SNAPPY STORIES

SECOND MARCH NUMBER

20 CENTS

VENUS AND ADOLPHUS—A PLAY
by HILLIARD BOOTH

THE SOFT-BOILED EGG
by THOMAS EDGELOW

THE GREATEST GEM
by CLINTON DANGERFIELD

MISS-ADVENTURES OF MORTON
by BOB DEXTER

The Zero Hour

He called her "Pretty Monkey"

in the letter that he left unfinished when he died—the letter that told how he regretted he could not give her his name the letter found by his legal widow.

A less respected citizen called her "the devil's sister, pocket edition size." And Coralie, half French *gamine* that she was, deserved both these titles. But there was more to her than one would suspect. All she claimed for herself was, "I have still one virtue: I pay my debts." Yet in the end this little light-weight—fluffy, fascinating, demoralizing—proved herself capable of a splendid sacrifice for another's happiness. The story of Coralie's checkered, cheeky career, that ends with a brilliant new beginning, is told in the novelette, "I Pay My Debts," by Frances Harmer, in the next number of SNAPPY STORIES.

A fierce bull chased her

but that was not as fierce a "bull" as Velma's wearing that super-snug sweater over no undies. At the Woodhaven Golf Tournament she was certainly the star—a scooting star. For furtive particulars see "The Ignorance of Bliss," by Garrard Harris, in the next number of SNAPPY STORIES.

"Office, bedroom and bath"

is the title of a by no means usual yarn in the same issue by George B. Jenkins, Jr. Need we say more? You'll want to read more, though, when you happen upon this skittish tale. And Thomas Edgelow, Bob Dexter, Hilliard Booth, Thomas Grant Springer and artful others will be there with bells on.

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SNAPPY STORIES

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Contents

The Editors will be pleased to consider stories suitable for this magazine. Where self-addressed stamped envelopes are enclosed every effort will be made to return unavailable manuscripts safely.

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THE NEW FICTION PUBLISHING CORPORATION
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CONFIDENTIAL

Words can behave as naughtily as humans.

In a story that came out in this magazine some time ago an author spoke of the heroine's trick of scattering the shekels as "spending money like a drunken sailor."

All that this author meant was that the damsel shook a reckless purse. He himself was just springing a figure of speech. But some men in the Navy, who are rightly proud of their uniform, read the expression as a reflection on the Service. They wrote in to say so. We are sorry that they construed as a slam something that was never meant as such.

Aren't words the limit! The way they can put it over on unsuspecting editors is fierce.

Now we'll tell you a secret. SNAPPY STORIES isn't out to knock anybody or anything. It is just out for a good time and to give a good time. It covets nobody's goat.

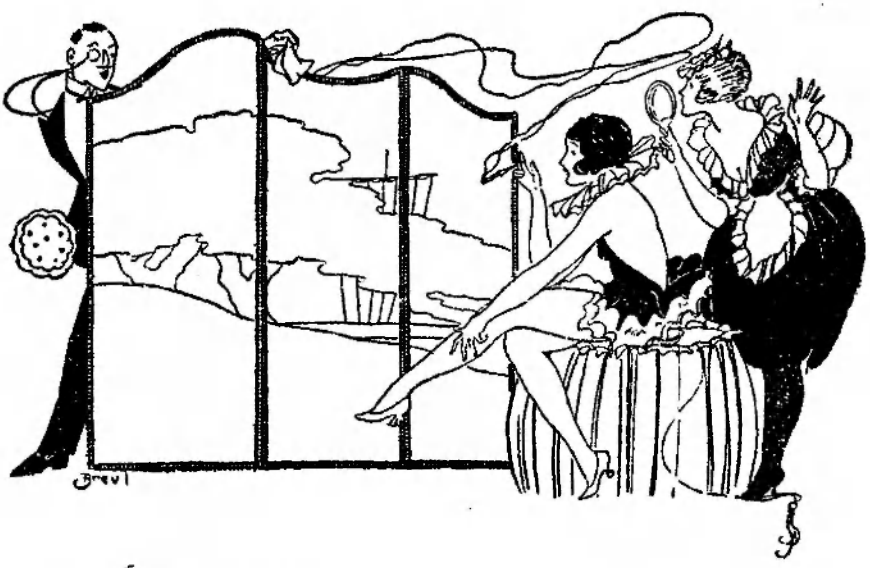
We editors watch as carefully as we can the way our authors sling language about. But you'd hardly want us to cramp their style altogether, would you? The dear old blue pencil, if ever applied, can make a magazine as tame as a tabby cat. Confront an author with a grim array of *don'ts* and all his pep oozes away.

When you are at a lively banquet where a glorious evening is being had by all, if somebody flicks ice cream gravy on your snowy bosom (male or female), don't regard it as a proof of malice on the part of the management!

But please feel free to kick to the management. We are here for that purpose.

Your faithful footballs,

THE EDITORS



Efficiency

By Harry Irving Shumway

ERWIN PELLSON was efficient. Well, let's try again. Erwin Pellson ate efficiency, worked at efficiency, slept efficiency, worshiped efficiency.

In the office where he was assistant to the manager there bloomed a lithesome queen, a girl whom Erwin desired from the moment he first said to her, "Dear Sir: Yours of the tenth at hand, and in reply would say that the cancellation of your order is hereby noted with regret."

Most young men on gazing at Janet were seized with an overpowering urge to take her in their arms and kiss her ad infinitum.

Erwin, upon taking a few gazes, let efficiency gum up his works.

He read up on the matter and laid out a strategic course which seemed not to have a knothole or even a streak of pitch in it. The pages of the women's magazines, the love column of the dailies, all these he devoured and compiled neatly in his orderly brain.

He bought her carefully chosen flowers.

He discovered her favorite confection and saw to it that she had it in profusion.

He took her motoring in a low, racy roadster that barked like a hoarse hound.

He took her to the theater where the seats ran into regular man's money.

He fetched and carried and did all those little tricks that the books say girls feed on.

As an efficient lover, he was A Number One with a special rating above that.

One day a new man came to work in the office. He was one of those birds who take a good deal for granted, the kind whose ears translate "Retreat" as "Step on it." Yes, Percy was rough, although the way he wore tweeds with leather buttons sort of took the curse off.

Erwin began to notice Percy's work with Janet. A frown indented the once efficiently smooth brow. He began to hate the other man and wondered how Janet could put up with his crude and rushing tactics.

The third day of Percy's employment in the office he got Janet's address from the cashier and said he would be up to call. He did, and for the first time in his life Erwin found himself sitting in on that fascinating game called the Eternal Triangle.

And the brute said right out loud in Erwin's presence that he would take Janet to lunch the next day.

From then on Erwin was but dimly conscious of a cloud of smoke. In the smoke was Percy, and he was moving so fast that all the traffic cops in the world couldn't have stopped him.

Percy called this divine creature "Sweetie" and got away with it. He never asked her gently to do anything or go any place. He just said they'd go and took her by the elbow.

In three weeks Percy announced that he and Janet were engaged. It was a terrible blow to Erwin, and he felt his plans and life were ruined forever.

He sought out the rough Percy and asked him the how of it.

"I'm done," said Erwin. "I have to bow to defeat. But tell me how on earth you did it."

"Efficiency," beamed Percy. "Just plain efficiency."

Erwin stared.

While he stared Percy clapped his hat on his head and breezed out to get more orders. Erwin was dumfounded. Something was all wrong.

He found Janet alone later and spoke to her.

"Janet," he faltered, "of course you must have known how it was with me—about you. I've lost, and it's hard. I wish I knew why. I did everything I could think of to win you. How did this crude Percy put it over?"

"He was so efficient in everything he did," replied Janet.

"Why, that's what he said," stammered Erwin. "I don't understand. Efficient what?"

"An efficient caveman, Erwin," smiled Janet. "Think it over."

A Flyer in Matrimony Preferred

By Dorothy Donnell Calhoun

"The next time" possessed a titian head and a dimpled back. Was it to be Broadway or exile?

MANLEY DALGREEN rolled over on the pillows and opened a reluctant and slightly bloodshot eye. Immediately before it dangled the hem of a sheet bearing the red-stamped words "Hotel Cosmopolite."

Manley pondered this phenomenon for some moments. The last thing he could remember was offering to fight the man at the next table because he would not stand up when the orchestra played the national anthem "How Dry I Am." After that episode someone had apparently brought him here and put him to bed.

Manley accepted the situation philosophically. He was more or less accustomed to waking in unfamiliar places. The last time it had been a Turkish bath; the time before that, the police station.

"Shome goo' S'meritan," he reflected contentedly. "Heaven will protect the working girl! Th' Lord loveth a cheerful giver, an' ev'ybody knows lil' Mannie's cheerfulles' giver on Broadway!"

The eye wandered by the sheet hem and came to rest on an object that is not furnished by the management of even the most up-to-date hotels, a pink satin, undoubtedly feminine slipper, adorned with a fluffy chiffon rosette. Moreover—here Manley opened the other eye hurriedly—it was dangling by the toe from a small, shapely foot, likewise undoubtedly feminine!

"If this is a prohibition hang-over," murmured young Dahlgreen, "all I can shay is it's a great improvement over green crockodiles—"

"I don't believe in getting up at dawn myself," remarked an absolutely unfamiliar voice reproachfully, "but two o'clock is my usual breakfast hour, though Gawd knows about all a girl in the profession dares to order is a bill of fare, for fear of exceeding the feed limit these days. You can't risk eating a chocolate drop for fear it'll show!"

Manley sat up in bed, completely sobered by the shock of amaze. In a chair by the dressing table with the confident air of having a perfect right to sit there was a young woman whom he had never, to the best of his knowledge, seen in his life before.

She was not the kind one could easily forget, being rather sumptu-

ous, with extraordinarily thick eyelashes and a great deal of hair of a vivid burned orange shade.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered, "b-but I didn't quite catch the name."

He realized that the remark was a bit inadequate but it was a situation not covered by the etiquette books.

The young woman smiled, revealing dazzling teeth. "Didn't I tell you last night it was Dimples? Didn't I show you why?" she turned toward him a creamy shoulder deliciously pricked. "They're natural too, though all the girls have had 'em put into their shoulders since shimmying came in."

"Dimples," repeated Manley Dalgreen, "Dimples—what?"

She surveyed herself in the mirror critically, smoothed an arched eyebrow and touched up the cupid's bow on her lips before she replied. Then, looking him deliberately in the face—

"Why, Dimples Dalgreen, of course, dearie! What else would it be when we were married last night at midnight?" She dipped down into the bosom of the diaphanous pink negligee and drew out a legal looking paper. "Here's the certificate, everything perfectly commy il fo even to the shoes the rest threw after our taxi. The last I saw of them was Pegeen and Sadie standing in their stocking feet on the sidewalk and Art Thayer sitting on the curbstone trying to pull off his pump!"

Mauley's young face turned a dull purple. "You can't frame me!" he said thickly. "I never saw you before this minute!"

Dimples yawned, patted the yawn out ostentatiously with a hand that wore a wedding ring. "Ask Art Thayer if you ever saw me before! Ask Merrivale Joyce—ask anybody that was at the Red Lion roadhouse on the Albany turnpike yesterday afternoon. It's just slipped your mind, dearie, that's all."

Manley Dalgreen held his head tenderly with both hands to keep his thoughts from spinning. He and Joyce had played poker and absorbed highballs at Thayer's rooms all night—that much he remembered. Somebody had proposed a ride and they had started out in Merrivale's French demon, carrying a liberal supply of cure for the prevailing drought, with them.

Vaguely he recollected a large white building because the stripes on the awnings were wavy instead of straight and he had called the attention of the others to this curious phenomenon. They had stopped to reason with the proprietor, then more iced drinks, an orchestra playing and the unpatriotic man at the next table who refused to stand up. And that was all. Absolutely all.

"I and two others from the 'Only Girl' company was having lunch there because Peg had just got her back alimony and blown herself to a runabout, and we was taking a spin on the cornfield circuit," continued Dimples calmly, "and I saw you in a mirror, drinking a toast to me, and Art knew Sadie, so pretty soon we was all chummy. And within fifteen minutes you proposed."

"I was drunk," sulked young Dalgreen. "I got drunk because the Governor called me in and ordered me to marry Lolita Porter, who had ten million and two bow legs—"

"These half mast skirts they are wearing have spoiled a good many of love's young dreams," agreed Dimples, "but drunkenness is no excuse in law for committing murder or matrimony!

"Besides, except for taking a cherry off Bagies' hat to put into your water glass and kissing the hat boy good-by you acted perfectly sober, even when you insisted on christening Peg's car 'Rheno' and blew up a tire by breaking a bottle of ginger ale over a tire."

For the first time an uneasy conviction of the truth of her story assailed the young scion of the Dalgreen fortune, and with it, like a chill wind, came the thought of his family's probable attitude.

The mater would have hysterics all over the place; Corinne, who was angling for a foreign duke temporarily out of a job, would weep and blat about "disgracing the family," and the Governor—

Manley shivered. At the time of his last escapade when he had been arrested for playing the humorous game of seeing how near he could come to hitting the traffic cop, John Dalgreen had informed his son in a voice like steel that there must be no next time.

He gazed gloomily from the flaming coiffure of the new Mrs. Dalgreen to the jade green sport suit over a chair back. There was no doubt in his mind that Dimples would come under the heading of a "next time."

"What about the license?" He caught at a straw of hope only to be submerged in despair by her ready reply:

"If you don't remember us all driving into town to the City Hall for it, you can ask the young fellow with the pimple on his nose that makes out the prescriptions down there! And the minister at Coopersvale, Long Island, will remember because you offered him an I.O.U. and a stage door pass to the Broadway Belles for a fee! And besides you introduced me to the waiter at the Argus Club, where we stopped to get you some clothes, as your blushing bride."

Manley regarded the embroidered monogramme on his lavender silk sleeve heavily, fumbled in the pajama pocket and produced a silver cigarette case.

"You don't seem to have neglected anything except taking my finger prints!" he said with grudging admiration, "now you've got me I suppose you expect to reform me and make me settle down?"

Dimples accepted a cigarette and blew a leisurely smoke ring. "No, dearie," she said softly, "no dearie, you got me wrong. I don't expect you to settle down, I expect you to settle up!"

The cigarette dropped from Manley's suddenly gaping lips.

"I had to have some reason for marrying you, didn't I?" asked Dim-

sonal approval. "You'll get another place easily with your fig—with your qualifications! But I'll be hanged if I know where my next drink's coming from!"

Mrs. Manley Dalgreen broke into hysterical laughter: "My Gawd, when this gets out I'll be the joke of Broadway! And it'll get out all right. Peg and Sadie and Art Thayer promised not to tell about the wedding so I suppose they've put in a busy day giving everybody an earful—all my best friends is gonna be *sick* when they hear of my good fortune!

"And when they get the sad news that I'm walking the weary again there won't be more than a thousand of the cats that'll hunt me up to sympathize with me!" She sprang to her feet, facing him excitedly. "See here!

"It's only a matter of time before your family comes round! In six months or a year at the latest they'll be ready to listen to reason—you'll get back your old job of being a rich man's son and I'll get my little bonus and we can call off the whole thing. But till then"—there was a ring of resolution in her tone, "till then we'll leave town. My face is worth saving if yours isn't—and you're going to support your dear little wife."

There was no reason to doubt that Dimples meant what she said. She towered over him—we have already said she was of generous build. Manley wilted under her compelling gaze, but helpless fury lurked crimson in his eyes.

"Of course you like me just the way a rumhound likes Mister Volstead," agreed Dimples, answering the glare, "and I'm not particularly hilarious over the prospect of spending the next six months in the exclusive company of a peevish, spoiled, chicken-chasing, hootch-hoisting cabaret cootie like you, neither! But quarreling isn't going to help us. Why not call a truce till we're out of this mess and then we will wind up the performance by all joining in the Hymn of Hate?"

The red died from Manley's eyes. Coldly he took the little hand she held out. "I suppose I *was* a cad to blame you! If I hadn't raised so many varieties of hell in the last few years the Governor wouldn't have got peevish. We'll have to stick it out—but if we live on what I can earn we won't live very long."

Dimples considered him, frowning. "You wouldn't be up to a purely intellectual job like demonstrating safety razors in drug store windows!" she mused. "Isn't there *anything* you can do?"

"Mix cocktails and lead cotillions," said Manley with unwonted humbleness, "play a rotten game of golf, lose money at cards, drive a car—"

She stopped him with a nod of her flaming head. "That's it! We'll go to Baltimore or Cincinnati or some of those foreign places and you can get a job in a garage manicuring motors!" Wistfully she regarded the exotic plume on the dresser. "I'll hock the lid—it don't go with my new role of dishwasher, besides it'll

governor's registered angora and haven't succeeded!"

Dimples shrugged her decorative shoulders, "Well, they can suit themselves, I guess I could learn to drink pink tea and endure Newport if I had to. I'm not crazy about you but the surest way to keep from seeing much of a man is to marry him, and besides I'd feel as if I still had a link with the chorus!"

Manley kicked off the covers and rose, experimenting gingerly with gravity. "Well, I suppose I'd better toddle around and break the good news to the family!" he said resignedly, "I don't suppose I've got more than a hundred in my jeans."

"You haven't," Dimples assured him sweetly as she patted a slim grey silk stocking, "before yon woke up I exercised my wifely privilege of going through your pockets and while you're interviewing Popper I'm going shopping for a paradise plume!"

The chewing gum and corset constellations were glittering above Broadway when she returned to a room filled with dusk. She switched on the light before the dresser and assumed several striking postures, admiring the effect of the wide-brimmed transparent black hat with its spray of paradise matching the burnt orange sheen of her hair. A voice from behind her set the startled plumes quivering.

"I don't suppose you've got enough change left from the hundred to buy a couple of ham sandwiches, have you?"

Dimples whirled wrathfully, "Why couldn't you honk and let a body know you was coming!" she broke off staring at his gloomy face, "why the crepe? You don't meanter say—"

Manley glared at her, "he's through with me! Said he'd got me out of the last scrape he was going to—swore he'd never give me another cent!" His voice rose to the pitch of tragedy. "He told me I could go to work and support as many wives as I damn pleased! *Go to work*—me."

"Your father must be a humorist," said Dimples grimly. She removed the hat. "Well, I was born on Friday the thirteenth with my fingers crossed and the other day I dropped my vanity case and broke the mirror. I'm in a paradise plume anyhow. But it's queer I never reckoned he might give you the raspberry."

"You," snorted the incensed Manley, "you're no worse off than you were before you—you turned matrimonial pirate and helped yourself to a husband!"

His wife tapped the floor with a gray suéde slipper toe, "I don't know about that," she remarked. "You see I dropped in at the theater this afternoon and told Zimmerman I'd married a millionaire and was giving up my job. And Ruby Thorpe is kicking her stilts in my place now—stilts is correct too! And her thirty-five if she's a day and her face don't fit! Not that its nothing to me only I don't know what the chorus is coming to!"

Manley looked at her with imper-

sonal approval. "You'll get another place easily with your fig—with your qualifications! But I'll be hanged if I know where my next drink's coming from!"

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bring in enough kale for some tailor-made overalls for you and carfare the wrong way from the Grand Central. Come on, let's go!"

Before pawning it Dimples wore the paradise on a farewell tour of Broadway with the laudable intent of giving her friends' eyes a treat.

"Loan me your rabbit's foot," begged Queenie Mulqueen. "The on'y luck I've had lately is not being struck by lightning! If I have my hair redecorated and take a correspondence school course in How to Eat Soup in Seven Languages will you give me a knock down to some millionaire?"

"Sure," promised Dimples lavishly. "Only I can't say just when. You see, we're going away on a wedding tour in his yot. We're going to sail through the Alps and down the—the Sahara," she improvised impressively. "We mightn't get back for a year."

Having served its purpose the paradise plume was speedily translated into terms of overalls and a one-way ticket to Syracuse. There was enough left over to pay the rent on two furnished rooms with housekeeping privileges, the latter consisting of a gas plate and three shelves hidden behind a burlap screen.

"But—but we can't live like this!" protested Manley when he was introduced to his new quarters. "Why, hang it all, there's only one tub in this entire house!"

Dimples regarded him with scorn. "Whadder you expect for nine a week, Lord Algernon, a private bawth and a billiard room? You gotter beat the rest of the boarders to the tub, that's all.

"Besides, from what I've seen of them already I don't think you'll have much competition. Stop growling! It isn't the Ritz-Warldorf or the Vander-Biltmore, but you're not the Idle Rich now, either, remember that!"

"I'm not likely to forget it," snarled the discomfited Manley. He grumbled a great deal in the first weeks of the new, hard life—at the tinny, shrewish shrilling of the six o'clock alarm, at the bitter coffee and grayish oatmeal Dimples cooked inexpertly behind the screen, at the unaccustomed labors in the garage where farmers in tin lizzies actually had the right to order him about, to his seething resentment.

"Trouble with you, you think you're too good to work," Dimples told him one morning, after listening to a fretful recital of his grievances. "You've got an awful case of Holier Than Thou! Well, lemme tell you right now, dearie, there are lots more he men in overalls than there are in cutaways and fawn-colored spats even if they don't know which knife is good form to eat peas with!"

"Oh, rot!" blazed young Dalgreen, putting all the smart of his torn, blackened hands into the tone. "If you hadn't got us into this damned mess I'd be driving out to the links at Arsdale now with Mildred Van Vleck or Patricia Brent instead of sitting in a filthy hole like this listening to your fool preaching!

"Think of it, decent clothes, awninged piazzas—girls looking like flowers in their summer dresses—" his tone shook with homesick longing and self-pity.

"More likely you'd be out with some dizzy trying to lap up all the liquor there's left!" retorted Dimples angrily. "What about *me?* Think I like being cooped up in a place where the most exciting event of the day is sending down the garbage pail?

"My Gawd, I can't even afford to be a titian on the measley thirty a week you pull down. If I didn't think that hard-boiled family of yours would come across good and plenty soon I wouldn't stay away from Times Square any longer than the fastest train could get me there!"

Manley sniffed. "The way you've let yourself go off, the only job any manager would give you now would be A Crash Off Stage! What right have you got to preach about the beauty of labor? I don't notice you doing any of it! Look at this place—it's like a slum scene in the movies, dirty dishes, filthy floor—bah!" He flung out of the room, banging the door behind him.

Dimples stood staring after him, for once speechless. Presently she managed a shaky laugh. "The nerve of him talking as if he was a regular permanent husband!"

She went over to the blotched mirror above the pine dresser and stared defiantly at her slatternly reflection. Her hair, uncurled and lusterless, hung in wispy neglect about her unpowdered face. The dressing gown she wore bore traces of all the meals she had cooked in it.

"Regular bill-of-fare!" Dimples acknowledged, looking down at its streaks and smears. Her unwilling glance traveled about the cluttered, untidy room with its rolls of dust under the furniture, its huddle of clothes and piles of unwashed dishes. Suddenly she straightened herself. "I'm not playing the game fair! He was right, though I'll never forgive him for saying it."

When Manley returned, disheartened and savage, he paused on the threshold, wondering whether he had gotten into the wrong room by mistake. The floor was swept, the furniture dusted, the litter of garments had disappeared. A clean towel covered the table.

