages had come ashore, arousing his cupidity anew.

"What sort of stuff is in those packages?" he had asked of the man with a hard hat and harder face who was the local leader of the gang. It was in his mind that he was just sort of feeling his way—that's all. But the leader had given him a swift, menacing look.

"You're paid to keep your mouth shut—not ask questions," he had snapped.

They had been working fast, the members of the gang, and at high tension. There was electricity in the air and Johnson had tried to smooth matters over.

"Say, you big boob," the leader cut in angrily, "if you've got anything more on your mind, wait until I get this stuff off my hands."

A few moments later Johnson heard him mutter something about somebody getting bumped off first thing they knew, and Johnson had absented himself swiftly from the scene.

When he returned they had gone. In haste, apparently, because he stumbled over a small package. He picked it up and glanced at it. A second later he had decided that he was going away from here and at once—before the gang discovered their loss. He had slammed his few belongings into a suitcase and was ready to go when he had a horrid qualm. Not of conscience, but of doubt.

Supposing the stuff wasn't drugs after all?

The wrappings were heavy, but he tore at them and was reassured. Tiny vials—hundreds of them, he guessed—were disclosed, wrapped in paper and tied together in small bunches. He had not stopped to tie the package up again. He had placed it between his feet and thrown in his gears.

Now he had forgotten it. He was hardly conscious of Jane's presence. He was actuated only by an animal-like instinct to save his skin. He turned and twisted desperately, striving to shake off the lights of the pursuing car and then, succeeding, turned and shot straight down toward the sea.

For an awful moment Jane believed him insane. He was headed straight for the boathouse. But as it seemed he must strike it, he jammed the emergency.

The next second he was gone, leaving Jane with her pretty mouth at its widest. But it shut swiftly when she heard an engine catch, at the end of the pier.

"Why!" she thought, "he's got my speed boat—and he was supposed to have taken it out of the water a month ago!"

The search-lights of the pursuing car bore down upon her. To her that suggested Jimmy

in pursuit. She shifted quickly over to the driver's seat and threw in the gears.

As the car lurched forward a shot shattered the wind-shield. Jane turned.

"Well, of all the nerve!" she gasped.

The other car swung abreast of her and—why, it wasn't Jimmy's coupé at all but a long, underslung touring-car. Two men leaped simultaneously to her running-board, automatic revolvers in their hands.

"Well, you double-crossing crook!" snarled one. "We've——" There he stopped short, to goggle incredulously. "Where's Johnson?" he demanded abruptly.

"I don't see as that is any of your business," began Jane loftily.

"Oh, it isn't any of my business!" broke in the other, and shoved his gun under her nose.

"But if you *must* know, he's gone off in my boat!" added Jane hastily.

Evidently this man was not to be managed by the methods she usually found adequate.

"What did he do with the stuff?" he demanded.

"What stuff?" asked Jane, wishing he'd be more careful with the revolver.

"Don't try any of that innocent-eyed stuff on me," he advised.

"But," began Jane desperately, "how——"

He reached over and gripped her wrist.

"Ouch!" she protested, as he twisted it. "Stop—you're hurting me."

"That's my idea," he retorted grimly. "Make it quick—where's the stuff?"

"I don't know what you mean!" Jane answered in all sincerity.

The next thing she knew she was being lifted bodily from her car. As she struggled, instinctively, her foot struck something that described an arc and the man who had swung on the other running-board caught it.

"There's some of the stuff!" he said excitedly. "She must have the rest on her."

"We'll get them," promised Jane's captor grimly, throwing her into the other car and leaping in beside her. To the driver he added: "Give her the gas."

The car plunged ahead, just as Jimmy came to grief again. He had been speeding toward it, still on foot, when a peg tripped him.

"If I ever try to take another girl to her Aunt Jane's," he announced irately, as he picked himself up, "you can take me out and shoot me!"

That he might have been shot save for the peg never occurred to him. He had no idea what all this tearing around was about, but he held Jane responsible. Which was unfair—but Jane was beginning to get used to that.