From behind the screen came a bubbling sound and a pleasant, savory smell. Then he saw Dimples, sitting in a demurely domestic pose in a rocker, hemming a strip of gray cretonne. Her hair was once more waved and burnished, and she wore a fresh pink apron tied in a coquettish bow.

"I had it in my trunk," she explained defiantly; "it was one of the costumes we wore in the "Help Mister Hoover" song in Hip-Hip at the time of the war."

Then, forgetting her resentment for a moment in housewifely pride, she waved the strip of cretonne: "Forty-nine cents a yard! I thought it might be just as well to doll up

"Of course not!" agreed Dolly brightly; "that's the life, isn't it?"

Manley looked about the little room. A red geranium, Dimples' latest purchase, glowed on the supper table. He set his young jaw doggedly. "It's certainly the life!" he agreed listlessly.

Hesitantly his hand went up to his pocket and drew out a brown envelope. He tossed it with an air of unconcern to the table. "Got a raise to-day—I'm in charge of the supplies department at forty per—"

She uttered an exclamation: "Forty!"

It was amazement, but he interpreted it as contempt, and his face flushed angrily. "It's funny how much more forty dollars seems when you work for it," he offered as if apologetically. "I used to lose ten times that at poker in one evening."

"I used to blow in forty berries on a hat, too," said Dimples slowly; "still, I don't know—lots of people seem to live on it and even own a bungalow and a flivver. Of course it wouldn't buy cocktails, or egg Benedictine, or lobster à la King, or mushrooms in sherry, but you'd be surprised how cheap pot roast is if you know how to shop—"

She broke off, to set the supper on the table. While they ate she talked persistently of the gay, glittering, carefree world of Broadway and behind the scenes.

Manley listened silently. In the last weeks of hard work and simple fare the lines of dissipation had gone from about his eyes, and he had acquired bulging muscles which would have looked odd under a dress coat.

Presently, not glancing at her, he pushed his chair away and rose, fumbling for a cigarette. "Forgot to tell you," he frowned down at the match he was lighting, "I got a letter from the Governor to-day. He offered to come across handsomely—"

Dimples dropped a cup she was carrying behind the screen. Then she laughed a bit shrilly. "So our exile is over! And after we get the hard knot untied you can go back and marry Lolita Porter, legs and legacy! The styles are changing and they're going to wear 'em longer, so cheer up. And I—" she caught up her gingham skirts and kicked a small, audacious foot high above his head, "I'll buy a diamond mesh bag and gold stockings and a paradise that'll make the Johns take notice.

"I'll—I'll—" she rushed by him into the bedroom, slamming the door. When Manley followed she was lying face downward on the bed, shaken by tumultuous sobs.

"Dimples!" he urged, "Dimples—are you crying because—"

Muffled in the pillow came the reply: "I'm crying because I'm so hap-happy, of course! I don't have to wash any more dishes—I don't have to c-cook any more pup-puddings—I'm happy! I'm so happy I —oh, go away, can't you leave me be!"

"Certainly," said Manley Dal-

green curtly. He went into the next room and moved about restlessly; when he came to the couch he gave the theatrical magazine a savage shove that sent it fluttering to the floor. Underneath it lay a book with bits of paper stuck into its pages here and there to mark the place.

Manley took it up and stood staring down at the title, "The Home Cook Book," with a curious light growing in his eyes. Suddenly he wheeled about and strode back into the bedroom. Standing above the crumpled heap of blue gingham and bright hair that was Dimples, he said, with the effect of continuing a conversation:

"Of course the Governor made it a condition that I should promise never to see you again if he took me back."

"Of course!" faintly, from Dimples.

Manley Dalgreen spoke levelly; "I know you don't care a continental for me, and I suppose you'll never forgive me for spoiling your financial scheme. But—well—I couldn't promise that, Dimples! I just sat down and wrote the Governor that I loved you and I wouldn't touch a cent of his damned money."

"Why that's just exactly what I wrote him!" gasped Dimples, sitting violently upright, "only being a perfect lady I left out the damned!"

"You wrote—" it was Manley's turn for bewilderment.

"He offered me fifty thousand dollars if I'd give you up!" she explained. "Of course I was going to do it anyhow if you wanted to go back, but trying to *buy* me! What do you know about that?" She laid her bright head against his grimy khaki coat. "If some people haven't got a nerve!" marveled Dimples indignantly.

Uncertain Certainty

By Harry Kemp

There's nothing so uncertain as a kiss—
Yet nowhere is there found more certain bliss.

Her Regeneration

By John McColl

Madeline Minx
Slouchily slinks
Over the screen;
Swallows morphine
Like lemonade,
Quite unafraid.
Svelte she appears,
Languidly wears
Velvet and tulle.
"Kiss me, my fool!"
Madeline cries,
Rolling her eyes,
Dropping them, juggling them up to the skies.

Madeline Minx,
Now Bessie Binks
Hops, skips, and jumps
Round rustic pumps,
Milks a mild cow,
Teetotal now;
Wears calicoes,
No furbelows
Mar simple gowns.
"True hearts beat crowns!"
Just hear her shout.
Why this about—
—Turn of Mad's morals? Vamps have gone out!

That Greatest Gem

By Clinton Dangerfield

A gem of great price lay within the coffer. Should he risk all to gain all?

FOREWORD

Seeing that the souls of women may not inhabit Paradise, they turn back from the gates of Heaven and do enter into the hearts of jewels . . . into glowing rubies, tenderly blue sapphires, green restful jade, changeful opals, and into the radiant, glittering cosmos of great diamonds. Say not, therefore, that the souls of women wander desolate on the air; for if ye plunge your hand into a coffer of jewels and let their beauty run through your fingers, ye shall feel in them the presence and mystery of Woman.

FROM THE MOHAMMEDAN-ARABIC

THE law of the desert is hospitality.

Therefore Lawrence Acton coldly welcomed to his campfire under the desert stars the man he most hated . . . Varley Bayne, whom Rose had suddenly married. . . . Rose who had been engaged to Acton.

Rose Morrow's marriage had literally dazed Acton. He had read it in a newspaper while he was away from New York City on business. He had not believed it. The keynote of Acton's love was faith.

Even his faith was disturbed, however, and he had wired his best friend, Campdon. Campdon confirmed it.

Lawrence Acton felt his universe disarranged, himself disoriented, stunned. Idealistic in his love, he had believed, with passionate simplicity, that he and Rose Morrow had been destined for each other. And she had seemed to him as true and exquisite in soul as she was alluringly lovely of body.

This action on her part, capricious, gross, the behavior, he thought, of a woman who wanted merely man, not one especial mate, destroyed his own confidence in his judgment and wounded him until he could scarcely eat or sleep.

In his violent disenchantment, life seemed to offer nothing now but an effort to forget his unhappiness in work.

Too wealthy to have any personal lack, he had offered himself to a society devoted to research along unusual lines. It promptly sent him, at his own expense, in pursuit of a buried papyrus, to reach which he had to cross a section of the Arabian desert.

He took the assignment mechanically; just as he would have taken it if it had been the South Pole or Congoland. Where he went was nothing

to him, unless he could escape from himself by the work and privations some difficult environment afforded.

Now he found he not only had not escaped from the memories he fled, but found himself entertaining, as his guest, the man of all men whom he most desired to avoid.

Under his impassive exterior, he secretly quivered with hate for Varley Bayne, smoking, insolently at ease, near him.

Yet Acton made a resolute effort to be fair. This man was not to blame because he was Rose's choice. Bayne, with his dead black hair, regular features and full red lips, was unquestionably handsome. His voice was not like Acton's guarded, cultivated monotone, unexpressive except under great pressure. Bayne's tones were theatric with color, emotional, caressing.

Yes, Acton thought, a man of his, Acton's, quiet type, must seem uninteresting to a girl alongside Bayne. But . . . oh . . . if Rose only had not pledged her faith . . . then broken it . . . it might have been easier to give her up.

He forced himself to talk to his guest:

"You haven't told me how you came to be alone out here? You had a party with you, of course?"

"Yes. Started out with a bunch of infernal tourists. They'd never felt the desert before. It scared 'em and they turned back. Their guides told me not to try it alone, but I did, and my beastly gelding crumpled up on the sands and died . . . the devil and the fellow I bought him from could prob'ly tell me why. Then I got lost . . . who wouldn't on foot? It was infernally unpleasant . . . not knowing how it would end."

He added reluctantly: "I suppose if you hadn't seen my tracks, and turned aside to follow 'em, I'd have mummified in the sands."

"Your tracks showed plainly enough that you were lost and wandering."

"Well . . . it was decent of you . . . since I'd won Rose."

"She had a right to make her own choice," Acton said coldly. But looking at this clever, shallow, sensuous face opposite him, his sickened spirit cried out silently, to himself, "How could she, oh, how could she?"

Bayne, anxious to turn the conversation, said with curiosity:

"Don't you find that long coffer over there a great nuisance to carry along?"

"Yes, it is."

"Got your supplies in it?"

"No." Acton added with an effort: "There is a little story attached to that coffer. Some weeks ago I saved the life of an Arab named Ilderim. I knew nothing about him and was a bit annoyed to find I had sheltered and rescued a wild, daring outlaw whom the British have been trying to get for years. Attractive fellow though, and in his way quite cultivated. Great one for rich plunder it appears.

"To-day, before I picked you up, I ran into Ilderim, or he into me. He was splendidly mounted, and had his

band with him. He embraced me effusively and wished this coffer on me.

"I am much afraid from his remarks that it is full of plunder. He spoke of a great jewel in it, for one thing. He said if I would promise not to open it till dawn, the treasure in it would bring me good fortune . . . otherwise not. He is superstitious like all his people. But he was very poetic, and embarrassingly grateful for his rescue.

"By the law of the Arabs, one may not refuse a gift without dire offense. So I took the coffer . . . and the two camels it was slung between. When I open it at dawn I'll take out whatever seems worth while, find the owners if I can, and keep it if I can't. Any gift from him would be a stolen one."

"And he probably gave it," sneered Bayne, "because the authorities were hard on his heels, and he was afraid of being caught with the goods on."

"Goods would make little difference to him. There is a price on his head," Acton said coldly.

"Then so large a chest may have delayed him in escaping, and he left it with you hoping to murder you later and recover it."

"You are welcome to make whatever cheerful suppositions you please," Acton returned. He talked from surface consciousness only.

His deeper thoughts were running on Rose. Where was she? Had she quarreled with Bayne? Had Bayne come out here, like himself. to forget Rose?

None could forget her, Acton thought miserably. Her violet gray eyes that could darken with her moods, the sweet arch of her brows, her soft, delicate skin, the tender loveliness of her lips, the grace of her movements, the charm of rippling cadences in her voice . . . all these . . . and oh, much more of beauty . . . were Rose. Where and how could any man forget. Bayne broke in on his vivid memories:

"I suppose that research bunch sent you out here because you are so infernally rich and can pay your own expenses."

"Partly because I could pay my way, and partly because I know the Arabs. I lived among them nearly a year, at one time, studying their horses and how they bred them. I brought home a very unusual stallion and two mares."

"Forgot you were a globe trotter." He added in a low voice, "Damned if I know how you stood these Arabs nearly a year. Dirty, treacherous lot. Don't care for anything but money. Turncoats and liars, and yet ready to believe the lies others tell 'em."

"I told them no lies," said Acton. "And I was able to be of some little assistance to a few of them. . . ."

"No doubt you played the Lord Bountiful and all that stuff. Damned easy when you are running over with money."

"Bayne," interpolated Acton curtly, "would it annoy you to tell me why you came out here? Why did you leave Rose?"

Bayne's eyes narrowed. He had no intention of letting Acton know that Rose had left him. He said smoothly:

"Why . . . to tell you the truth, Rose wearied me a little with. . . . Well, there's such a thing as having a woman a bit too fond of one. You understand. So I left her for awhile. Thought a change would make me come back to her more able to appreciate. . . . In fact, I don't want to get cloyed with love. She's a credit to me and. . . ."

The barbed shaft sunk deep. Acton could not quite conceal the agony and rage Bayne's words roused in him.

Bayne enjoyed this a few seconds, then he said genially:

"Did this fellow, Ilderim, give you any men along with the camels?"

"An Arab can't give his men. They are not slaves. He sent a boy of about eighteen with the coffer; but the lad, El Rey, came of his own free will. I gather from something he let drop later Ilderim beat the boy once, and El Rey would quit his service for mine very willingly," Acton said mechanically trying to show the indifference he was so far from feeling.

"He may be assuming all that, Acton, and quite ready to stick a knife in you when his chief wants the jewels back."

"I don't know that the chest has anything of value in it."

"I'll bet it's crammed with rich loot. I've heard of this fellow Ilderim. He takes only worthwhile things. It's like Fate to have chucked about a peck of jewels at a man like you who could buy the khoinoor if he wanted it."

Bayne could not conceal his envy and greed much better than Acton had done his jealousy and pain.

Acton said impatiently.

"If you don't mind, I think I'll have the camp and ourselves turn in for the night."

II

BAYNE could not sleep.

The camp was quiet enough, except for the occasional grunt of a camel, the impatient stamp of a horse, or perhaps the mutter of some sleeper who dreamt ill. But Bayne's mind was not quiet. It buzzed with thoughts of that chest and the rich jewels it might easily contain.

Ilderim must be a very wealthy chief to give away so lightly camels and coffer. Gorgeous loot might be in that chest. Why should Acton be so simple as to keep his promise not to open it until sunrise? And if Acton must be, as usual, a quixotic fool bound to his word, why should not he, Bayne, have a secret look into the chest?

The camp was wrapped in slumber. If it were worth while . . . if the jewels were rich enough . . . perhaps great rubies and long strings of milky pearls . . . why not take Acton's Zaide, fleetest of

off . . . alone with him . . . and then he could conquer her. That was what she needed . . . conquering.

The lawlessness of the desert seemed to have fired his veins. He felt a desire in him not to woo his wife but to humiliate and punish her into a subjection as complete as any hawk-nosed Arab chief could impose on a rebellious woman. Yes . . . . that would be sweet—sweet. That would pay for everything. This was the best life . . . out here . . . where a man could be master.

More than ever the jewels drew him. His thoughts reflected memories of jewels . . . cornflower blue sapphires from Ceylon, ropes of rich topaz, red tourmalines, incomparable Burmese rubies . . . he almost felt them in his hands.

The souls of women—in jewels—by Heaven there must be something in the idea, for the treasure in the chest almost breathed its presence. He rose on a cautious elbow. All was still. Noiselessly he sat up.

III

Is there anything in the transmission of ideas, involuntarily, from one brain to another? Do the thoughts of others gain entrance to our thoughts, and influence them?

Acton dreamed of jewels. Of Burmese rubies, gloriously red . . . red as a scarlet rose heart . . . mystically beautiful as a red, red rose with a shaft of sun fire falling on it.

He dreamed the rubies melted into one. That one was set in the hideous forehead of an eastern god. He reached out his hands and tore it from the idol's forehead. Immediately a rose-mist swathed the ruby.

It melted . . . and Rose Morrow stood before him. Fire of the ruby burned in her deep, dark eyes. Around her head, her hair was wound in two great braids, like a silken tiara of gleaming red-brown lustrousness.

Gravely she looked at him; then suddenly her voice cried, in broken sweetness:

"Oh, Lawrence . . . Lawrence. . . ."

Only this. Another mist fell . . . a dark mist. It blotted her from view, and from the darkness came quite another voice, which hissed softly into Lawrence Acton's very ear, whispering no louder than the fall of chestnut leaves in autumn:

"Master . . . wake . . . a thief . . . your chest. . . ."

Acton woke . . . wide-awake, as men of action do. Instantly alert, he gripped the hand of the Arab touching his, loosed it, leapt to his feet, and, drawn gun in hand, bounded toward the chest, a flame of light streaming from the flash he had snatched up and turned on.

As Acton rushed toward the chest, Bayne was just throwing the great lid softly back. It touched the sand . . . and in the body of the long chest, there stood revealed a treasure on which the flashlight fell blazingly . . . a treasure which wrung from Bayne a yell of fury,

and from Acton a cry of wild astonishment.

At once the camp was awake.

The Arabs sprang up. Lights flared out. Camels grunted. Horses stamped and shied in fright. And, beside the huge treasure chest, two men looked down into the silk-lined, perfumed cavity . . . looked with dilated eyes and pent breath.

There lay before them the sleeping form of a woman. Her small, exquisitely shaped hands were crossed on her lovely breast. Her eyes were closed peacefully, showing the silken arch of wonderful lashes resting, like fragile shadows, against the soft curve of her cheeks.

On her lips' red quiescence a dreamy smile lingered.

Her gown was a mist of diaphanous stuffs, which revealed the enchanting outlines of a form which might have been rose-touched marble, but for the steady, natural rise and fall of her soundless even breath.

Oriental perfumes rose, like incense to her beauty, from the padded silks on which she lay. On her hands were rings, and in these rings great rubies were set . . . rubies which turned eyes of mystic fire on the two men staring down.

The Arabs looked significantly at each other, then watched like hawks, the two Americans.

IV

After that initial cry of surprise and fury from Bayne, setting the camp astir, there had followed an intensity of silence, as though the desert, mother of mystery, had set her seal on them all.

Before the two men staring wildly down at her, before the dark eyes of the Arabs, the girl in the coffin-like treasure chest slept quietly on.

In her singular beauty, her untroubled peace, there was something unearthly about her, which almost suspended the breath of the down gazing men, although the breathing of Rose herself seemed gently natural.

Then Bayne almost screamed:

"So all the time you had my wife here . . . drugged . . . stolen. . . ."

Acton gasped.

"Bayne . . . before God . . . I didn't even know she was in this country."

"What! You expect me to believe that?"

There glided to Acton's side a slim, haughty-faced Arabian boy.

"Master," he said, addressing Acton, "my face thou rememberest not, for when thou didst my father and I a service, I was but a child of twelve, and now I have eighteen years. For the sake of that service, I will, if it pleases thee, tell this American the truth of this matter . . . which indeed is a simple truth."

Acton translated, for the boy spoke in Arabic.

Bayne said brusquely:

"You've a fellow I know with this caravan, Acton . . . a Turk . . . dragoman . . . Omar . . . call him over, and let *him* translate this boy's story . . . not you."

"Very well," Acton said haughtily, but quietly.

Omar came; his sly eyes darted from one to the other. He translated correctly, and fluently, as the young Arab talked.

"There came to the ancient border village a rich and beautiful girl, dressed after the English fashion of women's riding clothes, and mounted on a stumbling and weary horse.

"There followed her two servants. One was a grizzled old Scotchman and one a Japanese boy; both of these rode as though a sack of meal had arisen and got to horse of itself.

"All three were hungry and tired, their horses as hungry as themselves.

"Now the village was overrun with the men of Ilderim the Chief, who knows no law but his own will, and is ever being pursued by the British for his crimes, yet is never caught.

"He saw the strange beauty come to the old, old inn which is kept by a greasy old hag. Therefore the chief, Ilderim, who loves beauty, took up his quarters at the inn. He found that the strange and lovely girl desired to find either her stepbrother, Colonel Cresset of the British army; or else the digger of ruins . . . meaning thee, oh, friend of the helpless," he added to Acton.

"Now the chief, Ilderim, promised her his aid. But as he promised, Love arose and smote his wild heart with sudden desire of the girl. Yet he had no hopes in a wooing, seeing that the wives he possessed already would be in the way.

"So he took counsel with the hag, and she devised the scheme of drugging her guest and letting Ilderim take her away, as treasure, in a great chest which the hag herself owned. And for this she exacted a promise of much protection and her apron full of gold.

"And Ilderim, the chief, applauded her wisdom, and kept faith with her. And he was drunken with delight, for he is only part Arab. His mother was a missionary among those dogs the Armenians, and she was thought to have been murdered by the Turks in a general killing of Armenians.

"But, in reality, the father of Ilderim saved her, and took her to his tent and held her in subjection there, and made her his wife.

"She grew to love him, they say. Anyway, she bore him Ilderim, and taught the boy her own language, and made him believe the women of America, which was her country, are the most beautiful in the world.

"This thought abode with the chief, Ilderim, when he succeeded his father. And when he saw this Rose Bayne he swore, in English to Omar, that her name should be 'bane' no longer, but Delight and Rose-of-the-Desert.

"So that night when the strange and beautiful girl slept, she became even as you see her now.

"Yet did Ilderim not come by her easily. For his men liked not the

stealing of the American, because she had an English stepbrother, and the hand of England is heavy. They made protest. But he made them give way.

"Yet to reach her bed chamber, he had to kill the Scotchman and the Japanese boy. This minded he little; for already he has a price on his head, and when that is a man's lot, what matters a killing? As well be hung for many as one.

"I was with him when he reached the American rose, and she was so fair to see that almost she took his breath, for the hag had taken away the clothes she had slept in, and had dressed her in the gold-embroidered veiling which wraps her now—that she might the more please Ilderim, the Chief.

"The inn itself had strange chests of plunder and loot, and they say the hag . . . yes, master . . . forgive me! I will keep to the story. Nay . . . Ilderim the Chief, did the Rose of the Desert no harm. That is not his way with women. He is not rude . . . yet he bends them to his will in a few days, as a man may bend a blossom to his lips when the branch resists in vain.

"So they laid the rose-girl in the silk-padded chest, with its cunningly devised air holes, and walked over the bodies of her dead servants and out into night . . . and all of us, under Ilderim the Chief, struck out for home.

"Long we traveled, and quietly the live treasure slept. But toward sunset that next day came terrible warning of the pursuit by Colonel Cresset, who was again on the track of Ilderim.

"And Ilderim the Chief was so hardly pressed that he devised a scheme more subtle than the hag's had been. Thou, the digger of ruins, had now encountered him, and Ilderim remembered how thou hadst once saved his wild life, and he thought that it gave him a fine opening to give thee the chest, master, and thus leave the woman in thy keeping until he could outride and outwit Colonel Cresset, and then, mayhap, recover his love.

"Therefore he pretended gratitude and gave the chest in the manner of one grateful for his life, and swore thee not to open it till dawn. Allah knoweth this might have warned thee . . . hadst thou known Ilderim, whom I shall serve no longer, for in time Cresset will slay him."

The boy was silent, folding his muscular young arms and looking well pleased with himself.

Bayne rasped:

"Acton, do you fancy I believe a word of that rot? You've greased his palms nicely, and he lies well. . . ."

"I lie not!" the lad said angrily.

"You see! He speaks and understands English. Why did he need an interpreter?"

"The English speechway is mix-up of stones and burrs," the boy said sullenly. "My thoughts stumble bad in it . . . only little pick up from dragomans and tourists."

"Dismiss your witness," sneered Bayne. "This doesn't go with me, Acton. But no harm's been done so far. When dawn comes, I'll take my wife and go. She came out here in search of you . . . that's the kind of woman she is.

"But she misjudged my kind of man. She thought I'd be afraid of the wilds. But I know this country . . . I was here in my after-college tour. Asleep or awake, I'll take her. Out here a man's own is . . . his own. No damned habeus corpus law foolishness here. I'll take her and," he added maliciously, "I'll beat her if I like."

"You'll never take Rose unless she wants to go with you," Acton said slowly, his face coldly hard. "When she wakes and tells me . . . all . . . and what she wants . . . to do . . . her wish shall decide."