"It's no use treating me this way," she was informing her captor breathlessly, "because I haven't a thing on me, as you will find."

"Well—where is it, then?" he demanded.

"In the house." Jane lied desperately. "Hidden behind a secret panel in the library. Johnson put it there before we started."

As far as she was concerned, this was no more than clutching at a straw. She had no idea what it was they sought, but she was in the mood to try anything.

The man whose fingers gripped her wrist spoke to the driver. "Go to the house!" he commanded. Then he turned back to Jane. "And if you're stalling us," he said, "heaven help you."

Jane trusted heaven would.

The car stopped in front of the house. Jane was thrust out toward it. "Where's the key?" demanded her persecutor.

"Johnson has it," Jane told him truthfully. "You'll have to break a window in the library and get in that way."

They had already broken most of the laws set down by God or man and a window was nothing to them. To Jimmy's ears therefore came the sound of falling glass followed by a gleam of light from the library.

A gleam of light was what Jimmy sought and he moved rapidly.

In the meantime the two desperadoes—the third stuck with the car—eyed Jane suspiciously as she fingered the paneled wall.

"There ought to be a catch here," she murmured, fighting for time.

"There's a catch all right," retorted the leader, suspecting her intent. "You've got the stuff on you—hold her, Red, while I search her."

"If you put your dirty hands on me again," flamed Jane, "I'll——"

They seized her. She bit and she kicked. And that was the sight that met Jimmy's eyes as he reached the window.

Of such things Jimmy had read. In such fiction as he turned a professional's critical eye on at times in order that he might wonder just how the writers thereof got that way, and if anybody believed it, and if so, why?

In such stories the hero always managed by some incredible display of wit or intrepidity to put to rout any number of armed and desperate men who happened to be persecuting the heroine at the moment.

"I'd like to see anything like that happen in real life," was his reaction to such tales.

The chance to was now offered him. He, however, was inclined to doubt the evidence of his eyes, until his ears corroborated it.

"You double asterisked little wildcat!" one man was saying. "Keep still or I'll choke you."

At that point Jimmy's red hair and natural instinct seized hold of him and all but hurled him through the window. But a lingering vestige of common sense held him where he was and at that moment the driver of the waiting car spotted him and blew his horn four times.

"They'll get *me* in a minute," thought Jimmy, and stooping down he scuttled along the porch.

This he realized was not heroic. He did not feel heroic. The best that could be said for him was that he had no intention of going away from there and that he was striving, desperately, for inspiration.

From the library came Jane's voice, raised in terror, it seemed to him—though at another moment he might have suggested rage. He no longer reasoned or thought. The front door loomed before him, dimly lustrous. He flung himself at it and pounded on it with his fists. A second later he discovered a brass knocker and this he used with all his might.

So far, it was his fantastic notion that in investigating this hubbub Jane's captors would permit her to escape. Possibly some remnant of reason challenged this conclusion. Anyway:

"Open!" he heard himself shout. "Open in the name of the law!" Then, as it occurred to him that there was more to the formula, he added: "The house is surrounded!"

In his soberer, saner moments Jimmy could and often did talk of the power of suggestion and the psychology of fear. He knew, as every psychiatrist should, that suggestion is often more powerful than the actuality, especially when it works toward fear, which is always unreasoning.

Of such a device as he now tried he might at another time have said: "Possible—but improbable. It might work under certain conditions. I might liken such a situation to the combination of a safe. If all the factors happened to click together——"

All the factors happened to click together.

This much became apparent to Jimmy in the space of a breathless second. They had skipped. He rushed back toward the library, plunged in through the open window.

The room was empty!

"They took her with them!" he thought in anguish. Yet that seemed incredible. They had moved so fast. "Jane!" he called, none too hopefully.

At that Jane's heart beat a shade less furiously. She had been dazed yet triumphant at the suddenness of her rescue. She had had a vision of the room filling with bluecoats, as it did in plays and movies. But no bluecoats had come and a sudden panic seized her.

Supposing those men should come back!

This time she had lost no time in finding the spring that disclosed the secret staircase.

She had stepped through the open panel and swiftly closed behind her. Some one, she knew, was in the library.

"Jimmy!" her ears informed her, as he called. To her no sound could have been sweeter.

She started, impulsively, to reveal herself. As impulsively she checked herself. Trouble was something that Jane always managed to shed as a duck sheds water. What was over with was over with and Jane was remembering that she had a score to settle with that young man outside.

"Oh dear!" she moaned, feebly—but not too feebly. "Oh dear!"

Jimmy stopped short. "Jane!" he cried. "Where are you—what's the matter?"

"They stuck me up the chimney," moaned Jane. "I'm caught—see if you can reach my feet and pull me down."

Jimmy turned, glimpsed the fireplace and rushed there. Kneeling down he peered wildly up the chimney.

Jane, in her hiding-place, smiled sweetly. "What chimney?" demanded Jimmy hectically. "I can't see you!"

"I'm dazed," whimpered Jane's voice. "Look behind the sofa and see if I'm there."

Jane heard him rush there.

"You're not!" he said, with an anguish of voice that should have softened her but which, regrettably, did not.

"Then they must have thrown me down the old well," announced Jane, enjoying herself hugely. "It's out behind the garage."

It occurred to Jimmy then—tardily—but one must remember his mental state—that he was being kidded.

"I should say," he announced bitterly, "that you are perfectly intact and behaving about as usual. Do you realize that those men may come back?"

"I doubt it," retorted Jane. "You ought to see how fast they were going when they left. And even if they did come they couldn't find me. You can't yourself."

This was true, but he refused to admit it. "I'll find you quick enough!" he promised.

"Ain't we got fun?" said Jane. "When you come near I'll call warm—warmer—and when you go away I'll call cold—colder."

Jimmy gritted his teeth. "And to think I risked my life for you!" he remarked bitterly.

"You did a lot of risking!" retorted Jane scornfully. "What did *you* do?"

"I scared them off—banging on the door."

"That may suggest a gold medal to you—but not to me," Jane assured him.

"You're behind something," said Jimmy quickly. "A partition."

"Warm—warmer!" cooed Jane.

"Are you going to quit this nonsense—and come out?" stormed Jimmy.

"And go to Aunt Jane's—or an asylum? Nothing stirring."

"All right, then—I can stick it out as long as you can," said Jimmy. "You can picture me sitting here enjoying a cigaret."

"While I go out and swipe your car," replied Jane. "You see, there is a secret staircase here and I'm in it. I can get out at the other end just as easy." This was not true. The other end was padlocked. She saw no reason to tell him that, however.

"All right—I'll go out and sit in the car, then," said Jimmy.

That was not to Jane's liking. She essayed another tack.

"I'm chilled to the bone!" she said plaintively, and this time she told the truth. "I lost my cape and—I'm almost frozen."

"Then come out," suggested Jimmy.

"I won't. I'd rather freeze to death—and a lot you'd care!" It would have done her heart good if she could have seen his face. But she couldn't. So for good measure she added, vengefully: "You'd probably just view my corpse with professional interest!"

"Jane!" he said distractedly. "You know better than that. You know——"

"What?" demanded Jane. Then, as he did not go on, she shivered—audibly, she hoped.

"Please be sensible and come out!" he pleaded distractedly.

"I think my nose is red," she said. "And you're already so critical——"

"You know darned well it wouldn't make any difference if your nose was green!" he retorted.

"Would—you love me just the same?" she wheedled.

"Oh—yes!" he shouted, in a most unlover-like tone.

Jane thrust open the panel.

"I knew all the time you loved me," she said serenely. "But you were an awful fool to tell me so—just as I was beginning to get interested again."

"I am very well aware of that fact," he assured her distantly.