V

STEPPING with delicate feet between Day and Night, Dawn flung red roses along the eastern horizon, and Day awoke, still touched with Dawn's rosy mystery.

The camp was astir. The caravan bells tinkled faintly. The waters of the oasis-spring laughed to themselves. Under occasional movements of the horses and camels, the sand crepitated, like whispers from the desert.

Acton stood drinking a cup of coffee. His face was set and cold. He was watching Bayne, who was conversing quite fluently in French with Omar the Turk who had been a dragoman, but who had taken to the desert for his life's sake, joining the Arabs.

The Arab who had whispered in Acton's ear in the past night, the slim, handsome lad of eighteen . . . now gently touched Acton's elbow with light-brown fingers.

"Master, the woman is sitting up and looking at you!"

Acton wheeled.

Rose, wrapped in Acton's long coat, was as the boy said, sitting up, under one of the oasis date palms.

Out of a dreamless slumber, she had waked to clear consciousness. Except for a headache, the drug had done her no harm. But she could scarcely believe herself awake. When she had gone to sleep, she had been obsequiously tucked in by a smiling old woman, who had put her into a rude but comfortable bed in a respectable-looking room of the desert border inn.

Now she seemed in another world. And there before her, in this mysterious setting, were the man she hated and the man she loved.

Near her was a huge open chest, narrow and long, silk-lined and padded, with a small pillow in it. The dew-wet silk exhaled oriental perfumes.

Before she could cry out in her amazement, in her joy and relief at sight of Acton, in her fear at seeing Bayne, Acton was at her side.

"Rose," he said gently, "my boy

is bringing you a cup of coffee. Drink it, and eat a little before we explain to you how you came here. You are safe."

"Th-then, help me up," she stammered. He took her hand and got her to her feet, just as Bayne rushed up, asking roughly:

"Why the devil didn't you call me to help her?"

Acton made no answer. In his cool, steady glance at Bayne, Rose suddenly read the peril which her presence precipitated. She looked from one to the other with dilated, anxious eyes. Then the bearer hurried up with coffee and food. Obediently she drank and ate.

The three now went to the spring-side. At Lawrence Acton's orders, his men fell back out of low-voiced earshot. The caravaneers waited in apparent dignity and indifference, yet not a movement nor expression at the spring escaped them.

Acton, taking the matter in hand, quietly told what had occurred. She shivered, drawing his cloak closer about her. Then she looked bravely at both of them.

"Lawrence, you must have wondered . . . painfully . . . why I made that sudden, secret marriage with . . . Varley."

He made no answer, but something in his eyes hurt her worse than any verbal reproach could have done. She hurried on:

"But you and I . . . Lawrence . . . agreed that if at any time you sent me a note signed with your signet ring . . . which never left your finger . . . I was to know it was a real note from you. You remember . . . how we got to playing with the ring that day . . . in the rose garden . . . and you told me how your ancestors had used the ring that way . . . back in the Jacobite wars when they were for Prince Charlie . . . ages ago. And so a note came . . . Lawrence . . . from you . . . signed with that ring. . . ."

"What! No . . . impossible. You invented this to defend . . ."

"Oh, Lawrence . . . how can you? . . . Yet I might say the same thing if . . ."

"I think we've had enough of this kind of conversation," rapped Bayne. "What's over, is over. It's the present we deal with. And . . ."

Acton broke in, scarcely conscious Bayne had spoken:

"I suppose you'll tell me there was such a note and you destroyed it?"

"No, Lawrence, no! I kept it! I wore it next my heart. . . ."

"Next your heart!"

"That I might have it near at hand, always, so I could take it out, read it, and let it's cold, insulting words bolster up my pride . . . oh, Lawrence I needed help . . . any help I could get . . . for oh, I loved you so. . . ."

"Show me the note," he gasped, "if it's on you now."

"They left me my jewelry. See . . . these bracelets are my own. And in this locket . . ."

She drew from her breast a wide, heavy locket, opened it, snapped a spring, and revealed a false back.

From this, her trembling fingers drew a brief note, the paper around it having been trimmed down till only the writing and the signature was left.

Varley Bayne hesitated on the verge of a leap forward. Acton, watching him from the periphery of an eye accustomed to watch for dangers, said significantly:

"Stand back, Bayne. If you've done nothing treacherous, you can afford to let me see my own writing."

Irresolutely, Bayne waited. Acton took the note, and under the increasing brilliancy of the desert sun, read it swiftly, examined it closely. It ran curtly:

"Rose, I am sorry. I thought I loved you. I am marrying Hester Ridley to-night. I am using the signet as we agreed. Forgive and forget me. Acton."

Even through his coat of tan, Acton's face whitened with cold fury. He lifted eyes of such gleaming indignation that before them a sudden scarlet leaped into Bayne's cheeks. Acton said slowly:

"Rose, the handwriting and the signet stamp are both a forgery . . . just as the words are a lie. You remember we thought we heard something in the arbor that day . . . looked . . . and saw nothing. . . ."

"Lawrence . . . Lawrence . . . that is why I followed you to the ends of the earth! But oh, it was long before I knew the truth . . . for Hester had bolted secretly with Captain Framingham . . . I thought she was gone with you . . . then Framingham's wife learned the truth . . . and told me that it was her husband, Bob Framingham, who had taken Hester . . . not you.

"She said I had been tricked . . . I didn't need her to tell me. I saw, in one heart-sickening flash, that I should have suspected treachery, should have had faith in you, should have gone to you and learned . . . but oh, God, it was too late! To salve my hurt, my writhing pride, I had rushed into marriage with the man who planned it all. Who . . ."

"Cut the diatribes," said Bayne roughly. "All's fair in love and war!"

Lawrence Acton turned slowly toward him. In Acton's steady, harrowing eyes a terrible purpose lay. Bayne involuntarily touched his revolver. Acton smiled.

"No gun can save you now, Bayne. I have always believed that back of Life's seeming jumble lay a principle of justice . . . an element that follows such miserable treachery as yours . . . follows . . . uncovers . . ."

Bayne sneered:

"Talk doesn't trouble a man like me! Rose is mine, and I shall take her. We'll go on to the nearest Arab village. My belt is full of money. There I'll get men and horses for the return, and there you'll be quit of me."

"I shall not be quit of you there, Bayne. I shall be quit of you here."

The girl-wife looked from one to the other. Her hands flew to her breast, clutching Lawrence's cloak.

She felt her heart beats rising, and round her seemed blowing a slow, cold wind of terror.

She cried out, through dry lips:

"Oh, Lawrence, you . . ."

Bayne cut in:

"Keep out of this, Rose. It's between Acton and myself. Acton . . . what do you mean . . . quit of me here?"

"When I and my caravan leave here shortly," Acton said coldly, "I shall take Rose with me, to be my wife as she should be now. You I shall leave roped down in a valley, off the route. You shall lie with the bedfellow you have earned . . . a gun.

"I shall set a trail of rope afire as we leave. It will, in a little while, reach your wrist rope . . . and set your revolver hand free. When you are tired of the beating sun, tired of thinking how you murdered the faith and happiness of two people . . . then you can execute on yourself the justice which I won't soil my hands with and which . . ."

"No, no, Lawrence," Rose cried, starting forward. "We must not do that." His cloak had fallen from her. Under the early sun she seemed a creature snatched from some houri's paradise.

The beauty of her young form glanced through the gauzy robes in which it had pleased the hag to have her women dress her for bridal splendor. She darted between the two men . . . and threw herself on Acton's breast, clinging to him imploringly. "Oh, Lawrence, you must let him live! You must, my darling. No hideous memory like that must lie between us. Ah . . . for my sake, let him live!"

He held her away from him and glanced in surprise and anger down into her eyes.

"You can plead for such a . . ."

"Oh, Lawrence, you don't understand . . . your justice is right . . . but oh, it is too dreadful . . . too merciless . . . it is my love for you which pleads for him . . ."

"Your love for *me!*"

"Yes, yes, yes . . . don't you understand? You are perfect again in my eyes, Lawrence . . . but if you did this thing I would be afraid of you . . . always afraid. . . . I do not want to be that. . . . Ah, do not be only justice . . . be mercy too. . . for he cannot spoil our happiness any further. You shall take me now . . . now as your wife . . . by whatever rites these tribes . . . only let me think of you as willing to be merciful . . . memory must not. . . ."

She was clinging to him again, frantically. But to her relief he did understand.

"Have it so," he said curtly.

But as he spoke, Bayne made a signal with a hand held behind him.

Like magic, the Arabs sprang into swirling action. As when the wild geese flying south, break their wedge and reform confusedly, so the formation of the desert denizons broke, twisted, violently devided. Behind Bayne stood the men whom the Turkish dragoman had seduced . . . and the heart of Rose stood still.

Bayne, clever, crafty, dripping specious auriferous promises he could never fulfil . . . Bayne had played his chess with his usual unfailing keenness and audacity. She who had followed her lover into the mystery of the desert would see him pass through the gates of the greatest mystery . . . death.

So her drumming pulses told her. So her reeling senses, shocked with fear, informed her. She threw frantic arms around Acton's neck, hoping the living shield of her body might guard him.

VI

THEN the human storm broke around her, wilder than any sirocco. The crack of firearms, the roar of guns was mingled with the shouts of men, the scream of a wounded mare, the stamping of frightened horses and camels.

Through it she heard, subconsciously, the silver clash and tinkle of camel and lead mare bells, calling like vain, pitecus voices for peace. Cloudy smoke eddied from the fight, eddied and swirled around all of them, and cloaked her beauty in veils as beautiful as any loom could weave . . . but these veils were woven on the loom of danger . . . and of death.

She felt Acton fling her aside, behind a palm. She fell and crouched there, calling on God and on Lawrence Acton simultaneously, as though they were one.

A stallion, a huge shape of looming magnificence, came charging toward her, running for freedom and the desert. She caught the gleam of his great body through the confusion and smoke . . . and felt that her end had come under his steel shod hoofs.

But he rose, as he reached her. Tent-bred he was, and had never in his life stepped on anything living. Over her head he passed harmlessly . . . . landing a yard beyond her. Then, a glistening, silken coated filly, crowding close beside him, the two naked except for their halters, the stallion and young mare rushed out into the open, exulting with every stride.

But the dazed girl crouching under the palm, felt suddenly an urge to help . . . to save . . . perhaps even her small hands could. . . .

Into the melée she ran; encountered something which struck her down . . . and in the midst of alarms and the clash of humanity, floated calmly off on the deep, velvet wings of untroubled oblivion.

VII

WHEN Rose regained her lost consciousness it was night again.

Camp fires danced and flared against the vast background of the dark.

Stars, older than Egypt and young as new love, glittered sweetly in the bowl of the Heavens, and under them the wind stirred delectably; its kisses warmed by the ardency of the fires.

She found herself lying on some blankets, and she tried to clear her thoughts, for the blow on her head, though it had done no real harm, was more confusing in its effects on memory than the drug of Ilderim had been.

She thought she was again in the border village, and that she was waking from some wildly chaotic dream . . . yet part of that chaos . . . Lawrence . . . oh, surely he had been real!

Thought of him cleared her mind completely. She cried out sharply:

"Lawrence . . . Lawrence. . . ."

Instantly, from among the sleeping forms, a man arose. Alas, he was shorter than the man she called, shorter and narrower of shoulder.

He came quickly and knelt beside her.

It was her stepbrother, Colonel Anson Cresset.

She seized on him, recognizing him without surprise. She had grown past surprising.

"Oh, Ance . . . Ance . . . tell me . . . quick!"

Many had waked at her cry, and were listening and watching the brother and sister; but she had only one thought. Colonel Cresset answered her sadly.

"Rose . . . be brave, sister. I've bad news for you."

"Oh, God . . . I might have known . . . I might have known. . . ."

"Well, by George I don't see what you saw in him," burst out Colonel Cresset, trying to assuage the terrible grief he heard in her voice, and proceeding with no tact; for he had none.

"Oh, Ance . . . Ance . . . you don't know," she writhed. "And it was all my fault. . . ."

"I don't see it! He'd have been alive now, but a slim young Arab got him, just as he was trying to murder Acton in the basest way. . . ."

His sister shot to her knees and seized him by the shoulders. She shook Colonel Cresset with a strength and fury which amazed him.

"Is Lawrence living? Answer!"

"Why . . . dammit . . . yes!"

"Is he hurt?"

"Why . . . dammit . . . not much. Knocked out for to-night That's all. But Bayne is dead."

She flung herself into his arms and cried brokenly at his ear:

"Oh, brother, brother, God is good!"

"Well . . . dammit. . . ." gasped her brother. "You women! But you are off your head sister . . . off your head."

She stammered her story in his ear.

Colonel Cresset swore weird oaths. It was his way of being affectionate. He said comfortingly:

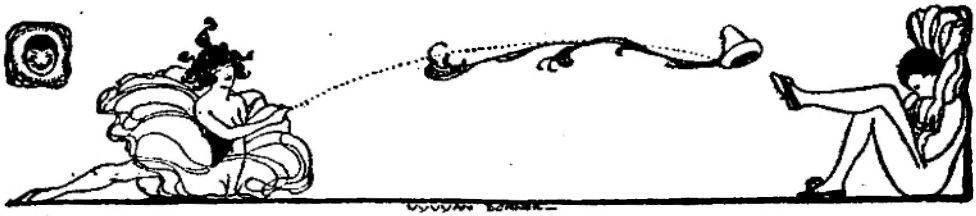
"Oh, well. It's all right now! What a mess you women do make out of things! Even out here in the desert setting men by their ears . . . I've got ears too . . . don't talk down mine so closely! It tickles."

"Ah . . . brother . . . let me watch him while he sleeps."

Grumblingly, Cresset assented. He loved his sister dearly, admired Acton and had hated Bayne.

So while Cresset went back to rest, Rose sat beside the quiet, sleeping figure of Acton.

And over these two and the camp, the stars, as old as Egypt and as young as new love, watched sweetly.



Just Deserts

By Paul Rayson

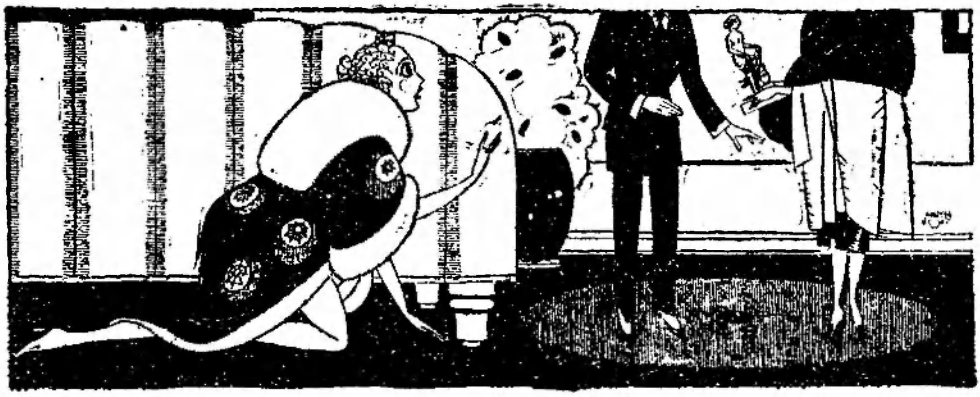
MARRY for fun, and break the rules
That cynics carefully devise:
The world is full-enough of fools
Who play at being wise.

Marry for Love, and keep a wife . . .
But bear in mind that he who lets
Four walls imprison him for life
Deserves quite all he gets!

To a Fiancée

By Mary Carolyn Davies

MAISIE taught me how to kiss
Phyllis, how to woo.
Oh, my blue-eyed, innocent!
Well I know what *that* kiss meant
And I wonder, ill-content,
Who taught *you?*



Venus and Adolphus

A Play in One Act

By Hilliard Booth

THE rising curtain shows the attractive living room of a bachelor apartment in New York City. It is a late afternoon of the present.

ADOLPHUS *sits at the desk struggling with a letter which he finds difficult to write. He is young, well built and rather good-looking, but with a placid exterior that suggests domesticity rather than bachelorhood. The truth of it is he has been struggling to get married for some time.*

The bell rings. ADOLPHUS *rises, goes out through the hall and returns with* JACK, *an exuberant youth of nineteen.*

JACK

Run along and keep your engagement, 'Dolph! I'll stay here and study my Greek Mythology.

ADOLPHUS

I'm not going out.

JACK

Not going out? You had a dinner date with Mary!

ADOLPHUS

Mary broke it.

JACK

Why?

ADOLPHUS

I wish I knew! I was writing your sister when you came in, trying to find out why! Mary's growing indifferent to me, Jack; the next engagement she breaks will be our engagement to be married!

JACK

Mary likes you; it must be your fault! Running around with any—er—

ADOLPHUS

No!

JACK

Well, do you mind dining out, anyway? Greek Mythology requires a lot of concentration.

ADOLPHUS

You can concentrate in the dining room.

JACK

I've asked a friend in to concentrate with me! We want solitude!

ADOLPHUS

You boys can take this room if you prefer. I'd like to commune with the Goddess of Love myself and learn how to keep your sister's love. Question Mary, Jack and find out what I've done to displease her.

JACK

Sure, sure; but to tell the truth, 'Dolph, it isn't a he!

ADOLPHUS

Who isn't a he?

JACK

The friend I'm expecting.

ADOLPHUS

You've asked a *girl* to meet you here?

JACK

Yes—Diana, Goddess of the Hunt! She's a pippin, 'Dolph, one little winner!

ADOLPHUS

Have you been drinking?

JACK

Not yet. *Of course not!*

ADOLPHUS

Do I understand that you have asked an unchaperoned female to come to *my* apartment?

JACK

She's with "The Classy and Classic Statuary" act; I saw her at Proctor's this afternoon, and—

ADOLPHUS

An actress!

JACK

She doesn't act—she doesn't have too! She poses in white, as Diana!

ADOLPHUS

Greek Mythology! Concentration! Solitude! Go on!

JACK

I asked her to dine with me. She can't go to a restaurant because the act goes on at eight-thirty and it's too much work changing into street clothes and back again.

So I suggested she throw on a cloak and take a taxi *here*. We'll cook up something!

ADOLPHUS

I forbid it, do you hear? I positively, absolutely forbid it! Not a word, or I'll see that your sister hears of this! If you ever again—

(He breaks off abruptly as the door bell sounds. JACK, *grinning, darts through into the hall.* ADOLPHUS *starts as a girl's clear laugh is heard.* JACK *returns, followed by* DIANA, *a pretty young girl in a handsome evening cloak.)*

JACK

It's all right, 'Dolph, she's brought a chaperon! Diana, this is Adolphus.

DIANA

I knew Dick wouldn't mind my bringing a friend along!

JACK

'Dolph's crazy to meet her, Di, he just said so.

ADOLPHUS

I said nothing of the sort, and this boy's name is not Dick, but Jack!

DIANA

Why be fussy? Come on in, Vee!

JACK

You *did* say you wanted to cummute with her, 'Dolph, or was it commune? It's Venus, Goddess of Love!

(ADOLPHUS *starts as* VENUS *enters from the hall—a tall, blonde young woman with classic features, and wearing a cloak which conceals her classic form.*)

DIANA

Vee, meet Alonzo!

ADOLPHUS

My name is Adolphus!

DIANA

Say, if you boys'd give us your real names we wouldn't have to have a roll call every time we wanted to say it's a nice night!

VENUS

I didn't have a thing on, so I grabbed my cloak and told Di I'd come along as chaperon. Is that a real bookcase or does the front lift down?

ADOLPHUS

There's nothing to drink in my apartment!

JACK

Come on, Di! We'll go into the dining room and mix the eats!

DIANA

There's many a slip 'twixt the flask and the hip!

(JACK *and* DIANA *go through into the dining room.*)

ADOLPHUS

Meeting you is—er—an unexpected pleasure.

VENUS

Seen the act?

ADOLPHUS

No, but I've heard a great deal about you.

VENUS

Well, you can't believe half you hear!

ADOLPHUS

You rose from the sea at Cyprus.

VENUS

I used to do a diving act, but I never played that town!

ADOLPHUS

Some contend that you're the daughter of Zeus.

VENUS

Nothing doing! My father was Mike Haloran of The Arabian Acrobats! Someone's been stringing you! As I used to say to my husband—

ADOLPHUS

What? You're married?

VENUS

Well, he wasn't exactly my husband! A soubrette dug up a marriage certificate with my husband's name attached that antedated mine by two months. She divorced him and we did a sister act together. But as I used to say to her husband —"A noble nature needs no pedigree."

ADOLPHUS

Take off your cloak, won't you?

VENUS

Want to see my shape, eh?

ADOLPHUS (*freezing*)

I beg pardon?

VENUS

Br-r-r, it's too chilly in here to sit around in imitation plaster! If Here gets wise to Di's being here to-night, things'll warm up some! They're engaged—he plays in the act.

ADOLPHUS

Diana and Hercules! Scandal!

VENUS

That's what I say, and him flirting with the sawed-off girl they cut in half twice a day! Di came here just to devil him! Here come the St. Bernards—P. D. Q!

(DIANA *enters from the dining room, followed by* JACK *bearing a tray with four cocktails.*)

DIANA

Here's the C. O. D.'s!

JACK

Call our doctor!

VENUS

Come On Delirium-tremens!

ADOLPHUS (*as they drink*)

It has *liquor* in it!

JACK

That's what I bought it for, but I've got my doubts!

VENUS

Whew, I can taste the grape juice!

DIANA

Don't hurry the kick—it's coming!

VENUS

Some B. V. D.'s!

DIANA

No knee-lengths about this. I can feel it down to my toes!

JACK

It's athletic, all right!

VENUS

I hope it don't crack the plaster!

JACK

It's brand new plaster, isn't it?

VENUS

Well, you might say it was—er—very slightly worn!

ADOLPHUS (*as his cocktail does a double somersault*)

Vee, tell me your secret, the secret of how to keep a woman's love!

VENUS

Been turned down by your girl? Come home, all is forgiven! This is right in my line! Di, does Here know you're here?

DIANA

I saw him taking down the number of our taxi.

JACK

Bring on your Hercules! Who's afraid! Come along, Di, we'll dish up something!

VENUS

No raw stuff, now!

DIANA

It'll be pickled!

ADOLPHUS

Goddess of Love, reveal all to me!

VENUS

He's been trying to get me to take my cloak off ever since I came in!

JACK

You've got a soused mackerel; what more do you want?

DIANA

All roads lead to Rum!

(JACK *and* DIANA *go through into the dining room.*)

ADOLPHUS

What did he mean by soused mackerel?

VENUS

He was telling me your real name was Mack! What love line have you given your girl?

ADOLPHUS

I've given her candy, flowers, books.

VENUS

Long-distance stuff! How about the close-ups? Ever kiss her?

ADOLPHUS

Yes! I've kissed Mary three times.

VENUS

Three—count 'em—three! Perhaps you didn't get the right neck hold.

ADOLPHUS

Neck hold?

VENUS

Don't you use your hands?

ADOLPHUS

A kiss isn't a wrestling match!

VENUS

Why isn't it? You want your girl to take the count, don't you? Give me number four! Go on, let's see your technique!