He refused even to look at her and so he did not know that her eyes were miraculously soft. He was so angry and yet he looked so absurdly boyish, with his hair tousled and his shirt-front rumpled. Boyish and yet pulse-accelerating. A question that had never been satisfactorily answered in her own mind had suddenly answered itself.

This she knew. And yet, being feminine—or at least Jane—she had to mock him still.

"And you prescribed less excitement for me!" she apostrophized. "I suspect that next you'll be prescribing something for pneumonia."

He wheeled swiftly, then tore off his great-coat and thrust her into it. "You *are* cold!" he said. "I'm sorry."

Their eyes met. From the drive came the sound of a motor.

"They're coming back!" he said, aghast.

"Quick!" she commanded, catching his hand and drawing him toward the secret staircase.

The panel closed behind them. He put his arms around her, instinctively. She did not protest. The roar of the motor diminished, and was silenced. His arm tightened about her. Some one had come into the library.

"Skipped!" announced a voice, vibrant with disgust.

They never heard him. In some way, their lips had met.

"Are—you still studying symptoms?" Jane whispered, as the first thrill ran through her.

"You know I'm not!" he breathed.

"Were you—ever?"

"Never—when I was with you!" he confessed.

"I suspected it," she assured him blissfully.

The voice in the library spoke again. "They can't have been gone long, Tom," it said. "And if they are running drugs tonight they're probably headed down towards New York. We'd better get back to headquarters and get the other stations busy."

"Drugs!" echoed Jane, in a whisper. "Why—was that what those men thought I had?"

"I suspected something like that," Jimmy answered. "But those men out there now are either federal or state officers—perhaps we'd better tell them what we know."

"But—we don't really know anything!" protested Jane quickly. "And—I'm very comfortable here."

"You darling!" he murmured.

"Spoiled, perverse, possessed of an ungovernable temper," she reminded him. "You told me so!"

"You yourself said you wouldn't marry me if I were the last man on earth!" he countered.

"Well, you aren't, are you?" she demanded. Then, snuggling closer, she said, "You—aren't going to take me to Aunt Jane's now, are you?"

"I think that perhaps we have discovered an alternative," he said. "If—you think you can get along with a little less excitement."

"Excitement! I feel as if I'd had enough to last me a lifetime."

"But that feeling will pass. And when it does——"

"I should say," she informed him, "that that would be up to you, Mister!"

And, as her face happened to be up to him, too, he decided that it was.

I Made My Money Work for Me

(Continued from page 38)

money on two percent bonds quite as effectively as he can on twenty percent wildcat stock.

I pride myself on an open mind, but in the beginning I closed it against four things—advice, good examples, mines and oil wells.

I wanted safety, of course. That comes first. But safety is a comparative thing and not a positive state. There s no such thing as absolute safety for investments any more than there is for human beings.

I know a man who invested his inheritance in stock in a New England savings-bank. What could be safer than that? Yet fifteen years later the bank failed and cleaned him out.

On the other hand, a friend of mine while in college in Boston took her last four hundred dollars—money she had earned teaching in night school—and bought forty acres of land in Cuba, sight unseen. Ten years later traveling through Cuba, she stopped at the nearest town and looked up her purchase. A sugar-mill was building near the land, her deed had been properly recorded, no claim had been filed against her title, and on the spot she sold the land for two hundred dollars an acre.

Circumstances alter the value of any sort of investment and circumstances change every day. A few years ago one of our rich Middle West states boasted that it had not had a bank failure in six years; and this remarkable record was credited to the honesty and efficiency of its banking laws—thanks to the political power then in office. The slump came, and it had sixty-eight failures in one year. It was not good banking laws in the first place, but high prices of farm products that prevented failures; and it was not bad judgment but bad luck that caused the later failures.

One of the first "good thing" emissaries that got to me was a matter-of-fact expert bookkeeper with a bald head and a black mustache. His proposition was a new creamery company.

I was interested at once. Outside of bread there is no surer sale than for milk products.

"Is there good profit in it?" I asked.