(ADOLPHUS *hesitates, then kisses* VENUS *lightly on the cheek.*)

VENUS

Swat the fly! My Gawd, you call that a kiss? Get your teeth into it! (*As* ADOLPHUS *quickly puts the table between them.*) That's just a slang phrase we use in the profession—it means shake it up, go after it, put your heart in it!

ADOLPHUS

I see—when your heart's in your mouth. Mine's generally in my boots.

VENUS

Wake up, Mack! Get wise! No self-respecting girl likes a modest smack! Serve a full portion! Let Vee show you! Put and take!

(*She follows* ADOLPHUS *around the table as she speaks, gets a half-Nelson hold on him, bends his head back and gives him a regular one.* ADOLPHUS *comes to the surface astonished but delighted.*)

ADOLPHUS

Great stuff, Vee! What next?

VENUS

Say, don't forget you're talking to the chaperon! Next you sprinkle the asterisks; then either you ring up a minister or the girl starts a breach-of-promise suit.

(*The bell rings.*)

ADOLPHUS

Round two! Take your corner!

VENUS

Back up! It's Here!

(JACK *runs in from the dining room, followed by* DIANA.)

JACK

Don't let him in, 'Dolph!

ADOLPHUS

Hercules? Certainly I'll let him in! You'll get what's coming to you, Jack!

(ADOLPHUS *goes out.*)

DIANA (*arms about* JACK'S *neck*)

Fight him for love of me, Dick!

JACK

Kiss me again before I die! Bring on your Hercules!

(ADOLPHUS *darts in from the hall, terrified; closes the door behind him.*)

ADOLPHUS

It *isn't* Hercules! It's Mary! Fly, hide, oh, my God!

JACK

Mary? Ha-ha! You'll get what's coming to you, 'Dolph!

VENUS

What kind of a girl'd visit a man in his bachelor apartment!

MARY (*from the hall*)

Open the door, Adolphus!

JACK

Beat it!

(JACK *and* DIANA *disappear quickly into the dining room.* VENUS *drops out of sight behind the lounge.*)

ADOLPHUS

Don't come out from there!

VENUS

Not for the Last Trump!

(MARY *pushes the hall door open and enters. She is an attractive and refined young woman in a street suit. She carries a small package.*)

MARY

I knew my visit would upset you, 'Dolph, it's so daring! But I didn't think you'd refuse to admit me!

ADOLPHUS

I know what you've come for—to break our engagement!

MARY

You're almost a mind reader!

ADOLPHUS

Why did you break our dinner date?

MARY

'Dolph, I'll be frank with you—you're too good! You don't drink, you don't swear, you don't smoke, girls frighten you and even art shocks you!

I'm sure you won't *want* to marry me after my coming here alone! I thought I'd test you, and to help the test I've brought you a present. Do you think you can live in the same apartment with Venus?

(*She unwraps the package as she speaks and reveals a small copy in plaster of the Venus of Cnidus.*)

ADOLPHUS

No, no, not Venus!

MARY

I knew it!

(*Overcome by curiosity* VENUS *looks out from behind the lounge. She sees the statuette with a look of amazement, changing to indignation. She rises to view forgetful of everything but her righteous anger.*)

VENUS

My Gawd, they've taken to making statues of me! Look!

(*She throws off her cloak and assumes the pose of the Venus of Cnidus. Her body, in white tights and covered with white paint, is an excellent imitation of plaster.*)

MARY

Adolphus!

ADOLPHUS (*with the courage of despair*)

Allow me—Venus, Goddess of Love! Vee, this is Mary.

VENUS

Where did you get that statue? T' think they're making statues of me just like they did of Mutt and Jeff and Charley Chaplin! Who's the man who made 'em?

ADOLPHUS

A Greek by the name of Praxiteles. They're sold everywhere.

VENUS

One of them damn' Greeks! And

Praxiteles pushed hard for first place—what?

MARY

You're a danger to Jack's morals! Oh, 'Dolph! You don't suppose those girls have taken Jack home with them? If I only knew he were where he belongs!

(*She starts out through the hall. The phone rings.* ADOLPHUS *answers it.*)

ADOLPHUS

Hello. . . . Here met Jack at the door? They're taking Jack to the hospital? Out in a few days? Snappy work! Give Here my blessing! (*He hangs up the receiver and calls.*) It's all right, Mary!

(MARY *re-enters from the hall.*)

MARY

Jack?

ADOLPHUS

Yes, he's where he belongs! Now you break our engagement and go as soon as I kiss you good-by.

(*He gets a half-Nelson hold on* MARY, *bends her head back and gives her an attaboy-get-wise full portion put-and-take kiss of the Haloran variety with some inspired improvements of his own. The kiss is a revelation to both of them.*)

MARY

'Dolph! . . . Oh, 'Dolph! . . . *Do you know what I'm going to do?*

ADOLPHUS

Start a breach-of-promise suit?

MARY

I'm going to reform you—by marriage! I'm going to *marry* you! ADOLPHUS (*starting for the telephone*)

This is where I ring up the minister!

MARY

Not yet!

ADOLPHUS

That's right; we do something else first!

MARY

What?

ADOLPHUS

Sprinkle the asterisks!

(*He takes her in his arms.*)

CURTAIN

An old man thinks of the sins he has committed in his happy past, and a young man thinks of the sins he means to commit in his delightful future.

Clipping Pussy's Claws

By Victoria Galland

Another woman is usually responsible for a girl's first indiscretion

IT was not long after the death of Muriel's mother that Ezra Nevins took unto himself a second wife. He was in the winter of his days, and, as so frequently happens to age, the spark of desire, long dormant, flared into flame for a brief moment, before it flickered into ultimate and final extinction.

His wealth made it easy for him to obtain a wife, and, as far as physical beauty was concerned, he was, indeed, fortunate. For Sybil, the girl whom he married, was strikingly beautiful. She was a divorcee of twenty-five, fascinating in a dark, flamboyant way, passionate of mien and apparently constrained of manner. She married him, most naturally, for his money.

Muriel, who was eighteen, and exquisitely lovely after her own particular type, disliked Sybil instinctively. Sybil reminded her of a sphinx, of a great velvet-pawed cat that slinks in and out, purring its way into one's graces only to turn suddenly and to scratch—to scratch quite horribly.

But because it was politic, Muriel pretended to like her youthful stepmother. It pleased her father, and when her father was pleased, it meant new dresses and hats and spending money for Muriel.

As cordially as Muriel disliked Sybil, however, did Sybil dislike Muriel. Indeed, she hated her. To begin with, Muriel was guilty of the sin of sins: she was, at once, both younger and more beautiful than Sybil.

Muriel was the prototype of that delicious frailty that is the envy of all women who do not possess it. She was a little thing, with fair, brown hair and eyes of sapphire, set quaintly far apart in her oval, piquant face.

Her body was delicately fashioned. She had little hands and feet; she was slim of waist; and smooth and white and rosy as to skin. Really, in a demure, faery way, quite a darling!

That was not the only reason why Sybil disliked her. There was another reason: Muriel was her father's daughter.

When he died, Muriel would inherit the greater part of his wealth. Old Nevins had made no bones about it; he had told Sybil quite frankly the terms of the last will and testament that he intended to make, and Sybil knew that in some things her aged husband was immovable.

The bond between father and daughter was deep-rooted, although

there was never any outward manifestation of it. But for all that, Sybil reflected, there are few bonds in this world that cannot be severed.

It was with the twofold purpose of injuring this beautiful girl whom she hated, and of adding unto herself all of her husband's money, that Sybil determined, in some way, to snap the bond that existed between Nevins and his daughter.

But how? Often, as she lay on the chaise longue in her perfectly appointed boudoir in the beautiful suburban house, just outside of New York, her clever, feline brain would cogitate upon this problem. And presently she was rewarded. An idea came to her.

She smiled to herself—a slow, catlike smile, and, getting up, she went to her writing table and dashed off a note to her cousin—one, Tobey Furle—who lived in New York, asking him if he would not like to come out to the suburb for the week-end. Then, she went in search of Muriel.

She found her in her room, dressing. Scantily attired, she was standing in front of her dressing table, brushing her mass of soft, silky hair.

"What a wonderful figure you have, Muriel!" Sybil exclaimed admiringly. "And such white, white skin! Some man is going to be awfully, awfully lucky one of these days!" And she laughed sweetly.

"By the way, dear, I've invited Tobey for the week-end. I've told you so much about him, and I do so want you to meet him. I've often wondered what your ideas are about a good-looking man!"

Despite herself, Muriel was flattered. "I'll tell you exactly what I think of him, Sybil—even though he is your cousin!"

"That's right, dear." She let a moment elapse. She sat down on the edge of Muriel's bed and regarded her enviously. "I'm so glad, Muriel, that you and I are friends. You know, dear, on your account I rather dreaded marrying your father. I hated the idea of being a stepmother. It sounds so dreadful, doesn't it?

"And it's turned out so splendidly! We are more like sisters! And you know, dear—it's funny—the way I feel towards you. But if I were in great trouble, Muriel, I think I would come and confide in you before anyone else in the whole world."

"Would you really, Sybil?" Muriel wondered if she had not misjudged Sybil.

"I would—really." She rose and moved to the girl's side. "You're such a tender little person—and so sympathetic!" She laughed again, and her eyes came to rest upon Muriel's soft, white breast. "You know, dear, really—you're positively adorable! I wonder how long it will be before some man runs off with you?"

"Oh, years and years, Sybil. I haven't even thought of marrying." She completed arranging her hair;

Muriel, he decided he was in love with her. And to be in love, as Tobey understood it, was to experience a desire greater than he had experienced before!

And just looking at Muriel produced that effect upon him. Her mouth — her figure — her white throat! By evening, he was insanely in love with her.

"Why are there such people as you in the world?" he asked her, when Sybil left them alone together after dinner. "You exist merely to torture people—like me. Or send them mad with happiness if—if—well, if you liked them enough, I suppose!"

She only half understood him. But she liked the half that she did understand. "You mean," she said, "you mean—"

"I mean," he returned quickly, moving a little closer to her on the sofa on which they sat, "I mean that you're the loveliest person I ever saw, and even if you're positively furious with me and never speak to me again, I've just got to kiss you!"

Which awoke the Eve within her.

"Of course I'd be furious with you if—if you did anything like that," she told him with mock seriousness, "but,"—and a smile quirked the corners of her soft crimson mouth, "I might—forgive you!"

"Oh, you darling! You perfect, wonderful girl!" He tilted her head back against his arm, and stooping, tasted the delight of her moist, half-parted lips.

He would have kissed her many times, for the fragrance of her mouth intoxicated him with an unappeasable desire for more, but she put him from her. She, too, had felt the thrill, but with it had come a sense of danger.

"That," she said with a tiny sigh, "is enough—and infinitely more than you deserve, considering that I've known you only a—a minute or two, Tobey!"

In the weeks that followed, Muriel saw a great deal of Tobey Furle. She wondered, at times, if she were in love with him. She decided she was not. Still, she permitted him to kiss her and caress her, because—girllike—she yearned to be kissed and caressed.

And, moreover, there was no harm in it. She and Sybil would laugh about kisses! She did not let other men, whom she knew, kiss her, because—well, because they none of them attracted her, the way Tobey attracted her.

Then, too, Tobey was always there—at the house. He spent nearly every week-end there. She had come to feel a certain intimacy growing up between them. For instance, in the mornings, Tobey would often come and knock at her door, and then enter—to wake her up. She liked him to do that. She liked it when he sat on the edge of her bed and caressed her white throat and kissed her shoulders.

And gradually, during those weeks, Muriel felt all dislike for Sybil pass from her. Sybil was so dear and kind and confiding! She

confided everything in Muriel. She told her about her growing infatuation for Wilfred Hollister.

And once, Hollister had come out to the suburb for lunch. Mr. Nevins had been away, of course. But Muriel had been there. And she sympathized in a way with Sybil. She could quite understand what it was to be married to a man so much older than oneself, and care for another man—like Wilfred.

Especially, when Wilfred was what he was—so good-looking and amusing and wonderful.

And he really was all those things; there was no question about it. Whether or not he was in love with Sybil, Muriel, of course, could not know. But she imagined he was. So did Sybil.

When Christmas came, Sybil spent a great deal of Muriel's father's money on Muriel. She bought her several expensive presents. Muriel, who was on a very small allowance, could not go out into the marts of beautiful things and buy expensive presents for Sybil.

But, instead, she bought pieces of silk and chiffon and ribbon, and expended many hours in making with her own hands dainty little garments, rosebudded and beflowered garters, and an exquisite chemise of heavy chiffon and rich filet lace.

Sybil evidently appreciated those beautiful, handmade delights which were her Christmas present from Muriel. She raved over them.

"And to think you made them all yourself, Muriel dear!" She was touched; her voice dropped low with emotion. She hugged the girl, and kissed her, and then to cement Muriel's faith in her, she confided an engagement she had the following evening with Wilfred in New York; they were to dine together and go to a theater.

It was quite safe as far as Muriel's father was concerned, for it was Tuesday, and Mr. Nevins always spent Tuesday night at his club.

The following week-end, which embraced New Year's eve, Tobey Furle spent at the Nevins' house. New Year's eve fell on Sunday. The Nevins gave a dinner party to a number of Ezra's club friends. Sybil had to be there, of course, to play her role of hostess.

But Tobey and Muriel escapel, and went to an ice skating party given under the auspices of the Country Club.

It was a clear, moonlight night, intensely cold. The small lake, a sheen of bluish-green and yellow beneath the moon and rows of lanterns, gleamed like some lovely opalescent jewel in a setting of virgin snow and black pines.

They skated until nearly midnight. They saw the New Year in in the supper room of the clubhouse. Afterwards, there was dancing. But Tobey and Muriel and a few others returned to the lake to dance there on the ice.

They could hear faintly the music from the jazz orchestra, and it was more romantic, dancing on the breast of that jewel lake, beneath the moon.

But presently, Muriel began to complain of the cold. Her feet felt frozen! She couldn't dance any more. But not until she stopped dancing did she realize how excruciating was the pain.

"Oh, Tobey—my feet! I just can't walk!"

He picked her up in his arms and carried her to the garage, where the roadster was parked. He put her inside, and drove her home. On the way, she cried—just a little.

It was late—past two—when Tobey pulled up outside the Nevins' house. He drove into the garage. Muriel got out and limped towards the side door. They entered, and found the house in darkness.

"You poor little thing!" he murmured softly, and picking her up, as he might have picked up a child, he carried her upstairs to her room.

"I wonder if my feet are frostbitten!" she said tragically, as she slipped out of her heavy coat and threw aside her woolen Tam.

Tobey wondered, too. He sat her down and took off her shoes and stockings. "Poor little feet!" he breathed, stooping and k i s s i n g them. They were icy cold, but very, very white. Their very coldness sent a shiver of delight through him.

"Oh, don't—don't do that, Tobey! It hurts—just to touch them!"

Tobey knew then that her feet were not frostbitten, but merely cold. Still, he pretended to be worried. He said he felt that something should be done; he didn't know what!

She sent him out of the room, while she disrobed. He said good night to her, and went into his room, which was directly across the hall. He undressed. Then, in dressing robe and slippers, he returned to her door and knocked. She bade him enter, and as he did so, she reached for a pale, rose-chiffon négligée and drew it over her filmy orchid-colored pajamas. She was sitting on a couch at the foot of her bed.

"How are the little feet?" he asked, as he came towards her.

She looked up at him, and a smile came to dissipate the little frown that knitted her brow. "I think they are getting better, Tobey. But they still hurt like the dickens!"

He came and knelt before her. He stooped and took one little foot in his hands. He caressed it softly. And then he was kissing it. She permitted him without protest.

The cold had commenced to thaw, and through her, from her feet to her head, there coursed the most delicious tingling sensation which the warmth of his lips enhanced. In a few minutes the pain had given way to a subtle pleasure.

"Oh, Tobey! Oh, Tobey dear!" she murmured between little sighs of ecstasy. Her hands went forth and stroked his head; they caressed his neck; they drew him to her.

She felt her whole being glowing with warmth and with an overwhelming desire. All physical coldness had left her; it was as though she were being carried away on a

great wave of happiness, of ethereal delight.

And with Tobey, it was the same. She became irresistible to him. He felt the glow of her, the new warmth that radiated from the soft white of her fragrant throat. Her supple body yielded to him, and, in an instant, their lips clung together in an intoxication of youthful passion.

"Tobey — Tobey — you mustn't! You m-mustn't!" she breathed between his devastating kisses. But she did not put him from her. A wondrous power, greater than her, rendered impotent her will, and urged her to give herself over to the rapture of the moment.

But their happiness was brief. Muriel was brought from the unreality of ecstasy by the sharp rapping on the door outside.

"Tobey!" she gasped in terror, struggling from his embrace.

He sprang from her, as the door opened and Sybil came in. She was more sphinxlike than Muriel had ever seen her. There was no tenderness or kindness in the expression of her face. It was masked and cold and set. Her eyes were hard and condemning. She stood for a moment, watching their confusion, taking in the details of the scene—Muriel's flushed cheeks, Tobey's embarrassment.

"Really, Muriel," she said icily, "this is a bit too much! I did not think it of you!" She laughed mirthlessly, and turning, she left the room.

Tobey and Muriel regarded each other in utter stupefaction.

"Go!" she said to him, tears starting from her eyes. "Go, Tobey—hurry!" She heard Sybil's voice down the hall; she was talking to Muriel's father.

Had there been any manliness in Tobey, he would have stayed where he was, and aided Muriel in the scene that was to follow. But all Tobey felt was fear.

"I'll go," he said, and he hastened from her room to his.

A moment later, Sybil returned, followed by her husband. There was the same catlike expression about Sybil's mouth, the same sly light in her eyes. She addressed her remarks to Nevins; she put the worst possible complexion on the matter.

"Of course, she's your daughter and not mine," she smirked. "But I'm not accustomed to being subjected to such conduct, and I won't stand for it! Not in my house!

"After all there is a line to be drawn somewhere, and I refuse positively to countenance such behavior! It's indecent!

"A girl of her age! I don't want to see her any more, Ezra—and I refuse—absolutely—to live under the same roof with her. It's up to you—whichever you prefer—me or that wretched little hussy!" She worked herself up in an indignant rage; she went on and on, feeling ever more and more righteous in her wrath.

Nevins, of course, sided with his

wife. Together they stormed at Muriel. They denounced her and insulted her. Ezra bellowed forth quotations from the Bible that had to do with a daughter who brings shame upon her father's house.

"To-morrow morning, you will get out," he concluded. "I will provide you with an allowance, so you won't starve. Then you can go your own way, and conduct your illicit affairs elsewhere! To think—a daughter of mine! Oh, the shame—the shame!"

After they had left her, and silence had fallen upon the house, Muriel sat for a long time—thinking. She felt keenly the humiliation and the shame of it all; and for a few minutes she hated herself.

Why had she let herself be swept away by mere desire? She felt s o r e l y conscience-stricken. Then she thought of Sybil, and every vestige of her erstwhile dislike returned to her. So often had they talked together of love, of kisses; and always had Sybil spoken lightly of morals. Muriel had done wrong—yes; but surely Sybil, after all her protestation of friendship, should have stood by her!

She did not understand it. She could not know, naturally, that Sybil had deliberately set out to awaken desire in her, and had placed the good-looking Tobey there to tempt her, and had waited for just such an occurrence as had happened.

She could not know that, but she did know that she hated Sybil—more even than she hated Tobey. Presently she switched out the light and got into bed to sob herself to sleep.

The following morning, there was another scene between Muriel and her father. She found his attitude unchanged. She was to go, and not return.

He provided her with an ungenerous allowance that was to do her for a month. If she sent him her address, he would continue sending her a like sum each month.

"But understand," he added, "that I no longer regard you as a daughter of mine!"

It was a miserable, broken-spirited Muriel who arrived, later that day, in New York. She decided to come to New York, because there was nowhere else she could think of. She knew no one in the great city, but that didn't matter.

She searched and found a cheap boarding house, where she engaged a room. It was very lonely and desolate.

She dined by herself in the cheerless dining room among a gathering of drab, commonplace people. And after dinner, she went up to her room—a dreadful room.

She went to bed early, but before she slept she made up her mind to do something. She would work. She thought vaguely of the stage. . . .

And she kept to her decision. That she did not succeed, makes no difference. Her decision provided her with something to do, an aim in life. And during the remainder of

that lonely winter, she pestered theatrical agents.

She received from them half promises and hopes, so that her days never seemed futile. Girls, she knew, did not get theatrical jobs thrust at them; it took time and perseverance.

Then, early in the spring, quite accidentally, she ran across Wilfred Hollister. They bumped into each other at Times Square.

"Well, well, well!" he greeted her. "And of all people in the world! Little Muriel Nevins!" He shook her warmly by the hand. "And how's everybody? Your father and —er—Mrs. Nevins?"

She looked at him in surprise. "They are all right, thank you," she managed. "Haven't you seen Sybil lately?"

He laughed and shook his head. "Why — er — no, not for ever so long!"

He asked her where she was going; he suggested that they dine together. And Muriel was quick to accept.

She had only met Hollister once before, but she had liked him. And she was curious to know why Hollister had not seen Sybil lately.

But over dinner, Muriel found out nothing about Hollister and Sybil. He merely reiterated that he had not seen her. His tone suggested that he was not interested in discussing her. He preferred, instead, to talk of Muriel. He wanted to know all about her. What was she doing in New York?

She told him. And because he was sympathetic, she detailed the struggle she was making against theatrical agents and producers.

"And do you want so very, very much to be an actress?" he queried.

"I don't imagine I shall ever be a really great actress," she returned. "But the stage rather fascinates me, and I hate doing nothing. Life gets so boring—unless—unless—"

"Unless what?" he pressed her.

"Unless—well, if a girl marries and has a home and all that—you know what I mean."

He smiled. "And you would prefer being someone's dear little wife than being everybody's actress?"

She admitted that she would. And then they both laughed because they were being so serious.

Now springtime is ever dangerous to the hearts of girls and men. There is something in the air that makes love extremely perilous. And it proved no exception with those two.

Within a month, Muriel discovered that she was very much in love; that her aim in life had miraculously changed from histrionic ambitions to far, far loftier ones.

They saw each other frequently. He had a car in which he took her out into the country. They dined together. It came to a pass where no day went by without their meeting.

And one evening, as they were motoring, he stopped the car in a beauteous roadway that was a

patchwork of shadows and moonlight.

"Muriel," he said, and his hands left the wheel to possess themselves of hers, "I don't think I can go through life any longer without you. And I don't want to. You know I love you. And I've got enough money to make life for you quite beautiful. Tell me that you love me. Muriel, darling—my little Muriel—tell me you will marry me!"

Presently, they were talking of time. When were they to be married?

"Right away," he urged. "In a week, Muriel?"

She laughed at his eagerness. "In a month, dear," she promised.

Now because Wilfred Hollister was a personage of considerable importance both socially and in the realm of law, the news of his engagement to Muriel Nevins crept into the newspapers. It was in the order of things that it should be so.

And two days later, the maid, who "did" the rooms so poorly in that cheap boarding house, where Muriel still lived, came to tell her that there was a lady in the parlor waiting to see her.