"Old Herb Henley has done pretty well." My caller pursed his lips, making his mustache stand up suggestively. "Twenty years ago Old Herb started in over in Westside Valley with three cows. Now he's worth six hundred thousand dollars at least."

I asked for plans, particulars and details—and got them. The figures prophesied a net profit of forty percent.

"Sounds good, but where does Old Herb Henley come in? Is he willing for a rival to get most of his business?"

"We'll get it anyway," he declared positively.

"There is only one thing that I can see wrong with it," I concluded in the end. "Old Herb Henley started in with three cows twenty years ago. From three cows his dairy grew to three hundred. Then he came into town and took over the distributing end. He knows the dairy business from the milk-pail of the producer to the appendix of the consumer. He has learned a whole lot as he went along. He has acquired a large patronage, and accumulated a complete physical equipment.

"He learned to sell milk because he had milk to sell. Then when the business grew he looked around for capital.

"Now, you are men with capital looking around for business. Not one of you is a dairyman. You are starting at the top. You will organize and go out and buy all the new machinery you need—and a lot more. You will hire a man to run it. No hired man is likely to be an equal of Old Herb Henley. You'll have office expense that Old Herb hasn't. And worst of all, you will start out at the big end of a full and expensive equipment, and at the little end of a business that is yet to be acquired.

"You may not get the business. I hope you will, but it is too risky for me."

Only a few months ago this company went into the hands of a receiver. The assets will pay less than ten cents on the dollar.

Following the milkman came a procession of solicitors, stock salesmen, promoters, inventors, borrowers that if laid out end to end would reach around the outer rim of a baseball stadium—and I sometimes wished they were.

What makes it more difficult to preserve your small hoard from these voracious ants is that most of them are comparatively honest and superlatively industrious. At least nine out of ten solicitors and salesmen believe, at least for the time being, in the thing they are trying to sell you. Hence their convincingness. One needs to keep his wits about him every moment to see the flaw in their smooth persuasiveness.

So few of the propositions put up to me stood the test that I went out looking for investments. They are not easy to find. A friend with $30,000 to put into something told me recently: "I've looked this town over and there are very, very few places you can put your money with safety and profit."

Some of the best chances that have come my way have been from friendly information offered by disinterested parties.

Jim Fenton, a barber who cuts my hair occasionally, remarked one Saturday morning as he applied the bay rum to the finished product: "Say, there's a fellow got a row of houses up on my street that he wants to sell the worst in the world. He has let them run down until they look like the devil, and he can't even rent them any more. He will nearly give them away."

I went out that very morning and looked at those houses—five in all. They did look like the devil, or rather like the devil had been there and gone. Soiled plaster, dirty woodwork, old bottles and cans in the back yards. No wonder they would not rent or sell. Yet the things that made them look the worst were the least expensive things to repair—cleaning up the lot, retinting the walls, painting the woodwork.

The owner lived back in Illinois, and had intrusted them to a lethargic old codger who had been selected for his honesty. One of the most losing hallucinations in the business world is that honesty is the chief qualification of an agent. I would rather a man would make money for me and steal half of it than have him lose it honestly.

There were five of the lots and the agent thought they might be bought for $1,500 each.

I got a good live carpenter and painter to go over the houses with me.

"Not bad," said the carpenter. "The plumbing is fairly good and that is one of the most expensive things. Four hundred dollars apiece ought to put the houses in decent shape."

"What will they sell for?"

"At least two thousand, I'd think. And this part of town is growing. All around here for blocks a better grade of houses are being built."

That meant the whole district would be raised in value. It is much better to buy a rather poor property in a section that is growing fast than a good one on a good street in a district that is going bad

That night I wired the owner: "Give you $6,000 cash for your five lots."

The telegraphic acceptance came next morning.

I put the carpenter and painter to work. The repairs cost $600 instead of $400, which made the houses stand me in at $1,800.

When the work was finished you would not have known these houses. Two sold for $2,500 each. The sale was so easy I raised the price of the next to $2,750 and I got $3,000 each for the last two.

The sale was made on payment of $500 down and $35 a month, but as all deferred payments drew seven percent interest and were payable at the bank, that was as good as cash.

The whole transaction had required less than three months, and I had cleared over fifty percent on my investment.

This turned my attention sharply to city real

estate. I still kept an open mind for other things; but my experience brought me a few definite conclusions. One is that a man usually should invest his money in the thing he knows most about; another, that so far as possible he ought to invest it where he can enter into partnership with it.

In this deal it was not the money alone that earned fifty percent. Judgment and taste in rehabilitating the houses and cleverness in advertising them had played a part. Brains are the most valuable things in the world, and good taste is next. If one can use both along with his money in his investments, he can make six percent look very much like a stale bottle of near-beer.

A lot of people imagine that any sort of bond is as solid as Vermont granite, and that any sort of stock is as wildly speculative as stud-poker.

But the principal difference I have observed in them is in the rate of interest. About the only thing that a bond guarantees you is that you will never get more than four or five percent for your money.

Of course, relatively speaking, a bond is better security than stock shares; but the security of both of them depends upon the successful operation of the company. If the company is a going concern and continues to make money, it will pay interest on its bonds, and dividends on its common stock. If it ceases to make money, it may pay interest on its bonds a little while, but not long.

Most people are scared of big profits. I'm not. I am scared of concerns that *advertise* big profits. I am wary of companies that pay big dividends before the stock is sold. But I am not a bit afraid of twenty percent if the company is really earning it. The more a company earns, the sounder it is. But in the reverse, the more a company promises, the more dubious it is likely to be.

Personally I do not believe anyone with only a small amount of money to invest should buy either stocks or bonds. Certainly he should not buy in a company just being organized. Much less than ten percent of all the ventures incorporated ever pay dividends. Of those who do succeed, very few pay dividends the first two years. And even in the best of them, one can almost invariably buy the stock a year or two after at less than par.

Here is a financial axiom worth remembering: Buy of the man who has already bought and save money. And if you have to buy bonds, buy them from your bank or an established bonding house.

The number of financial tragedies every year is appalling. The bitterest poverty is that of those who have had and lost. And for a man or woman—it is all too often a trusting woman—to see the savings that stand for years and years of hard toil swept away in a month, merely because they listened and believed a smooth-tongued grafter or promoter or stock salesman, is too cruel for words.

I suppose there is nothing to be done about it. The credulous, like the poor, are always with us. People still allow other people to think for them and yield to dogmatic persuasion.

My experience has brought me two or three conclusions. One is that the safest and most profitable investment for me is real estate. It is something tangible, something permanent; something that may be examined; something in which I can make my own ability and tastes play a part.

I prefer residence property to business property, but that is because I know values better there. If the location is good, the house is modern and built in good taste, and one lends not more than fifty percent of the market value, the security is well-nigh perfect. Outside of a few boom towns, property in the ordinary American city is not only fairly stable, but is always salable. A farm mortgage used to be considered the greatest security. But a farm is a logy sort of thing. There are periods of years when you can't sell a farm at any price; while on the other hand a well located house in

a town can always be either sold or rented.

And if one wants to enter into partnership with his money, city real estate still offers the best opportunity.

I have made my best profits in real estate. First and last I have had perhaps a hundred lots, and thirty or forty houses.

I have learned a great deal, but I never buy a new piece of land or a house that I do not learn some more.

I rarely buy in a new subdivision. Seven times out of eight while the "hurrah" is on the lots sell higher than they will again for three or four years. I have made several thousand dollars buying lots in good subdivisions about two years after the subdivision was all sold out.

In investing money in city property I have discovered two or three things that are easily overlooked by the inexperienced investor. In fact, to my amazement, some of the hardest-boiled real estate dealers and contractors still overlook them.