It was Sybil. Muriel was surprised to see her. Sybil was her most sphinxlike self. She came at once to the purpose of her visit.

"I understand," she said, while a self-satisfied smile curled her lips, "that you are engaged to Mr. Hollister."

"What if I am?" Muriel demanded.

"Only this—dear," Sybil went on with assumed sweetness. "I don't want it. It displeases me that you should marry Wil—Mr. Hollister. We won't discuss it—my reasons, I mean. I've only come to tell you that I want to learn that the engagement is broken—say, by tomorrow noon. Or otherwise—well, I will take steps to break it myself!"

"You—you wouldn't dare!" Muriel burst out. She guessed, of course, at what Sybil had in mind.

"Wouldn't I? My dear Muriel, I can assure you that I would not hesitate to go myself to Mr. Hollister and have a little talk with him. It's all so simple. You see, I know Mr. Hollister, and I'm quite sure he would not want to marry a girl who—who—well, need I say more?"

And that terminated the interview. Sybil left, and Muriel, terrified, went up to her room, inwardly trembling with fear, her dream castle seemingly crumbling, in a few short hours to fall in ruins about her.

She did not know what to do. She knew that Sybil would not hesitate to go to Wilfred and to tell him; and her version of the story would be garbled and colored so that Wilfred's love for her would be turned into hatred.

Then what to do? She loved him; the idea of giving him up made her heart freeze within her. Suppose she went to him and told him herself. She pondered over the idea.

She pictured what would happen. She saw Wilfred's eyes narrow and

grow hard. She heard his voice—sans tenderness, telling her that he was sorry, but—well, he couldn't marry her!

She lunched alone. The afternoon hours dragged by. Muriel was to dine with Wilfred at seven; he was to call for her. But she could not face him—not there, having him call for her. She would go to his place. Somehow, she would tell him. If he loved her as much as he said he did, perhaps he would forgive her.

It was a little after five when Muriel rang the bell of his apartment. His servant came to the door. He told Muriel that Mr. Holister had not yet returned from the office.

"I'll come in, then," she said. "I'll wait."

The man showed her into Wilfred's living room. It was luxuriously furnished. She sat down on the deep-cushioned divan, and for a long time she thought. She pictured over again the scene that would take place between them.

She saw his eyes—condemning; his voice that would lash her like a whip. No, she decided, she could not. She could not. She would just slip out of his life—forever. She would live on—lonely and unloved—with the memory of him.

She got up and went to his desk. She would leave him a brief note, saying that she had discovered that she did not really love him, that their engagement was at an end.

She looked about for writing paper. There was none on the desk.

She opened one of the desk drawers. In it were a miscellany of letters and papers. She was about to close it again, when her gaze was attracted by a circlet of rose-colored silk. She recognized it at once as one of a pair of garters which she had made and designed for Sybil the Christmas before. A little gasp escaped her lips. She took it from the drawer and examined it closely to make sure it was of her own making. Yes, there was no doubt about it. She closed the drawer, as the door opened and Wilfred came in.

He was surprised to see her. His expression asked why she was there.

"I—I was just passing, and—and I thought you would have just returned from the office," she proffered explanation. "And I was going. I was going to leave you a note saying—I—I love you!"

His mouth wreathed into a smile. He came towards her. He took her hands. One of them was closed over the circlet of silk. He opened it—and saw. And he laughed—a trifle uncomfortably.

"Wilfred," she said, and her voice was reproachful, "I just happened to come across it. Why—why—"

He led her to the divan where they sat down. "My dear little girl," he began. "There is really nothing to get upset about. I don't profess to be an angel, and men—well, nearly all men have affairs."

"Did you have an affair with the girl who owned this garter?" she asked with wide-eyed innocence.

He laughed again. "I suppose

you would call it an affair. There isn't any other word for it. But that was months ago—before I fell in love with you."

"But did you love her, Wilfred?"

"Oh, I didn't really love her. She appealed to me. We appealed to each other. It was a mad infatuation that lasted a very short time."

"I see," she said slowly. "I see!"

"And now tell me you forgive me, dearest. I haven't been an angel in the past—but I promise I'll be ever, ever so good—after we're married. Please—kiss me and say I'm forgiven!"

He held open his arms to her, but she ignored them. She got up and moved from him. Unobserved, she slipped the garter in the bosom of her dress, while a wild joy surged over her. She thought of her sphinxlike stepmother.

In the morning, she would see her. Her words would be as plain as Sybil's had been. She would show her the garter. She would ask Sybil what Muriel's father would think if Muriel sent it to him with a few carefully chosen words. And that, Muriel decided, would clip the claws of the cat so that never again would she be able to scratch—at least, not Muriel!

Diagnosed

By Katherine Negley

ROY'S head throbbed as if with sick headache, his throat felt as if he had the mumps, he could hardly get his breath, his heart beat as if he were suffering with indigestion or heart trouble, his knees trembled as if with ague, and he felt hot and feverish, but he had none of these diseases.

He was sixteen, Mabel was his best girl. He had just kissed her for the first time.

Heart of a Slave

By James Perley Hughes

Fair as a lily, she possessed all its grace and purity and sought only to give of her love

CHINA and her mystic lure were calling to John Hilton as they had called to Marco Polo. He was satiated with the humdrum life of a New England village, where fate had cast his lot, and when opportunity knocked and suggested that he go out to Wu Chung for the Asiatic Trading Companies, Ltd., he accepted with alacrity.

It was through the good graces of Stanton Thompson that he was given the chance to embark in foreign trade, so he listened with tolerance to the advice that the elder man heaped upon him.

"Wu Chung is the jumping-off place," Thompson informed him, "what they call an 'out port' in China, which means that it is very much inland. Still, it is an excellent place to study the Chinese and their ways. Likewise it is one of the very best spots in the world to save money, for the simple reason that you can't spend it there. Except, of course, for the three old friends whom we have ever with us, wine, women and—"

"Oh, yes, of course," Hilton interrupted, "but remember I have Anita."

Thompson was a good friend and a wise one. He said nothing.

Anita received the announcement with coolness. They had been engaged since that mad furor of war had sent couples into each other's arms, who might have remained good and lifelong friends instead of becoming strangers—if not enemies.

"You can't expect me to wait forever." There was a note of petulance in her voice. "I've lost lots of good times waiting for you already and now you are going to the other side of the world and heaven knows when you'll come back."

"But dear," he pleaded, "here is a chance for me to get a start that would be impossible in this sleepy little town and then—"

"If you'll send me some lovely silks and jade and ivory," she saw some advantages in his going, "then it won't be so hard."

Anita did not give back his ring. It was too nice a one and besides, she told herself, she had earned it waiting all these years when Tom Chatterton, who owned a drug store, had just been begging her to marry him.

The journey to Wu Chung was a long one. Sailing from San Francisco, after several balmy days upon a tropic sea, he entered the palm-circled harbor of Honolulu. A

day ashore with the dusky inhabitants encircling his neck with lei wreaths, gave him his first taste for that disregard for Occidental conventionalities that is one of the most potent lures of the Far East.

Next, he saw Yokohama with its gay throngs of tourists and the even gayer crowds of American and European residents. It was there that he discovered that the Orient is a man's world. Women play a part, to be sure, but it is screened from the eyes of the many. This applies to both native and foreign life, the American and European women live quietly on the Bluff, while their husbands take part in the gay gatherings at the Grand and Oriental Hotels.

Then came Kobe, Shanghai and finally Hongkong, the end of his journey on the trans-Pacific liner. Next he took a steamer for Canton and there again transferred to a smaller craft to ascend the West River.

As this vessel rounded the bend in the river below Wu Chung, Hilton's stout heart sank just a little. A low, flat town with its never ending tile roofs, pierced here and there with a temple and to the West a stately pagoda.

Clinton Hawkins, whom Hilton was relieving as the local agent for the Asiatic Trading Companies, greeted him effusively as he came down the gang plank.

"I never saw you before, but Lord love, I never was so glad to see a body in my life," he bubbled, gripping the new arrival's hand with unassumed warmth, "You see I'm going home to be married and I'm all in a flutter. Come up to the club and have a nip and I'll see that your plunder is taken care of fy tee."

Followed an eruption of Chinese that galvanized into strenous activity a score of coolies that had been basking in the tropic sunshine.

Hilton stepped into a sedan chair, for the streets of Wu Chung are too narrow and winding and far too unevenly paved for the use of a 'rickshaw, and in a few minutes was deposited before a low wide building with huge verandas on which four men in spotless linen or pongee were sipping cool drinks while China boys ministered to their wants.

"Hail, hail! the gang's all here," bellowed Hawkins, as he joined the quartet and then to his companion, "You'll have the pleasure of meeting the entire club the first hour of your arrival. You are already a member, as the company takes care of that. Gentlemen, permit me to present my successor, Mr. Hilton."

Ensued a personal introduction to each of the quartet. There was Chumleigh, representing a powerful British concern; DeVieux, who had charge of the interests of a French exporting house; Van Zandt, a great blond Dutchman, who had been in the Orient more years than he cared to remember for a Holland trading company, and Parsons, the inevitable representative of the Standard Oil Company without which no trading port in China is complete.

"There, you've met the entire

European population of Wu Chung," Parsons announced at the conclusion of the ceremony, "except of course the Joss men, but the Hong men and the Joss men never meet, you know, except on the Fourth of July and Christmas."

"The Fifteenth of July and Christmas," supplemented DeVieux.

Van Zandt was about to speak, when Parsons interrupted.

"Except on our several national holidays and Christmas," he explained, "the missionaries and the mercantile sets do not mingle. It isn't pukah."

Hilton found them a companionable lot, full of good feeling and seriously welcoming him into their midst. True they looked at the world from a more cosmopolitan angle than he, but he had been away from home enough to realize that nowhere is provincialism more deeply rooted than among his own kith and kin.

During the dinner that followed, plans were laid for all hands to go down to the river the next morning to bid Hawkins bon voyage. The departing agent had hurriedly explained his office routine to his successor and excused himself at the conclusion of the meal.

"I generally dine at home," he explained to Hilton, "but this is a sort of last supper, you know."

As he left, the four looked at each other knowingly and Parsons winked at Chumleigh.

"I rather fancy he expects her to kick up a deuce of a row," the Englishman ventured, puffing great rings of smoke from his pipe and fixing his eyes upon the widening circles.

"He should be more diplomatic. All of these things can be arranged with delicacy," DeVieux commented, as he lighted another cigarette.

"Pay them vell and den kick 'em oudt is my system," growled Van Zandt, knocking the ashes from his calibash.

Hilton said nothing. He sensed that questions would be ill advised at that time.

At the dock the following morning, they found Hawkins with a weeping Chinese girl clinging to his arm. She was dressed in the native costume with dainty trousers of the palest lavender, while her jacket was so lavishly covered with embroidery that its color was suggested rather than apparent.

Hilton was struck with the girl's fragile loveliness in spite of her tear-stained face. She was like a doll, strangely beautiful with skin of delicate cream and great dark eyes that, with their half-restrained tears, seemed wonderous deep.

She pleaded in a sweet, small voice that made music of the sing-song dialect of Wu Chung.

Hawkins answered in her own tongue, but his jaw was set and his lips compressed when not actually speaking. On the arrival of the foreigners, the girl shrank timidly away.

"I'm awfully sorry that she had to start something right here," Hawkins apologized, speaking to the

others and ignoring Hilton. "You know how it is. She wants to go along, but Lord love me, I can't take her to America and if I let her go as far as Hongkong, you know what would happen to her there."

"I giff you five hundret taels for her right now," offered Van Zandt, "I'm joost aboudt to kick out dot gell of mine anyvays."

"Oh, I couldn't do that," muttered Hawkins, as the girl behind him gave a half-articulate cry.

"Und vhy nodt me," the Dutchman bristled belligerently.

"You're all right, Heine, but you don't understand. San Mei is an awfully nice little girl and—"

"Dey're all alike," Van Zandt broke in, but the whistle of the steamer sent the coolies to hurrying Hawkins' baggage aboard.

San Mei did what she had never done before. She interrupted a conversation between white men. Pleadingly she looked into the eyes of the departing American and clung to his arm as she begged in low sobbing tones.

Hilton could not understand the words, but their meaning was plain to all. The man's replies were likewise emphatically apparent.

Another blast from the steamer and Hawkins, tearing the girl from his arm, hurried up the gang plank, which was hastily drawn aboard. With a heart-broken cry, San Mei dashed across the wharf. She made a desperate leap, caught a rope that was being drawn in, and was dragged over the side.

As the vessel swung into the stream, those on the dock could see her rush to the upper deck and hysterically throw her arms around Hawkins' neck. This time he did not cast her off.

"Now he has the merry little parting to do all over again," Chumleigh commented.

"Diplomacy would have avoiled all that," was DeVieux's verdict.

"Should have sold her to me. I'd show her," growled Van Zandt.

It was not until Parsons and Hilton were alone that the newcomer voiced his interest in San Mei's tragic story.

"Slave girl," was the laconic explanation, as they took their seats on the clubhouse veranda, "Hawkins bought her and then she fell in love with him. Bad business—very."

"I must be terribly dull," John blurted, "but I thought that slavery was a thing of the past."

"Well America was the last of the Christian nations," the Standard Oil man replied, "but Lincoln was not president of the world when he signed the emancipation proclamation.

"Old Abe was pretty well known, but out here in China they haven't heard of him yet. Some of the natives who have studied English have a sneaking suspicion that George Washington was a regular tai pan, but they have a big surprise in store for them when they hear of Lincoln."

"And is this a—er—general practice?"

"General and hallowed with the

approbation of countless centuries," Parsons allowed himself just the ghost of a smile. "Of course Van Zandt is rather notorious, but he's an exception in many ways. He's willing to give almost any sum for a pretty one, but he does not keep them very long. Rather an expensive hobby I'd say, unless he gets a fair price when he disposes of them."

"Do you mean to tell me that he buys and sells these girls—commercially," gasped Hilton in a tone that plainly indicated his astonishment.

"Well you might put it that way," the other admitted, "but old Heine would not like it if you used such precise language."

The newcomer knitted his brows as he contemplated an institution, new to him, but as old as ancient Cathay. Of New England stock, he was an abolitionist by tradition, but he had never looked forward to a time when he would face a condition rather than a theory.

On several occasions during the next six weeks, Hilton tried to discuss the question with the other members of the club, but they studiously avoided direct statement and soon gave him to understand that it was a subject that they wished to avoid.

He had taken over Hawkins' quarters, where he had set up his household goods and employed a house boy, a cook and a coolie. The other men, likewise lived in separate homes, but met daily at the club.

"I've got to get another house boy," he told Chumleigh one evening, for they were indulging in the usual small talk of the East, where servants prove to be one of the favorite topics.

"Vhy don't you get a gell," Van Zandt broke in with his usual bluntness, "I'm going to get a new vun right away quick. My cook he rundt avay mit the last vun und I loose seven hundredt taels."

"The only girl I want is one back home." Hilton was still loyal to Anita, although her letters were few and far between.

"Don't like the yellow vuns, eh?"

"No."

"Maybe not now, but you vatch oudt—"

"But, old chap, there's nothing wrong in getting a girl for your house work," Chumleigh interjected, casting a meaning look at DeVieux. "You'd really be doing a lot of good, taking her from wretched poverty and keeping her from God knows what."

"But I—"

"My dear monsieur," DeVieux broke in, returning the Englishman's glance, "our British friend is quite right. You'd be doing Christian charity to save a girl that might be sold into the worst kind of conditions."

"Why don't the missionaries do something—they're here for that purpose, aren't they," the American turned to Chumleigh.

"They are but—well even a missionary's purse has its limits," and he emitted a laugh that was typically Anglo-Saxon. "Really, old thing, at

times you are—are most diverting."

Hilton was about to retort when a party of Chinese came up the bamboo shaded walk. At the head strode a man attired in dark blue silk, his cap bearing a button of red cord. He was a compradore of standing in the little community.

Behind him was a shabby Chinese followed by a woman in ragged attire, leading a girl of not more than seventeen. She, however, was dressed in the richest of silks, her slender limbs attired in pink of the faintest coral shade, while her little jacket was flower-embroidered in the extravagance of the Orient. Her pretty slippers were likewise covered with needlework.

She was that lily type of beauty of which the Chinese poets have sung for ages without doing their subject justice.

The compradore left the party, ascending the veranda steps and approaching Van Zandt.

"I catchee littie gell may be you likee number one," he began, bowing low before the huge Hollander, "she velly well educated—specially fol foleign gentlemans—maybe you like look see this time."

"Bring her up," commanded the Dutchman, laying aside his huge pipe, "I takee look see—maybe I buy—no can tell."

The compradore uttered a command and the woman led the shrinking girl up the veranda steps and, with a rude shove, pushed her before Van Zandt. The Hollander studied her appraisingly. He noted her soft dark eyes, her creamy complexion with its pink touched cheeks, her slim dainty figure.

"How much for dis vun?"

"She velly fine littie gell—specially educated—can do singsong—speak itty-bitty pidgen talk," the compradore enumerated what he regarded as good selling points. "She good gell too—you savvy—live all time home side—her mother gualantee—velly cheap, seven hundled fitty taels."

The prospective purchaser arose and brutally placed an appraising hand upon the girl's breast. As she recoiled in repugnance, Hilton leaped to his feet.

"You let her alone," he commanded and the other stepped back involuntarily, "you can't have her."

"Vell, brehaps nodt, but I tink so," sneered the Dutchman, then turning savagely, "you Yankee kid, you get mit the hell oudt of here or you vill vish you hadt."

He made an awkward lunge at the American.

Hilton drew back his fist.

"Here, here. This will never do, especially before natives," Chumleigh broke in hastily, jumping between the belligerents. "Never let the Chinese think anything but that it is one for all and all for one."

"I'm sorry, but I can't let this beast have this beautiful child," the younger man retorted.

"Dot's all right about being a beast, but I buy this gell right now" Van Zandt stood his ground.

The Chinese looked on with un-

moving eyes, but it was plain that they sensed the situation, although they could not understand the words. The compradore, however, knew enough English to realize that a quarrel like this was an aid to business.

"Just to keep things from getting too hot," Parsons began, "I'll buy her myself. I know where I can—"

"I'll give you eight hundred taels," Hilton hardly recognized his voice as he turned to the compradore.

The Chinese turned the eye of an auctioneer to the others on the veranda. They were silent.

"Can do," he hurried to close the bargain.

Hilton wrote a check on the Bank of Canton and the girl was turned over to his care.

"Her name Toy Koo," the vendor informed him and then added, "you send pletty clothes back by boy next day. These things only lented to make pletty look see, you savvy?"

He had bought only the girl's body, even her clothes did not belong to her. They had been rented for show purposes.

Toy Koo looked up shyly as her parents and the compradore departed.

"I velly good gell," she began brokenly. "I be velly good to you. You save me flom this bad mans."

Van Zandt snorted indignantly and stalked off in dudgeon.

"Now, what am I going to do with her?" the American queried as the Hollander disappeared into the shadows of the bamboo-lined walk.

"You were saying that you needed a house servant," Chumleigh suggested with stressed seriousness.

"Yes, but—" Hilton hesitated and then as an idea dawned, "I'll educate her at home and that'll keep me from drinking so much Scotch here at nights. At the same time she can be my housekeeper."

The others smiled knowingly. Later they marveled at the transformation that was wrought in Toy Koo. She took up her duties in Hilton's establishment with a puzzled air, but once she understood her position, she showed that she not only had rare intelligence but executive ability.

She mastered the coolie first and soon impressed him that he must look to her for orders. Next the cook was forced into line and then the house boy. The American had stressed the fact that while nominally she might be a slave, it was his wish that she be regarded as mistress of the household and not one of those pampered and petted playthings that are to be found in homes of foreigners like Van Zandt.

He turned his attention to her education with enthusiasm and, upon the more or less uncertain foundation of the pidgen jardon of the China coast, taught her to speak correct English.

In this study she gloried, and day by day her speech became more proficient, but in times of excitement, unwittingly she would lapse into the trade talk that is not Chinese, Portuguese or English, combining all

three into a linguistic hash that is heard only on the China coast.

At times Hilton found her great brown eyes fixed upon him in adoration, but he did not try to plumb their depths. They were not the slit-like orbs of some of the Chinese races, but full and brilliant with only the suggestion of almond shape. They told their message, but the American was blind as only a man can be and when he caught their glance they would drop and her creamy cheek flame.

He was forced to tolerate much kindly chaff from the men at the club, especially when he left early in the evening with the announcement that this was Toy Koo's night for English composition or that night Toy Koo would study American history.

All, however, accepted these statements without question and even showed a kindly interest in his pupil's progress. All—except Van Zandt.

"You beadt me oudt of vun pretty vun," he would growl, at the same time smiling heavily to show that he harbored no resentment.

It was three months after Toy Koo had come to live at his home that he invited Chumleigh up to dinner.

"I'll have you fellows up in turn," John told the others, "but the little girl is so flustered at having one guest that she would have nervous prostration should you all come."

During her studies in English, Toy Koo had obtained copies of American magazines and the table appointments were perfect reproductions of illustrations she had studied with assiduous care.

The greatest surprise, however, fell upon Chumleigh and Hilton alike.

With the aid of the needle women, famous in Wu Chung, she had fashioned a dinner frock of rare silk, rich in embroidery. Her hair was done in an adaptation of the prevailing occidental mode and the result was a picture that made both men gasp.

"My word, old chap, you have worked a transformation—a metamorphosis, by Jove," muttered Chumleigh as he glanced with admiration at the petite figure before him, bowing low yet with dignity.

"My dear, you are charming," Hilton whispered as she passed him and she blushed happily. The American, however, did not see the look she flashed that would have told a story to any but the blind.

"But where is the place for our enchanting hostess?" inquired the Englishman, glancing at the table. Places were set for two.

"Why, Toy Koo," the master of the house broke in, "what is the matter? You are dining with us, of course."

She turned with flaming face. In her excitement, she lapsed into the pidgen dialect.

"It no belong plopah for slave girl to eat with master when tai pan man come home side catchee chow," she stammered, and then catching herself, "It would be very unconventional."

"Forget conventions." Hilton spoke just a trifle brusquely. "You must dine with us."

"As you command, master," and she bowed low.

Toy Koo made a charming hostess and Chumleigh was quite carried away by the manner in which she conducted the dinner and instructed the servants in the finer arts of serving when they blundered.

"She's positively wonderful," Chumleigh declared as he left that night. "I didn't realize that one of these girls could be trained until they're almost—ladies."

"Toy Koo is a lady," corrected his host, and then with a slap on his friend's shoulder, "perhaps not in the English sense of the word, but by any American standard, she is entitled to the same respect as the finest in the land."

Behind the curtains in the great living room, the little Chinese girl smiled happily as she nervously plucked at the embroidery on the first skirt she had ever worn.

As Hilton entered, she looked into his eyes with undisguised longing, but with an odd movement of his hand, as though to blot out the vision of her loveliness, he turned to his room.

"You were wonderful to-night, little girl," he said as he parted the curtains. "I am very proud of you."

The next evening, as they sat on the veranda, while he listened to her reading the story of Helen of Troy, they were interrupted by the arrival of Fung Ta Sang, the compradore who had sold Toy Koo to Hilton.