In nothing outside of art does that intangible element known as charm play so important a part as in real estate. The home buyer is usually a very undecided and bewildered sort of person. He has a vague idea of what he wants, but can't quite find it. He is shown dozens of houses for sale. The price counts within his range. That is, say he will pay from six to eight thousand dollars for a five-room house. Inside of that range the one thing that counts most with him is not the cost of the house, but whether or not he wants it.

Now, that is where charm comes in. If the outlook is pleasant, the house convenient, and it has some beauty that makes him want it—the sale is made on your terms. If he does not quite want it, the price must be cut five hundred or a thousand dollars, to make the cheapness overcome his reluctance.

I have seen a man with a small amount of money to invest hunt for the biggest house for the money. He may find a big old eight-room house in a decadent part of town that he can buy for $4,500. The seller points out that it could not be built for $10,000. The buyer thinks that surely it is a bargain. He does not take time to consider whether anybody would build that sort of house at any price now. He finds himself stuck with property nobody wants, and is forced to rent or sell to people who cannot get a house elsewhere. Almost invariably he loses money.

It is surprising how few builders realize the great commercial value of beauty and good taste. I can take two houses exactly alike, side by side. The least expensive thing about a simple little house is tinting the walls. It costs perhaps, for five rooms, less than $75. I can tint the rooms in one of these houses a drab, depressing color; the other a bright, pleasant shade. The bright one will sell for $500 more than the other—and sell months sooner.

Almost the entire secret in investing in city property is: select a location that is growing better, and buy something that has charm.

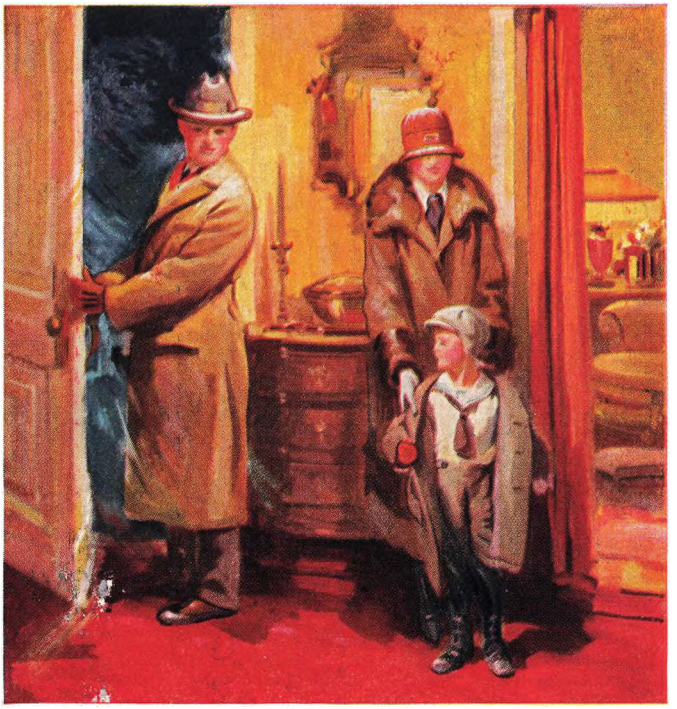
Never buy or lend money on a house that is irredeemably ugly and awkward. Beauty and convenience are always marketable.

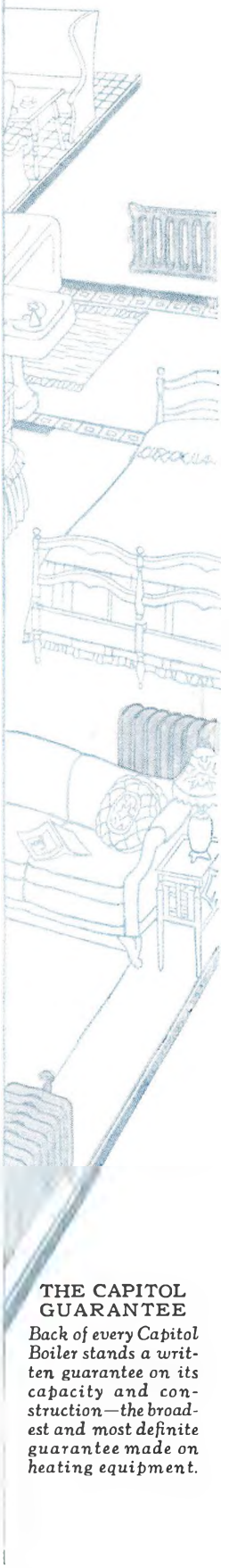
In any sort of investment it is well to remember that the best profits are made on what people want, and not what they have to have. The staple products of life are good for four and six percent; but the big profits are made in getting something that will give the buyer with money pleasure. A man who merely has to have a place to live may give you a hundred dollars' profit on a cheap lot. The man who wants a view, a location of unique charm, may give you a profit of $20,000.