There were many low bows and smug smiles and numerous cups of tea before the business at hand was reached, but the American was becoming accustomed to this form of commercial etiquette and patiently awaited for the Chinese to come to the point of his visit.

"I know number one chance you makee foul hundled taels, Misto Hilton," Fung began with a sidelong look at the girl.

"Yes?" John put the question directly to him. "What is it?"

"You buy somethings for eight hundled taels, now you sellee back to me one thousand two hundled taels, you makee pletty plofit," was the unctuous reply.

"I never bought anything from you that I can sell back," Hilton spoke in a tone that should have been a warning.

Toy Koo shot a question in the Wu Chung dialect that the American did not understand.

"Ying Kwuck," Fung Ta Sang replied in the same tongue.

Hilton leaped to his feet.

"Do you mean to tell me that you want to buy—to take Toy Koo from me?" he demanded of the startled compradore, who also had suddenly arisen.

"Why not—you buy—you sell—good pidgen, makee foul hundled—" Fung barely dodged in time to evade a soda bottle and he was in full flight before the second sped by.

"You yellow dog," John shouted after the fleeing Chinese. "If you ever—"

But Fung Ta Sang was now well down the street and out of hearing. The white man turned to Toy Koo. She stood with lowered eyes, but as he stood before her and put a hand on either shoulder, she looked up.

"Little girl," there was just a trace of tremor in his voice, "I shall never sell you. When you want, you can go away, but I shall not sell you."

"Master, I'm very happy," there were tears in the great brown eyes. Tears and longing.

It was shortly after De Vieux had been at the Hilton establishment for dinner and had raved as only a Frenchman can over the petite beauty of Toy Koo, that her father, accompanied by an interpreter, came to call.

"I am a very poor man but I long for my daughter, he began, the translator repeating his words sentence by sentence. "I have saved money and now wish to buy my daughter back. I will give you one thousand taels for this lily of my heart."

The young man turned to the girl, who breathlessly awaited his response.

"This is different," he told her. "While I shall miss you terribly, I have no right to keep you from your father. I will not sell you, but you can return to your father's home without price."

"I shall not go," there was resolution in her voice. "You do not understand, master, they making fool talk—Oh, I cannot tell you—" then in her agitation, "they come here catchee me, makee more taels—this all lie pidgen—you makee them walk-walkee fy tee," and she burst into a flood of Chinese directed at both the interpreter and her father.

"Ho Hang," she commanded with a sweeping gesture and the Chinese scuttled toward the door. "I tell them get out," she declared. "Maskee honorable father—he yellow dog."

"You must not speak so of your father," he chided her, "especially here in China, fathers are looked upon with veneration."

But Toy Koo resolutely declined to look upon her father with that adoration inbred with the Chinese and, in the weeks that followed, she turned her attention to eradicating every tie that bound her to her own people.

She no longer wore the picturesque little trousers of the Chinese girl. The long braid of blue-black hair that marks Oriental maidenhood was put up in the Occidental style and this brought forth questions that were embarrassing. In China, girls wear the braid until they are married and never afterward.

"Has the tai pan married you?" asked one of her aged sewing women, the first day that she appeared with her new coiffure.

They spoke in the Wu Chung dialect.

"He can never marry me," was Toy Koo's answer. "But I am happy to be his slave. We are different people. If we married we would have children and they would be neither of us. His people would see only the blight of my blood and mine would see only the taint of his."

She was silent for a moment, great tears welling up in the dark depths of those fine eyes.

"But I love him so." A sob that could not be stifled told of her suffering, suffering that for months had made her life sweet torment.

"The daughter of Cathay has no right to love," the older woman warned her. "We are dust at the feet of our fathers, our husbands, and yes, our sons—"

"Had I never known him it would have been all right to have followed in my mother's footsteps." Toy Koo drove back her tears and spoke with studied calmness. "But my father willed otherwise. I was not for marriage. He would have sold me to that beast of Tuck Kwuck—Van Zandt and I was saved only by—"

"Hush little one," the other gestured with a warning hand. "You are building a bed of thistles when you might lie in silk. I am old and I have seen life. You are very fortunate. Better the slave of a good man than the idol of a knave."

That night after the servants had cleared off the table, John Hilton spread a quantity of mail upon the table. The steamer had arrived that day and brought the overseas post. He had not had time to read all of it at the office.

Toy Koo dreaded the coming of the American mail. She knew that sometimes, summons from Mei Kwuck, as the Chinese call America, would call him home and then—she could see nothing except self-annihilation.

She had taken down her books and was preparing for the usual evening recitation, but she saw that he would not be able to hear her for an hour or more.

Anxiously, she watched his face as he opened each letter and read its contents. The concentration for the business communications, or smiling appreciation of some friendly note recalling far away friends.

These letters, however, had been less frequent of late. Her heart skipped a beat as she saw him pick up a square envelope that was faintly tinted. The girl had watched him read those letters before and instinct told her that they were from a white woman far across the Eastern Sea.

As Toy Koo scanned his face, seeking to learn her fate, John Hilton read a crisp note from Anita. She and Tom Chatterton were to be married within a week from date. Were married now, he reflected with a glance at the calendar.

He had loved Anita, but when he assayed the result of her announcement,he knew that he did no longer and that the last tie that bound him to his old circle had been broken.

As he tossed the letter carelessly aside, the heart of the little slave girl beat happily.

Next he took a large envelope from his home office. He was notified that he was to be placed in charge of a larger and more important agency in Bangkok, Siam, and that his successor would be in Wu Chung a week after the arrival of the letter. Toy Koo studied his face as he read the

announcement. She could not fathom his expression.

"You get letter from home side, master," she queried, with a little catch in her voice.

"Yes, from home side, but must I tell you every day not to call me master?" His gaze was still fixed upon the papers.

"Maybe you go home side by and by and marry pretty girl over there." The tiny tremor in her voice showed her fear for what the answer might be.

"Hardly—not now," with a glance at Anita's discarded note.

"Oh, I am so glad. I feel so very happy."

He laid down the letter and looked across the table.

"But why are you glad that I am not going to marry?" he questioned, looking into the depths of the great, dark eyes. He saw their beauty, their tenderness, their—

"Because I love you very much," the eyes looked frankly into his with the ingenuousness of a child's.

Hilton dropped his gaze.

"Come, my child," he chided her, "you must not talk so. You know that I could not marry you."

"No—you could not marry me—I would not let you if you would—I am as the dust at your feet." The tone was wistful, but eager. "But then you could love me as Mr. Hawkins loved Sau Mei and—"

"S-h-h-h, little girl." Hilton arose and paced nervously back and forth. The battle was going against him, but he had not surrendered. "You must not talk so. Besides, I have orders from my head office that will take me to another country. I shall return you to your mother."

Toy Koo swayed as she walked toward him.

"You are going—you are leaving me here?" There was agony in every word.

"But I shall give you to your mother."

"And that dog—my father," her tones were sibilant, "he would be glad for me to come back that he might sell me again. He tried to buy me back and sell me at a profit to that Frenchman and—"

Hilton raised a silencing hand.

"Yes, and that Ying Kwuck—that Englishman," she rushed on disregarding his gesture, "it was he who sent Fung Ta Sang to buy me after he had been your guest. They would have me before your steamer got one day down the river and—"

She sank quivering at his feet.

"Stop, Toy Koo—"

He clenched his fists.

"Don't, master, don't strike," she begged. "I tell you only truth—you tell me never make lie talk."

"Strike you," he muttered, but not so low but what she heard, "strike you? I'm only trying to keep from kissing you and carrying you away to the ends of the earth."

"Kiss me then and carry me—far past the southern hills—far o'er the Eastern Sea—to the end of eternity."

A great flood swept over and engulfed him. He bent low and snatched her into his arms.

The Soft-Boiled Egg

By Thomas Edgelow

A village apartment and a series of lovers, or one small-town husband? Which was preferable?

PART of the Hartley family, like the Curate's egg, was good. Parts of it were—well, there was Harold Hartley, the father, and Harold, now fifty, was an unsuccessful business man in Syracuse. He had married for the second time, a thin, weedy woman, who adored show and pretense.

Then, there was the other part of the family, little Phoebe Hartley, Harold's daughter by his first wife. And Phoebe was distinctly good—that is, if to be beautiful, is to be good!

Phoebe was one of those sunny, golden-haired, curved little darlings who can create more wickedness in a man's heart, more kindness and goodness, too, and, oh, more anything than any celebrated vampire of the Theda Bara type. With her blue eyes and red, pretty mouth, with her white skin and adorable little figure, Phoebe was one of the chief attractions of Syracuse, New York.

Despite her beauty and her youthful twenty years, Phoebe was not very happy. She was sick of pretense. Her father's business—he dealt in coal—was, to put it vulgarly, on the fritz, and yet Mrs. Hartley was forever trying to impress the other inhabitants of the city that they were very comfortably off. Harold Hartley's business was doing badly, chiefly because of his prosperous competitor, Theobald Griswold.

Ah, you have the plot, have you? And a darned old one at that. But then, you know, if you watch your friends, or read your newspaper, you will continually run across situations that lend themselves to fiction.

All the same, here was the ancient situation, where a middle-aged man wanted to marry the daughter of another man whom he could ruin or make.

All this came out one spring evening in a conversation between Phoebe, her father and Mrs. Hartley.

"I tell you," Hartley complained bitterly, "that if something doesn't happen, I'm broke."

Mrs. Hartley glanced around her pretentious living room, where furniture from Grand Rapids asked you to believe that it was genuine Louix XIV.

"Well, I would prefer to be in my grave," she whined, "rather than let people know that you have failed. And you wouldn't fail, Harold, if your daughter," and here she looked aggressively at Phoebe, "had the

faintest idea of duty, love, affection or what she owes her father."

"Meaning," put in Phoebe politely, "that fat, red, greasy man, Theobald Griswold. Well, I have some news for you!"

Phoebe walked across the room and sat down at the grand piano, where her white hands began to play jazz music.

"Phoebe! Phoebe! Stop that noise. What is this news?"

Phoebe swung round on the piano stool, displaying, as she did so, many inches of delightfully-filled black silk stocking to a totally unappreciative audience.

"Listen, people! Dry your tears, Daddy! I, your dear little daughter, am about to save you. Don't protest, I'm going to do it!"

Mrs. Hartley ran her tongue over her thin, dry lips. "You mean—"

"I mean, dear Stepmama, that I'm about to annex all that round stomach, pale blue eyes, short brown hair, manly figure and pompous voice that makes up one, Theobald Griswold, together with all his chunks of ill-gotten wealth—provided always and it is hereby agreed, that he goes through with that little amalgamation business so that Daddy becomes partner! Now, what do you say about that?"

"You mean this, Phoebe?" put in her father. "I don't want you to sacrifice yourself too much just because of me. I daresay that I would swing it somehow alone."

"Not entirely because of you, Daddy," Phoebe answered seriously. "Theobald isn't such a bad sort, and the main point is that I am sick and tired of pretense—of pretending that we have more money than we have. Of keeping a maid, when we can't afford one—oh, of 'Keeping Up with the Joneses.'

"That's the real reason, why I am going to do it. Theobald is coming after supper. He phoned this afternoon, and said he hoped I would have reconsidered what I told him."

"And what did you tell him?" queried Mrs. Hartley.

"That he could go to Hell and chase himself," Phoebe answered with her usual simple directness.

"Phoebe!"

"Phoebe!"

"What are you both Phoebe-ing me about?" the pretty girl exclaimed, as she got up from the piano and moved towards the door, when she turned and faced them. "There you go again! One can never be natural! Always pretense—and respectability!

"I don't expect, by marrying Theobald, to escape respectability in this hole of a one-horse town, but I do hope to escape pretense—through Theobald's money—and that's why I am going to accept him to-night!" The door banged on her exit.

About nine o'clock, Theobald was sitting in the living room with Mabel and Mrs. Hartley.

"I have letters to write," said Mrs. Hartley, as she left them alone.

"More pretense! As if he doesn't know it," Phoebe thought, and had difficulty in not voicing it.

Theobald Griswold, who was not really as bad as Phoebe had painted him, being merely just a prosaic business man, inclined, perhaps to girth and a choleric complexion, edged his chair near the sofa on which Phoebe was sitting.

She was looking particularly delectable that night in a tight-fitting little gown of black velvet, which revealed delightful curves and outlines. Her silky hair gleamed like gold under the lights; her mouth was very red.

"So you're going to think over—about marrying me?" Theobald began in his up-State accent. "Look here, Phoebe—let's have t h i s straight. I'm no poet."

"No?" queried Phoebe w i t h charming insolence.

"And quit kidding me. I'm a plain business man, and I guess if I were dead, that I would cut up close on a quarter of a million, taking the business and everything. Well, Phoebe, I love you. I don't know what you have done to me—but, damme girl, I want you.

"Marry me and I'll make you a good husband—and you can have all the money you want to spend in reason—and I'll fix your father, who is pretty nigh broke. Him and me will be partners—he'll have a quarter share in the Griswold Selwyn Company in exchange for putting his business—which isn't much—in with me. Now that's that. Is it a bet? Will you marry me—and do it in a month?"

"Yes," Phoebe accepted him.

She accepted more, for his eager lips would have kissed that red, wet mouth. Instead, she received her betrothal kiss upon her firm though soft cheek.

"Well, I'll kiss you differently when we're married," he threatened, but it hardly made any impression upon Phoebe.

The Hartleys were called in, and pretended to be greatly surprised at the news. The next weeks were busy ones preparing for an unnecessarily pretentious wedding in the Hartley home. More, lawyers plied their trade, so that partnership papers were drawn up ready to be signed just before the wedding.

Although Phoebe rejoiced at seeing the load of worry removed from her father's shoulders, she was also glad when she thought of her own changed circumstances.

As for kisses, Theobald Griswold was clever enough not to scare the girl before they were safely wedded.

There came the afternoon when all the Hartley's friends were gathered in the living room, with the doors thrown open to the hall.

An Episcopalian clergyman stood by an improvised altar, and presently, young Philip Johnson, seated at the piano, crashed out, as well as he could, the wedding march.

Down the stairs came the bride, leaning on her father's arm. The bridegroom, t h i n k i n g sensuous thoughts, stood in his appointed place.

While the service was being read, Phoebe was thinking:

"Pretense—just like everything else. I can't get out now. I don't know if I want to—but—to-night—will he kiss me? Will *it* be very horrible? No, I'm a stupid. What a frightful tie he has got on! Father is happy—now he's a partner. I wonder if they have forgotten the ring."

Old Mr. Doubleday was coughing loudly. Someone else was sniffling.

Again Mr. Doubleday's cough drowned the rest of the words. A little more, and then Theobald's hot face was pressed close to Phoebe's, but she drew back from him, to receive more kisses. Everybody wanted to kiss the bride.

They sat at dinner, the bride and the groom. Rather was it a late supper, for they had not left the Hartleys' house before seven, to motor, in Theobald's car, to a cottage that had been lent to them in the country some thirty miles outside Syracuse.

An elderly housekeeper had prepared the meal, placed it on the table, and had retired, leaving them alone.

"As I was saying, your father is now my partner," Theobald's voice was droning. "And when we get back home, I'm going to buy you an electric runabout so that you can drive yourself."

He glanced curiously at his girl-bride. "What's the matter, Phoebe? Sleepy?" His voice implied much more than his words.

At last she went upstairs, and entered the bridal chamber. She slipped out of her dress and stood there, exquisitely lovely, in her shimmering gossamer silks—part of her trousseau.

The door opened and Theobald entered quickly.

"Some baby! Some baby doll!" His arms went about her. He sat down on a chair, and drew her to his knee. He buried his great red face in the ecstasy of her perfumed shoulder. He kissed her golden hair, and then his lips sought and found the rapture of her scarlet mouth, the while his hands held her fiercely.

And in those passing seconds, Phoebe suddenly knew that she could not go through with this thing. She had not understood. She had not been ignorant of marriage, but she had not understood her own finer self.

She had not realized the horror of what this would mean. She had not contemplated what the touch of his lips, what those fierce, hard, greedy hands would mean to her.

She could not go through with it, and her girlish wits were working furiously. She must play for time. Later, once the horror of his presence was removed from her, she would think up some means of escape, but the impulse of the second was to rid herself of his embrace. What was it that always calmed men?

Tears!

She wept, then. She wept noisily, and it was not difficult to summon real tears, so near hysteria had his kisses brought her.

"Phoebe! What's the matter?"

But he had released her, and she hurried to the other end of the room, where she slipped on a negligee. But she did not cease her weeping. She flung herself down on the bed and wept, and wept, moaning little cries of distress.

"Oh, go away from me! Go away! Not now—later! It—it—you frighten me! Go away now and leave me alone to-night. Please, Theobald—please!"

The closing of the door told her that the bridegroom had left the bridal chamber—had left her alone. She got up and turned the key in the lock. Thank God—she had escaped! She had escaped. . . .

It was not that she lacked human passion. She would, she knew, welcome the tenderness and caresses of a man she loved—when that time came, but because Church and State had murmured a ceremony over her, that was no reason why she should surrender herself to a man whom she did not love.

But she had only postponed matters. She must act that night, so that a similar scene could not be repeated. But how? Now, at least, her father was safe financially, although her basic reason for marrying Theobald had been to escape the petty irritations of poverty.

Now she *thought* that nothing mattered—save her complete freedom. *The little fool did not realize that it never pays to cheat.* But freedom! This suggested New York.

She wrote the inevitable letter, in which she stated that she was going away and that it would be useless for Theobald to follow her. He could divorce her—do what he would—but Phoebe was absolutely through!

Then, in the very early morning, while Theobald most unromantically snored on his back in another room, Phoebe softly left the house, carrying a heavy suitcase.

Luck was with her, for on reaching the end of the lane, a passing driver of a huge truck slowed down, and gave her a lift.

Nor did she take the train from Syracuse as the truck was headed north, but, prettily thanking the driver, she caught a train from an unimportant station some distance away, and arrived at the Grand Central in the early afternoon.

So came Phoebe to New York, and because a girl friend of hers had told her of Greenwich Village and of its freedom, because she had also heard of artists' models, and because she knew something of the beauty of her lithe young figure, Phoebe, checking her suitcase at the depot, took a Fifth Avenue bus, and with about a hundred dollars in her purse, went down south to Washington Square in search of a room where she might stay.

By the evening, Phoebe found herself established in a fair-sized bed-sitting room with a bath on the same floor, situated on one of those little streets that twist and turn about Sheridan Square.

She awoke early the next morning, and having made her coffee over an alcohol stove, went out in search of work.

On West Tenth Street, not far from Sixth Avenue, Phoebe discovered a building given over entirely to studios. Mounting the stairway, Phoebe knocked on a door, and it was Seth Finley who opened.

"Oh, come in," said Seth, once he had obtained an eyeful of all that pulchritude and pretty flowerlike face. "Something whispers to me that I can use you."

Phoebe entered a big, bare studio, and turned to regard its occupant. He was rather like an owl, was Seth Finley, only rather a thin owl. In age, he was in his thirties—a tall, not bad-looking man, with a clearly cut face and big, horn-rimmed spectacles.

His voice was that of an educated man, and although his clothes were badly in need of pressing, there was about him something that appealed to the little girl.

The room, itself, was almost devoid of furniture. There was a couch-bed, pulled up against one wall. There were two or three comfortable though brokendown armchairs; two easels, a model's throne, and in a little dressing room-bathroom, that led off from the studio, a two-ringed gas stove made elementary cooking possible.

And many, many canvases were piled anyhow on the bare floor or were leaned up against the walls.

"And you have never been a model before and you are terribly afraid that I shall ruin you," Seth Finley was saying, in an amusing way. "And you are also a little worried that I shall ask you to pose in the nude. I shall. Go in the dressing room place, there, and take your clothes off.

"I have some money. I have some money! I would like to write a song about it—but I have some money. Therefore the editor who might buy a cover for a magazine can kiss himself. I have some money, and so I shall please myself. I shall make an exquisite sketch of you in the nude. Don't get frightened. To-day is Wednesday. I *never* ruin little girls on Wednesday."

Phoebe gasped. She had never met anything quite like this! Yet his very chaff seemed to reassure her. The fact that he was laughing gave her a sense of security.

"You have got to begin sometime," counseled the artist. "So why can't that sometime be now? I feel in a very fatherly mood. Now will you pose or will you not?

"If you wait a week making up your mind, I shall be broke and won't be able to afford you. And you get five dollars a day, which is a dollar more than the usual rate. Now go!"

She shut herself up, and slowly began to disrobe. At last she stood nude, beautiful and charmingly shy. A model's cloak hung on a peg. She snatched it, put it on, and re-entered the studio.

"Go and stand on that throne thing," ordered Seth, busy with a canvas and an easel. He walked to-

wards her. "Drop that cloak. What do you think? That I'm going to bite you? I may be a man—at times I am—but to-day I am an artist. I am going to look on you as a housewife looks on a nice bit of cold mutton!"

Reassured—she dropped the cloak, and Seth threw it on a chair.

"Now don't stand as if you were a sack of potatoes," he grumbled. "Hold your arm like this. And don't be all knees. Never saw a woman with so many knees in my life. What's your name?"

"Phoebe—Phoebe Hartley," announced the girl, dropping her husband's name. She felt more at ease, as Seth had returned to his easel, and already was busy with charcoal.

"How did you know that I had never been a model before?" she asked presently, after Seth had been working for some time in silence.

"Because I am the reincarnation of the late Sherlock Holmes; now will you kindly shut up while I work?" he answered absent-mindedly.

So the morning passed, with periods of rest. At lunch time, Phoebe, at Seth's request, scrambled some eggs, and just before four o'clock, he declared that he had finished for the day.

"Go and get your clothes on again," he said, as he stretched himself. "I might be a man again any moment—instead of a poor fish of an artist."

When she emerged from the dressing room, he took one of her hands and kissed it. "You have been very nice. Now I'll blow you to some tea and show you some of the Villagers—the wicked Bohemian set."

Together they strolled east and entered a hotel on Fifth Avenue, where, downstairs, a few people were having tea. The old days had gone, the days before the old women at Washington, headed by old lady Volstead, had spoiled everything, but still, occasionally some artist folk would gather there, and, at least, it was all wonderful to Phoebe.

As they sat at a marble top table, Seth Finley rattled on about the other people in the room.

"See that smallish man—rather good-looking and dark, talking to the pretty girl in the blue thing—that's Leon Nack. A novelist—writes books and short stories, which aren't bad. Still, he doesn't have to hustle for a living, because his father is a multi.

"The man at the next table in the rough clothes is a poet—Patrick Stevens. He is one of the few people alive who can make a living out of verse, although that is not all he writes.

"The fat woman who wants a bath—anyway, she needs one—for one man can lead a fat woman to a bathroom but ten can't make her bathe—anyway, she 'makes Art.' Just like that—she makes Art! That female spoils more canvas than anybody in the trade.

"Ah, the chap coming in now is Winthrop Prudy—who makes a living writing short stories. Apart from

the fact that he thinks that he has a private pull with Paradise, he's not so bad."

Phoebe's blue eyes regarded Winthrop Prudy to observe that he was about twenty-eight or thirty. Just over medium height, slim and not bad-looking, his brown hair, though not unattended by a barber's scissors, was rough and untidy. He had gray eyes, and his smile and expression appealed to Phoebe. He came straight over to their table. And Seth Finley introduced him.