The wants of the body are pretty cheaply supplied. It is the whims and emotions and prides and fancies and pleasures that men and women pay extravagantly for.

That is why here in rich, extravagant, yearning America, if one sends brains and taste out with his money, his investments may return profits that make the ancient free-booters look like the loan committee of a savings-bank.

DEPENDABLE HEAT ALL OVER THE HOUSE WITH ECONOMY





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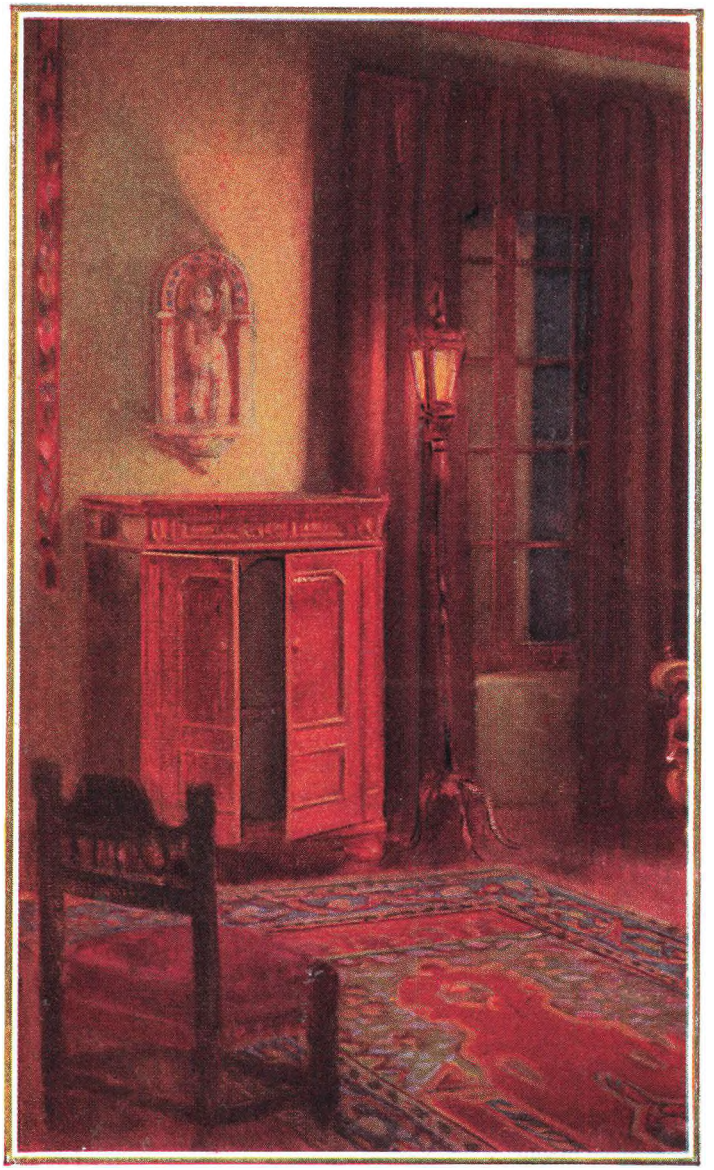

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