"I have some money," Winthrop Prudy announced.

"So have I," remarked Seth proudly.

"I mean real money, you poor prune," continued Winthrop. "I've sold a movie to the picture thieves. I don't know why they didn't steal it—they generally do. Anyway, I have a cold thousand, and I don't do another stroke of work until it's spent."

"Oh, permit me to help you," begged Seth Finley politely.

But Winthrop did not answer. It was as though he suddenly realized how beautiful Phoebe was. For the next hour he talked exclusively to her—chiefly about himself.

He told of his work, and of how he was all alone in the world, living in a small apartment on Waverly Place.

"Come and have dinner with me and go to a show," Winthrop begged Phoebe. "Not here in the vulgar Village with common artist people, but uptown among ladies and gentlemen from Riverside Drive—gentlemen who wear real diamonds and everything. Only I won't dress. I'll do anything but that. Then we will go and see this play, "Half-Pure," which they are all talking about."

"Oh, I'd love to," accepted Phoebe instantly.

"You don't mean to say, Winthrop," Seth put in plaintively, "that you are going to pay money to see an actor?"

Winthrop's expression showed the scorn he felt for such an idea. "Tanqueray, who does the dramatic criticisms for *The Goose Feather*, has to dine with an editor in the suburbs, and he gave me the tickets," he vindicated himself.

That was how the affair started with that rapidity which only two elements can achieve—fire and passion. There was no explaining it, but from the very first evening, Phoebe thrilled at the touch of Winthrop's hand. She thrilled at his voice, as they sat in the theater and Winthrop mocked the vulgarity of the show which they witnessed, where Broadway, trying to be naughtily French, succeeded in being as light as suet, as delicate as a tenth-rate circus.

"Look at those women," whispered Winthrop, during a scene where several ponderous ladies, in a bedroom set, played at "strip-poker," disclosing Rubenesque charms. "I suppose that might appeal to a mid-Western pork dresser—or rather to a pork *undresser!*"

And then he was whispering how

delicious was Phoebe, and how he wished that he might see her in a softly lighted room gradually and with pleasurable tardiness play at the same game herself.

"Oh!" said Phoebe, but she liked it.

The next morning Phoebe returned to pose in the nude, for Seth Finley.

"Hold it for another five minutes, and we stop for the day," said Seth later in the day from behind his easel. "I can't work this afternoon."

Then the door, which was not locked, opened suddenly, and Winthrop Prudy walked into the room.

His eyes took in that supreme beauty, but only for a second, for instantly Phoebe ran to the dressing room and closed the door.

But as she dressed, putting on her silk underwear which caressed the warm white of her satin skin, she knew that she did not mind. She knew how beautiful she was, and although she would not have admitted it for the world, the little devil was pleased that Winthrop should know something of her loveliness.

"Good morning, Mr. Prudy," Phoebe said demurely, as she emerged from the dressing room clad in a little suite of knitted silk.

"Why all the 'Mister' business—Phoebe? I thought we agreed last night—but, I came to take you out to lunch."

That afternoon, Phoebe had tea in Winthrop's tiny apartment, and it was then that she told him of her marriage—which had been no marriage.

"You can get a divorce later on," Winthrop remarked as he lay stretched out on a couch, his head on Phoebe's lap, his eyes looking up into hers. "But it doesn't matter—as you can always have a lover. There are a few things I despise—and among them are respectability, Virginia cigarettes, egg plant and marriage, but the greatest of these is respectability. You can have a lover, Phoebe."

She stooped, so that her face was nearer to his.

"Can I?"

He swung his legs to the floor, and, when he was sitting by her, his arm drew her close to him.

"I love you," he whispered hoarsely, and he devoured her with his kisses. "You were right—you were too fine to give yourself to a man you didn't love. But you would be just as wrong to suppress yourself—if a man chanced to make you love him. Tell me that you love me, Phoebe! Tell me at once."

She whispered, and then her arms crept about his neck.

Bohemia—such Bohemia as exists in Greenwich Village—accepted the situation with a good deal of gossip, but as something perfectly praiseworthy. Phoebe had to face nothing more than congratulations when she left her room and moved her things over to Winthrop's apartment.

Perhaps, for all women are conventional within their hearts, deny it as they will, secretly Phoebe wished that she was divorced from Theobald

Griswold and married to Winthrop Prudy, but in the first weeks of glamour, she had little room for any emotion save that of love. There were long drawn-out afternoons of tenderness, and evenings when the gray world seemed very far away. Sometimes, a slight doubt would cross her mind.

"Tell me, Winthrop."

"Tell you what—little goose-girl?"

"Tell me—you know! Tell me that you love me." Thus, the eternal feminine ever eager to be reassured.

"I love you," he would reply, "so much, much more than you guess!" Then, very tenderly, he would kiss the palms of her hands.

But of course such love could not last indefinitely. Besides, that thousand slipped away with miraculous swiftness, and Winthrop had to write to make more money. When he worked, gone was the lover. There was merely a grave faced man, hammering his typewriter.

The housekeeping of the tiny apartment did not occupy much of Phoebe's time. When she had finished, she would sit, pretending to read, wishing that Winthrop would stop work for the day.

But Winthrop did not write easily. He had no flow of words, and he sweated for the editorial money. As a matter of fact, very little money came in. Perhaps, Winthrop's creative powers were blunted by his passion, but anyway, manuscript after manuscript was refused.

"Damn their hides," Winthrop would shout, when the postman would bring back the heavy envelopes returning his stories. "They don't know what they want themselves. I wish to God I could get a contract with the movies—that means real money—lots of money—and paid every week.

"I would spend an entire day ringing up editors and telling them what I thought of them. Anybody who attempts to make a living by his pen is worse than a fool!" So he would rave.

Soon there came a time when creditors would ring the doorbell of the apartment. The delicatessen man refused further credit. The meat market was raising hell. The Telephone Company had sent its final notice, and there were two returned stories in that morning's mail.

"I shall have to borrow to keep the telephone animals quiet," grumbled Winthrop.

He went out moodily, forgetting to kiss Phoebe.

That was the beginning of the end. Now Winthrop stayed out in the evenings. He would give unconvincing excuses, and meanwhile there were many money worries and very little money.

"Who is Louise Burden?" Phoebe asked Winthrop one evening when he had come home to dinner.

"Oh, I see, someone has been gossiping," he snapped at her.

"Naturally, people talk," Phoebe returned bitterly. "I don't mind, only I wish you wouldn't lie to me. The night before last, you said that

you had to talk over a plot with Morgan, and you were really with that vulgar little cat."

"She is not a cat, and she is not vulgar," he answered sententiously. "She's a very sweet girl who lives in Brooklyn with her mother."

Very soon there was a row. Phoebe lost her temper.

"I'm sick of it—sick of it all—and particularly sick of you!" she exclaimed at length.

"Well, what am I going to do about it?" he asked disagreeably.

He took his hat and went out. Phoebe, having cried herself almost sick, packed her things into her trunk and locked it. She would send for it later. Placing a few necessities in a suitcase, she left the apartment and hurried around to Seth Finley's studio.

"Seth, I want you to lend me some money," she began at once. "I prefer—respectability to this, and I'm going back to my husband."

"Wherever you go," Seth summed up after they'd talked it all over, "you will find the same thing. There is always a fly in the ointment. If you like the life in the Village—and not being married and so on—then there will be a series of lovers—but freedom.

"If you like the red plush and the parlor and the shells on the mantelpiece—I don't mean that exactly, but these things typify a small town in my mind—then you have to put up with a husband—and no freedom. It's just a question of choice."

Early the next morning, Phoebe arrived in Syracuse. She made her way—not to her father's house—but to the home of her husband, that home which she had never entered, as the honeymoon had been spent—what there had been of it—in the borrowed cottage.

She was intensely miserable. She wanted, although she did not know it, love. Still, she had decided that she was through with Bohemia, as she softly went up the porch steps.

Phoebe peered through the window of the dining room, where Theobald Griswold sat at breakfast. How fat he was! And how red! Phoebe pictured countless breakfasts at the same table.

Then Theobald Griswold settled matters as far as he was concerned. He was eating a soft boiled egg. A very soft boiled egg, and at that second, he dribbled egg down his red chin.

Phoebe fled back to the station. She could not—and, oh—well, have you ever seen a plump business man dribble egg down a red chin?

Before taking her ticket back to New York, Phoebe suddenly remembered the Websters, who are not important. Miriam Webster had, before her marriage, been a friend of Phoebe's, and had often begged Phoebe to stay with her.

So, because she wanted somewhere to rest while she surveyed the mess she had made of her life, Phoebe stopped off and spent ten days with Miriam.

"You have been very sweet to me, Miriam, dear, and so has your husband," Phoebe said as she kissed her hostess on leaving. "All the same, I don't think I could settle down to a married life."

"Then what are you going to do?" asked Miriam, who knew nothing of Winthrop Prudy.

"I don't know," lied Phoebe, who knew quite well what she was going to do. Better a thousand times poverty and Greenwich Village and a lover—perhaps a succession of lovers—than respectability and egg dribbled on a red chin! Besides, she was very fond of Winthrop. Very fond of him! Which is quite different from being in love! Still, dear old Winthrop! And so on.

Arrived at the Grand Central, Phoebe blew herself to a taxi, but being about dinner time, she stopped at the hotel where she had first met Winthrop. She would dine and then see him afterwards.

But, for once, Riverside Drive, the Bronx and the East Sixties were supplanted in the downstairs rooms by genuine Villagers, for a party was in progress. It was Winthrop Prudy, who caught sight of Phoebe, and, alcoholically drew her aside.

"Listen, Phoebe," he said, and Phoebe noticed that he did not kiss her, "I may as well be the one to tell you this. If I had known where to get you I would have written. Anyway, I'm sure you're too good a sport to make a scene."

"Make a scene?" re-echoed Phoebe blankly. "What do you mean? What is all this?"

"You see," he continued, "the very next day after you left, some movie people sent for me—same bunch that bought my last picture—and signed me up on a contract at fifteen hundred dollars a month! And nothing to do for it, Phoebe—practically nothing. So you see—well, you see!"

"But I don't!"

"Well, you see, once a man has arrived," and Phoebe noticed that Winthrop's voice had actually grown pompous, "it is time that he married and settled down. So, Phoebe—and I'll set you up in a tea shop of your own, now I have plenty of money, I married this afternoon—Louise Barden!"

To-day, not far from Sheridan Square, Phoebe is fairly prosperous and not so very unhappy in her freedom, to say nothing of her many lovers, in her tea shop, which is called:

"THE SOFT-BOILED EGG."

But if you chance to ask Phoebe an explanation for this curious nomenclature, she will only smile into your eyes and ask: "Oh, do you want some more coffee, don't you?"

But Phoebe's smile is only of the lips, for you see, deep within, Phoebe knows her loneliness, and she wonders whether it pays to cheat!

Uncle Algernon's Present

By Paul Hervey Fox

His wife was only human after all but even so life sometimes brightens up for the shorn lamb

THEY were married at last. Everyone was relieved, pleased, happy. Dickon Russell was a fine fellow, Betty Fennor a pretty girl.

For three long years they had exchanged a cloud of letters and telegrams, arranged secret appointments, shared private and incomprehensible jokes, sighed, loved, hoped, moped, quarreled, cried, occupied phone booths while anxious gentlemen swore outside, ignored everyone except themselves, and behaved with all the agreeable idiocy demanded by tradition.

It was an evening wedding with a supper and a reception to follow; and Dickon Russell looked excited as he shook hands and acknowledged congratulations.

It had been a long struggle, Betty had been hopelessly out of reach, but he had won. In this first flush of triumph, life seemed very good.

He was a pleasant looking young man with a timid manner that handicapped him. His early passion for stealing grapes and trampling rose bushes had been transmuted by time to the dignity of a profession: Dickon was a landscape gardener.

There had been no superfluity of landscapes during the three years of his courtship; and his patrimony barely enabled him to buy postage stamps for the letters he wrote Betty. Then, Betty was attractive to men, and Dickon had often ground his teeth in misery and fear when she had accepted the invitations of his rivals.

When he had won her at last, he discovered that there was still another fortress to storm. The Fennors held themselves high, and their frigid glances made Dickon's pleading smile at times a wan and dismal thing.

But finally they, too, had succumbed after Dickon had received his first commission, and all of them had flocked to the wedding, stiff, a little supercilious, yet not quite the dragons he had believed.

All, that is, except Uncle Algernon Fennor. Uncle Algernon lived in remote Montreal, and was known to be the wealthiest and the haughtiest of the family.

He had been notified of the event, and had replied with a leisurely

letter in which he had referred to Dickon as a young upstart. As Dickon had never met Uncle Algernon, he was inclined to think the opinion unfair, and made certain dark resolves in his heart.

Nevertheless it was necessary to pacify Uncle Algernon who had not only amassed a large fortune but was a bachelor as well. Uncle Algernon had not even sent a present. And he could write checks one after the other, without stopping, as fast as an actor playing a financier.

So Dickon consented to Betty's plan of a honeymoon in Montreal, the secret purpose of which was to reduce her hard-hearted uncle to open philanthropy by confronting him with their excessive happiness. Uncle Algernon might not yield; he was notably eccentric, and had not seen Betty herself since she was a little girl; but it was worth while trying the chance.

At length Betty came down in her traveling dress, and Dickon fought his way through the press of bridesmaids to her side. Bill Martin, his best man, charged after him and pressed into his hands the railroad tickets which had been purchased only that afternoon. He hung to Dickon's shoulder, laughing loudly, roaring unintelligible sentences, and saying all manner of nonsense.

Dickon tore himself away, recovered Betty, and successfully launched her in the big, dark limousine that was waiting to take them away.

There was a breath of suspense, broken by the roar of the motor, the flash of lights, the confused sound of voices and shouts, and they were off, speeding through a starless night down the White Plains road for New York.

"So it's happened at last, darling," said Dickon as if announcing some calamity. "It's happened at last!"

In reality he was thinking with relief of the fact that there had been no practical pranks, no rice, no confetti, nothing embarrassing or vulgar.

He had been afraid of Bill Martin for that reason, as Bill had a popular sense of humor. He saw now that his fear had been unnecessary. Bill Martin was a prince, one of the best.

The car plunged on through the darkness, and Dickon remembering that his train left from the Grand Central at twelve sharp, realized that there was no time to lose.

"I suppose we ought to have started sooner," he said to Betty, who sat, silent and brooding, with the air of someone who has been abducted. "Bill Martin wouldn't stop talking," he added afterwards in order to let her know that he certainly did not blame her.

She did not answer, and he leaned forward, putting his hand on her arm. As he did so, a loud report came to his ears, and the car slackened pace, rolling forward with a limping wheel. They had blown out a tire.

Under Dickon's gentle but persistent inquiries the chauffeur worked manfully; and in fifteen min-

utes they were on their way again. But the delay made their chance of catching the midnight express a precarious one, and never had the traffic seemed so thick and enmeshed as it did to Dickon when they had speeded into the outskirts of the city.

By the time they were near Forty-second Street he was clutching two grips with one hand, and holding his watch in the other, like the timekeeper of a race. Sublimely indifferent, Betty continued to revolve thoughts acceptable only to herself.

When they reached the station, Dickon caught her arm, and encumbered with baggage though he was, managed to make a run of it. It was the barest squeeze; the guard at the gates had cried the first "All aboard!" as Dickon flung himself at the entrance panting, disgorged his tickets, and hurried down the runway.

They entered the nearest car, and almost immediately the train started. Followed by Betty, Dickon lurched forward with the grips. He glanced at the Pullman slip in his fingers, and saw that it read Lower Berth Eight in Car Two.

After he had pushed his way through an interminable chain of sleepers, he conferred with a porter, and was informed that he was in the car he sought. He handed over the tickets.

"This the lady's? Numbah eight?"

"Yes, that's right," said Dickon.

"Then you got the other one. You know whar that is? Five cars to de rear."

"What?" said Dickon. "I—I'm here. That is—"

"No, you ain't suh," the porter corrected him. "You're in car seven, you is."

"But—but there's some mistake," Dickon stammered.

A trainman, swaying forward, paused to adjust the difficulty.

"Yep, that's seven," he said authoritatively in a loud, harsh voice. "Move right ahead. I'll tell you when to stop."

"But—" Dickon began wildly.

At that instant he was sensible of a soft but very firm push from behind him. The trainman was urging him quietly forward. Dickon Russell did not know what to do. He was a mild man with an aggravated respect for rules, and it did not occur to him to defy the official.

He heard Betty cry out piteously in a faint voice: "Dickon, you're not leaving me!" and then the heavy door banged behind him, and he was marching dazedly forward with his bag in his hand, and the silent and sinister figure of the trainman behind him.

He did not attempt to think; he would do that later. By unknown means he would coerce someone or something into letting him return to Betty. For the present it was better to make no resistance to organized authority.

"Here you are. This is your car."

Dickon halted, and stared earnestly at the porter of car seven.

"Porter," he said as soon as the trainman was out of sight, "I want

to effect an exchange. Can you arrange somehow to let me have a berth in car two?"

"But your ticket, suh, say seven."

"I know it; that's why I want to change."

"Who you want to change it? Me? I ain't got no right. The company does that, suh."

Dickon glanced cautiously around. There seemed nothing left except the humiliating course of taking the negro into his confidence.

"It's my wife, you know," he began hesitatingly. "In car two. We—we were separated. Now if you could fix it up with the porter in two, I could —that is, it would be worth your while."

To Dickon's astonishment the black man greeted his plea with a slow, jovial and impudent wink.

"I'm sorry I kain't help you. I jus' got this job. The porter befo' me got fired for helpin' a gen'l'man that way. This here's your berth, suh."

Dickon glared helplessly around him. Then, with a sigh, he yielded to the bitterness of circumstance, and climbed into the upper the porter had indicated.

He sat there in darkness as the train rattled and grumbled on in the night, while the heavy breathing of the sleepers in the car rose and fell in a measured, ridiculous rhythm. Sitting upright and motionless, he did not attempt to take off his clothes.

He remembered his three long years of adoration, and his frustration seemed the more complete. He dared not think of Betty, so frail, so frightened, all alone five cars ahead of him. He ground his fingers into his palms to prevent his repeating to himself the desperate, low-voiced cry which she had given at his departure.

Now for the first time it occurred to him to wonder how the mistake had happened. Like a flash it was lit up for him in two words: Bill Martin. It was Bill Martin, of course, that confounded, lumbering fool with his clumsy idea of a joke, who was responsible.

Dickon, caught up in a rush at the last moment of preparation, had asked Bill to buy the tickets. And this was obviously his work. Fervently, fluently, with a sincerity that a fanatic would have envied, Dickon invoked a curse upon Bill's immortal soul.

Rage gave him the courage which his ardour had failed to offer. With nervous, impatient fingers he now began to undress himself. Then he reached into his bag and found his slippers and his bathrobe. Attired in these, Dickon lowered himself gingerly to the floor, and then, imitating the leisurely gait of one who seeks the washroom, sauntered up the car.

In a moment he had gently closed the forward door, and stepped into the next Pullman. He perambulated through three cars without meeting anyone.

In the fourth he encountered a sleepy porter, who did not even look at him.

In the fifth he stopped to put his hand over his heart. It sounded

louder than the pounding of the wheels upon the tracks, he felt. He paused before the curtains of number eight, thinking.

Suppose he had not counted correctly. Or suppose Betty, awakened unexpectedly, should scream? It would place him in an awkward position. Then all at once he heard a sound of muffled sobbing. He bent lower.

"Betty," he whispered, "Betty . . ."

"Oh, Dickon, I thought you had run away from me," she whimpered.

II

Four o'clock. A vague grayness like a thin mist was beginning to mingle with the darkness. Along the steel roadbed the train lumbered heavily while the couplings whined and rattled.

Dickon Russell stepped into the corridor with his bathrobe wound around him, and made his way cautiously towards the rear. Though he moved carefully, he was proud and exultant. Not Bill Martin, himself, could have shown a superior craft in overcoming circumstance.

Through three cars Dickon made his progress unchallenged, and with larger confidence entered the fourth. He opened the rear door of the latter briskly, and then stopped, frozen in a nerveless horror.

There was a vague sound just behind him. He glanced across his shoulder and saw a porter yawning near the door of the smoking compartment.

"Porter," said Dickon, "where—where's the rest of the train?"

"Is it the second section you means? That done went to Buffalo, suh. At Albany she switched off."

The porter jumped. Dickon had given a low but quite audible groan. His wits came to his rescue for a fleeting moment. He pretended to stretch himself.

"Well, I think I'll turn in again," he said with a dismal imitation of weariness.

He wandered back through the car. His mind refused to function for him. He was conscious of a vast but intangible fear. One thought only occupied his attention; the dawn was coming up, and he would have to exhibit himself before long in a traveling costume that consisted solely of a bathrobe and a pair of heelless slippers.

He noticed suddenly that in his abstraction he had reached Betty's berth in car two. There was nothing to do but get inside and tell her what had happened. She listened to his low recital with ominous silence, and then at the very end she began to cry.

"I knew I shouldn't ever have met you," she wailed softly. "Oh, Dickon, darling, you've disgraced me. I'll never be able to hold up my head again. Oh, oh, oh! Aunt Wilhelmina was right about you. Oh, Dickon!"

Dickon rubbed his chin and ruefully considered this greeting. He felt that it was hardly sympathetic.

It seemed to him that he was beginning to find out things about Betty already that proved what he had vaguely suspected: maybe she was human. But he held his tongue, and tried to think of ways to get out of his predicament.

Betty, once her crying had subsided, fell peacefully into slumber, but Dickon lay starkly awake, revolving a whirl of expedients and empty hopes. And in another hour he was so torn by the various pictures of his imagination, pictures of jails, of a procession through city streets in a barrel, of Uncle Algernon Fennor as an accusing magistrate, of a life sentence at hard labor in some Canadian prison, that through sheer exhaustion he fell asleep himself.

When he awoke Betty had her clothes on and was preparing to leave the berth. Now that he had rested, Dickon's brain was clearer, and for all that his situation seemed an awkward one, it did not seem quite so grave.

A faint noise of talk in the corridor where the passengers were rising and threading their way to the washrooms came to his ears, presenting to him the need for an immediate plan of action.

"Betty," he said, "if anyone asks you, tell him I'm sick. Maybe they'll let me stay like this till we reach Montreal."

Dickon lay back, listening to the low sounds around him with an attentive ear. Presently he heard the call for breakfast, and sighed. Endless minutes dragged by, and while he waited for Betty's return, he tried to shape his wandering fancies into a definite plan.

It was clear to him that it would be more than difficult to remain any length of time where he was. He heard people passing by, and now and then a cheerful snatch of voices. He reflected that there were still those in the world who were happy.

When at length someone paused near the curtains of number eight it was the porter and not Betty. Dickon gripped the edge of the berth.

He expected to be recognized at once as a result of his talk with the man when he had boarded the train in New York. But the porter merely shook the blankets as if to awaken him, and surveyed him with dull, unremembering eyes. Quite suddenly, with all the beauty of a vision, a very simple, feasible idea came to Dickon.

"Porter," he said in a whisper, "how soon before we reach a station?"

"Half an hour, suh."

"Do we stay there any time?"

"Ten minutes, suh."

"Then—then I want you to do something for me. I want you to step out and buy me some clothes—any kind will do. I'll pay you well. That is, my wife will. She'll pay you anything. Do you think you could get enough clothes for me in ten minutes?"

The porter merely nodded as if it were some trivial, everyday request, and before Dickon could continue

the discussion, he had moved away. When Betty appeared, Dickon told her triumphantly what he had contrived, and she seemed relieved.

After she had left him, Dickon peered through the slit of the curtains and saw that all the berths except his were made up already. However, he had only half an hour to wait for liberation. He prayed that nothing, nevertheless, would interfere with his staying where he was for the present.

That half hour seemed longer than any other to Dickon Russell; he had no watch, and tried to count the minutes until he gave himself a headache. Then the train slowed up, and stopped with a lurch beside a long platform. Suppose that stupid porter had forgotten?

Dickon trembled at the thought of exposure. He waited nervously, but it was not until the train slowly puffed away that the porter appeared before his berth.

"Here dey is, suh!" he said, and shot something in at Dickon. With a gaping mouth Dickon picked up a druggist's medicine bottle. Upon it was inscribed in clear lettering: *Oil of Cloves.*

For some minutes thereafter he lay in his berth in a stupor. He felt that he wanted to laugh hilariously. The end of the world might come for all he cared. He was roused by Betty when she thrust her head through the curtains. In broken sentences he told her what had happened. "But the porter wants to make up the berth," she informed him fretfully. "Dickon, you ought not to be here. I told him you weren't well, but he only grumbled. Said he'd have to make you get out.

"And I've told everybody. One man—an awfully nice man; he had the bluest eyes!—offered to go through the train for a doctor."

"For God's sake," Dickon pleaded, "stop him. If a doctor comes here, he'll make me get up surely. Dearest, do you suppose the next time the train stops, you could get off and buy something in a hurry that I could wear?"

"I'll—I'll try," she said. "I've got to go now. It looks queer—my standing here like this talking to you."

This time it was an hour before the train stopped again, an hour that for Dickon Russell was never recalled in later days without a shudder. When he heard the wheels grinding, as they slowed down, it seemed to him that it was only in time to save his reason.

The train did not wait this time, it started in a minute or so, then stopped with a jerk. Dickon heard voices, a vague sound of cries, and they were off once more. He fought to control his impatience as he waited for Betty to appear. Could she really have gotten him a suit of clothes in that limited time? Had, horrible thought, the train gone off without her?

Betty, herself, breathing hard, suddenly pushed her head in through the curtains.

"Oh, Dickon," she whispered, "I almost lost the train. Did you hear

them? They stopped it. I ran so hard I think I've hurt myself. And I didn't have time for anything except—except this."

She tore open a small package and dangled before Dickon's horrified attention a prettily striped silk necktie.

For some seconds he could not find his voice. He said at last in a muffled tone:

"And you pretended to love me!" He began to laugh softly and mirthlessly.

"I'm sure it's no laughing matter," she said.

"The thought of my—of my wandering around," he got out with difficulty, "with nothing on except a necktie! It would create a sensation, wouldn't it? And what am I going to do now?"

At the station at which Betty had descended to make her swift and unsuccessful shopping tour, a passenger had gotten on, a tall, lean man with a ruddy face. He had taken the seat opposite Dickon's berth and deposited a suitcase on the floor. Glancing across the aisle, Dickon saw that he had left, very probably for the smoking room. So it was that the last expedient came to him.

"You've got to steal that suitcase for me," he said grimly. "There may be an extra suit in it. Over there."

"I?" Betty whispered back. "Dickon, you don't know what you're saying."

"No one will find out. They'll think it's yours you're taking."

"It isn't that. It's that I don't want to steal. I've heard of wives whose husbands made them into thieves, but I—I never thought—"

"You've got to!" said Dickon rapidly. "We'll pay him afterwards. Besides they won't let me stay where I am much longer. And I'm hungry, too. Suppose they make me get out as I am!"

Betty cast one fearful glance around, seized the suitcase, lifted it spasmodically into Dickon's berth, and fled as if from an assassin.

III

With trembling fingers Dickon opened the suitcase, and a little sound of relief issued from his lips. He pulled out a checked suit of the variety that the English comedians of musical comedies wear to enhance their humor. In five minutes he was clothed in a coat that pinched his shoulders and hung to his knees, and had put on shoes in which his feet swam with dismaying ease. Fashion, however, was far from troubling him.

He slid out of his berth, kicked the stolen suitcase back to its place, and looked around him. Eyes were lifted, staring at him curiously; he reddened. Then he caught sight of Betty and made his way to her side in the shambling gait that was necessary in order to keep his shoes on his feet.

He put his hand over hers but did not speak. The next moment out of the tail of his eye he saw the lean,

ruddy man, whose baggage he had pilfered, return to his seat from the smoking compartment.

Dickon, in spite of himself, could not take his fascinated gaze from the stranger. Suppose he recognized his own clothes on another man? Dickon shrank back in the attempt to make himself as small as possible.

The next moment the lean stranger bent towards his suitcase. Dickon held his breath. The stranger unfastened the clasps in the idle manner of one who rummages for a book. He plunged his hand inside, drew it out, gazed hard at the depleted contents of the bag, and lifted his head with a scowl of perplexity.

What happened next was chaotic and disordered. The lean man's eyes fell full upon Dickon, remained there, staring, and thereafter paced through a hideous moment to the ultimate realization. Rising precipitately to his feet he advanced with clenched fists in Dickon's direction.

"You give me my clothes!" he cried at the top of his voice.

Dickon rose clumsily, almost tripping on the too long trousers.

"I—I won't," he stammered feebly. He heard a hubbub behind and in front of him. He was aware that he was the center of an audience that comprised all the other occupants of the car. All at once a conductor appeared, pushing his way to the lean man's side.

"What is this? What's the trouble?"

"This fellow stole my suit," said the lean man with the ruddy face. "Look at him! Ask him to deny it! Look at him! It's a great misfortune if I can't take a small business trip without—"

"Come out here," said the conductor peremtorily.

Dickon meekly followed him into the corridor near the smoking compartment. He was too crushed to wish for anything except the release of having it all over. Better to begin breaking stones in a prison yard at once than go through this ordeal of humiliation any longer.

The stranger followed him. Behind, with a handkerchief, clenched in her hands, came Betty. Dickon wondered dully whether she would come and talk to him through the bars after he was sentenced.

"Well, how do you explain this?" the conductor asked in a heavy voice.

"I stole it," said Dickon drearily. "I—I had to."

"He didn't. I did!" Betty declared.

"What's this? Oh, you're in it, too, are you?" the lean man demanded. "A gang of you operate on these trains, I suppose. Conductor, as soon as we reach Montreal, I want you to see that they don't get away while I notify the police."

"Very well. Only I'll ask you not to dispute while you're on my train."

The conductor turned his back, and shrugging his shoulders, moved away.

Betty began to sob.

"Oh, you're cruel!" she declared. "It isn't Dickon's fault. He has clothes of his own, he really has.

Only they're on their way to Buffalo. You can ask anyone if we're not honest. Or telegraph to my father, Anthony Fennor of White Plains."

The lean man considered her carefully, and when he spoke, his voice was noticeably quieter.

"Suppose you tell me exactly how everything happened," he said.

And Dickon, in a voice shaken with emotion, told him the tale of the last twelve hours. The lean man began to laugh, silently but expressively. It seemed that he would never stop that low, gasping sound. At last he said:

"My boy, I'm going to withdraw my charge. You may have that suit as a gift from me. A wedding gift. I owe you one, you know."

"I don't understand," said Dickon wearily, hardly yet aware of the fact that the prison gates were not to clang behind him after all. "You owe me one? Who—who are you?"

"Who am I?" retorted the lean man with an agreeable twinkle in his eyes that seemed to declare the checked suit would not be the last of his gifts, "who am I? Why, I'm your Uncle Algernon!"

Two Cars

By Kay Anglay

WILLIAM had a powerful car and Harold had a secondhand flivver. No one could understand why Muriel preferred to go with Harold when William was so anxious to take her everywhere, but the reason was not hard to find.

When she went out with William in the daytime, he stopped his car whenever they came to a beautiful stretch of mountain, river or sea. At night, he called her attention to the silvery moonlight and the wonderful stars.

When she went with Harold, he never troubled her about scenery, the moon or the stars; but he could drive with one hand, and he knew all the quiet places where one could dim lights and stop awhile.

The Miss-Adventures of Morton

A 'ROUND THE WORLD SERIES

I—The Girl Who Came Back

By Bob Dexter

FROM where the Hotel Moana rears a stately head to gaze out to sea across a mask of coconut palms and tropical vegetation fringing Waikiki Beach, Honolulu, there creeps a long, narrow pier. For a hundred yards or more it pushes an inquisitive nose into the emerald Pacific and plants its feet firmly in the white sand of the ocean's bed, better to bear the weight of promenading pork butchers and retired delicatessen men "doing the South Seas."

That phrase must be quoted, because nothing further from the—No! To proceed would be to rend the mighty work of the boosters who have put their shoulders behind Hawaii. If there be kindly, respectable old souls who still believe what they read in the steamship guides, far be it from me to mar the delights of their anticipations.

Anyhow, this pier is so long that it finds itself in deep water. The rollers curl in, spit foam about its furthermost limbs and go swishing and slopping beneath its sturdy stomach.

Its head is a cupola which shelters four or five semi-nude Hawaiians during the heat of midday and all sorts and conditions of lovers far into the night.

Occasionally these native boys take a dive into the water, but mostly they loll around, twanging ukuleles or steel guitars, and neither toil nor spin beyond the vocal effort necessary to win a stray half dollar from a newly-arrived flapper in return for a dirge.

Aye, a dirge of the deepest dye! That's the only way to describe real Hawaiian melody. Think of the well known wangdoodle mourning for its firstborn, or the wail of a Chinese widow, and you have some idea of its melancholy.

On this particular morning the number in the cupola was six, five natives and a white man, who, coolly attired in ducks and silk shirt, balanced himself on the rail listening to the boys' arguments.

He was there because he had nothing to do. That he had nothing to do was due to the oversight of every fair huntress from the Fish Markets to Diamond Head; for this was good-looking prey.

He was about twenty-three, with a healthily browned skin and a quizzical sort of grin that would have branded him as Irish to anyone who didn't know he was Scotch. But the Highlands were four generations behind, and the clan McDowell had thawed a lot since then. In America the heather had mated with the black-eyed Susans, and Morton McDowell leaned toward the latter.

Morton! A fancy name with which to ornament him! But at college they had clipped it to Mort, and though there was nothing dead about this happy-go-lucky sojourner, the nickname stuck.

Listlessly he watched the natives tossing pennies, and ruefully thought of all the songs that extolled Waikiki. Then he thought of all the profanity he knew and used it mentally without a single reservation. He had had three days of Honolulu, and home seemed fair to look upon.

Suddenly his lethargy vanished, however. A glance out to sea brought him renewed interest in life. A long breaker was rolling in with a full-head of foam.

Couched in it, in superb "shooting" position, was a heavy surf board, and on that board knelt a girl. Her balance was perfect. She brought it up from the first dip of the break and "shot" clear, riding the crest until she was sure of it, and then rising to her own full height with the board's nose boiling beautifully through the water and the foam swirling past her ankles. In the thrill of a perfect "shoot" she stretched out her arms and went sailing shoreward.

A few minutes later she came paddling back, sprawling happily on her board and dexterously piloting it through the breaks. A second wave; a second "shoot." This time she passed within ten yards of the cupola, and with a fling of her hand acknowledged the applause of a good-looking stranger there.

The fact that she did respond to his salute gave additional zest to Mort's observation. If Neptune ever had a family this was his prize daughter, perfect in physique and, but for a tightly-fitting black costume running from low neck to halfway down her thighs, as free from tramel as Neptune would have been.

On legs and arms and chest was a tan of such softness as to convince him that Nature had intended her as a blonde, and had had its own way at any rate with the hair concealed beneath a red cap.

When she returned he hailed her. "How's the water?"

"Fine," she retorted with the freedom of the seas. "Come on in."

Being unable to "shoot" breakers, Mort felt his present position to be of greater vantage. He was content to watch, while she charmed. He saw her send her board skimming on to another wave, coming still closer to the pier this time, churning up the water in a surge.

Suddenly she dropped to her knees and frantically pulled on the side of the board. Even before she

realized it a wave current had caught her and held her to a course which she could not deviate. She was heading straight into the piles.

She proved herself feminine when she allowed panic to overtake her and make her forget that safety lay in diving. Instead she clung desperately to the board.

The end of the pier shook to the crash. There was a flurry of foam and splinters and a string of bubbles to mark where the unconscious girl was sinking.

Without waiting to throw off his coat McDowell dived, and came up a few moments later with the body clutched in one arm. The five natives were waiting to drag him to the pier when he paddled to the steps, but he refused their offers of further assistance.

The force of the collision had only stunned the girl who revived slowly in the cupola. To Mort her thanks more than compensated for his wetting; and in the half hour which elapsed before she felt strong enough to walk they chatted along amiably. Her name, she told him, was Lucille Houston; that she lived in a bungalow in the second grove behind the Aquarium; and if he wouldn't mind helping her she would like to start for home. Besides, his clothes were drenched and he could dry them there.

Her home was typical of a hundred others along Waikiki—white and well netted against flies and mosquitoes. Tall coconut palms encircled it; flaming hibiscus ran riot in a patch which once had been a garden; bougainvillea had crept up one corner of the veranda and was sending disorderly tendrils along the walls.

Inside were evidences of a "once-upon-a-time." Not that the place was untidy or ill-cared for; the touch of a woman's hand was everywhere apparent; but more than that was necessary to cover up curtains that were old beyond mending and fiber mats frayed by the scuff of many feet.

Furniture was scantier even than is usual in the bungalows of Honolulu. A battered talking machine stood in one corner. Sea grass chairs were rickety and bewhiskered with use.

A bureau boasted a shell-encrusted horseshoe, a few strings of red and black beads, and sundry costless knickknacks of native manufacture. In all this was the home of one whose fortunes had run to seed.

"You may change in there," Lucille remarked, indicating a tiny dressing room. "You'll find an old bathrobe and some of—" She hesitated in confusion. "Some clothes to wear until yours dry."

When Mort emerged with his own wet garments in a bundle, the girl was moving about the house in a kimono. She was stockingless, her feet held in a pair of Japanese slippers. And in confirmation of the man's surmise, her hair was blonde, piled in a mass and held secure by a braid which circled her head.

Her eyes, he saw, were blue and

youthful, and though at the corners were the faintest suspicions of lines a glance at her face as a whole convinced him they were the marks of worry, not of age. And he wondered.

"Are you going to stay in Honolulu long?" she inquired when, having hung out his clothes, he joined her on the veranda.

"No, just trotting through," he admitted, and provoked a sigh from the depths of her heart.

"You don't know how lucky you are."

"Why?"

She looked back into the room, gesturing hopelessly.

"You can see for yourself. It's no place for a man or woman with ambition."

"Yet you stay here?"

"Only because ambition is about dead. Burned to death! You see I brought my ambitions with me from San Francisco. I worked on a newspaper, doing social notes and all the jobs a man wouldn't tackle.

"I had heard about Hawaii, so I packed my best hopes with my best dress and came here to do what I always wanted to; write wonderful colorful things, things I'd seen, things I'd felt. But now—" The unexpected cynicism of her voice became a shade deeper, bitterer. "If I wrote of what I'd seen and felt, not a paper in the world would dare publish it."

Unable to think of suitable sympathy Mort remained quiet and permitted Lucille to proceed—very candidly, too.

"The only clean thing I've found here is the surf on Waikiki, but today even that turned on me. Life's funny."

"Why?"

"Because we make it so, I suppose."

"But what happened to the ambitions?"

"Everything—when they got married, that's all," she declared, almost defiantly turning the palm of her left hand downward. There was no ring on the third finger, but a white band stencilled against the brown of her skin betrayed the existence of one up to a recent date.

Thoughtfully she rubbed the mark as though to erase a memory. "Marriage isn't always what you expect it to be, not when you see the man going to hell on Hawaiian gin. But it's all over now."

"Dead?" McDowell queried, and quickly rebuked himself for opening a wound when the girl looked right past him through the netting of the veranda to the grove and nodded. "Then why don't you go back?" he suggested.

"Because at twenty-two I'm an old woman, and I'd be as lonely there as I am here. Besides I—I have no money, to be absolutely frank."

Now McDowell had heard that tale before, but hitherto it had always been accompanied by a hopeful, questioning, appealing uplift of the face or a well-trained dewiness about the eyes. None of those symptoms were present, however.

The girl, neither asking nor ex-

pecting assistance, would have accepted any offer as an insult. To himself Mort whispered "Poor little devil" and felt perplexed. Inspiration brought another question.

"You're not really lonely here, are you?"

Lucille flashed on him, all bitterness lost from her voice, her eyes laughing at him. "Now be careful," she joked. "Remember the trouble which started when the Lord asked Adam that very question."

"But this isn't Eden," he reminded her and brought her leaping to her feet, grasping his hand and smiling.

"Found—one man who doesn't believe that this is the Eden of the Pacific. Shake, brother, shake!"

And when Mort, reclad in his own dry clothes, left the house he was delighted with the morning's adventure, keenly expectant of another that would commence when the mantle of tropical night wrapped Waikiki in its romance. That's what the smile and promise of a surf siren will do for a man.

But another masculine voice rumbled sleepily in the bungalow he had just left.

"Who was that guy I heard you talking to, Luce?"

"Oh, just another boy who saved me from a watery grave, Stan."

A chuckle rolled through the bedroom door.

II

Lucille Houston was not the first fair damsel-in-distress to be accorded the assistance of Morton McDowell. Others before her had acquired the knowledge that he was a highly-qualified live saver, in the non-natatorial sense, and profited by it.

There had been Delight Duquesne, pronounced Du-quain, a dashing brunette who displayed grogeons limbs in silken tights at roof garden shows when times were hard; and Marguerite Le Faneau, whose acquaintance with the tongue of her supposedly French ancestors was limited to "consommé," "charlotte russe" and the full and unabridged chorus of "Mademoiselle of Armeutieres"; and Elsa Urquahart, who baptised herself from a serial story; and—well, six all told.

Their actions had destroyed Mort's wholeness of heart; their threats of actions had almost annihilated the profits his father, Wiltshire McDowell, made from three Broadway attractions and seven shows on the road.

Old Wiltshire had allowed his son to blink at the white lights at the age of twenty-one, and three months later was settling Delight Duquesne's breach-of-promise demands for ten thousand dollars.

But this he considered as tuition fee; for, if the boy were to follow in his father's footsteps as a producer of girly-whirls, he must be taught more than stage technique and audience value. The human side of things behind the screen must be understood.

But Mort needed more than one

lesson. Graduate and post-graduate courses were heaped upon him. First a brunette, then a peroxide blonde, then a girl whose hair was as red as ox-blood; and more until the tally was six, all demanding financial fixative for shattered hearts, some in cash, others in kind.

And Wiltshire McDowell found the latter the more expensive; for "kind" was a fat part in a new show, and the critics had a habit of pounding at the weak link thus constituted and completely ignoring the perfectly strong and artistic ones that held it iu place.

Mort could not help himself, however. In the lives of chorus girls he found woe in quantities. He was susceptible to their appeal, blind to their cunning; he made promises from the bottom of a chivalrous heart and a flat pocketbook.

But those promises were always negotiated at the old address. Truly was Mort their meat; verily were they his father's poison.

In two years the old man came to liken himself to various things—the only pin in a bowling alley; a four-masted barque laboring out of one wave only to be smothered in another; the doormat at Delmonico's main entrance.

When at last he was bruised all over, he called the prodigal into his presence. As cheerfully as a sun-ray piercing a storm cloud, the boy entered, accepted a seat, a cigarette and a forbidding stare from his father, who came quickly to the point.

"Morton, I'm sick of this!"

"Of what, Dad?"

"You know damn well! For two years I've been acting as a private mint to half a dozen blackmailing beauties who had attached themselves to you. I've been stung so often that I look like a soup strainer. And now it's got to stop!"

"Well, I couldn't help it, Dad. I didn't do it intentionally."

"Of course you didn't. A fool never does. It hurts me to say this, but you're a fool when it comes to women, boy."

Mort would have jumped to his own defense had he not been aware that long suffering gave his parent certain privileges.

"They say a fool and his money are soon parted. I only wish the same applied to a fool and his women. Want to be a producer, don't you?"

"Yes— and a playwright."

"Well you'll never be either. I've let you run for two years, and you're as easy now as on the first day you saw Wrigley's sign. Producer!" McDowell snorted the word, spat it out as though it burned his throat. "Producer! My God! You'd have every woman from leading lady to thirty-dollar chorus girl running you and the whole show and fighting like a hundred tabbies on a fence, within two weeks. But you won't. Not with my shows!"

He brought his two fists pounding to the table and glared at the boy.

"Listen! I'm going to give you one more chance. You've been stung six times. Now you've got to go out and *sting* six times. Understand?"

Young McDowell, flushing a little, rose abruptly. "No. I *don't!*"

"Then sit down and listen. I'm going to send you around the world for a year. In that time you've got to meet six women and make them fall in love with you. Yet you must come back to me unmarried, and with six tokens as proof of your conquests."

"You mean you're sending me around the world just to victimize six women?" Mort demanded indignantly. "If that's the sort of thing you want me to be you can go—"

"Stop! I've said nothing about victimizing women. You merely have to *escape* them. Boy, I've watched you, and I know you're as straight as a two-foot rule—too darned straight for Broadway. I always want you to be that way, though.

"Nevertheless, you must listen to this proposition. For every girl you haven't been able to dodge on Broadway you've got to escape one somewhere else. I'm not going to give you any assistance beyond paying bare transportation and a hundred dollars a week for you to live on.

"No use wiring or cabling me for money if you get into trouble, because I won't answer. Unmarried you go, unmarried you return—but with the symbols of affection of six women.

"If you can do it, boy, I'll say you've served your apprenticeship and give you every chance as producer or playwright. You see, Mort, I'm getting on in years, and I want you to take my place. But until I can make you girlproof I have to keep working. Now do you understand?"

The boy strummed the table with his fingers. "What's the alternative?"

"Glad you asked that. If you won't accept my proposition, or if you fall down on it, I will instruct my attorneys to pay you fifty dollars a week for the rest of your life and refuse to honor any of your debts. How'd you like to see this in the papers?—'I, Wiltshire McDowell, give notice that I will not be responsible for any debts contracted in my name by my son, Morton McDowell.' I'll do it, too."

Now Mort, despite his failings, cherished ambitions to add wattage to the luster of his father's name by finding success as playwright as well as producer. At first he had been inclined to doubt the sincerity of the astonishing proposal, but he was feeling the iron in the old man's will.

"There you are!" Wiltshire broke in upon his cogitations. "Be what you like—producer and playwright or Broadway bum."

And so Mort, moving before a transcontinental breeze, landed in San Francisco and from there

shipped out to Honolulu with a letter of credit that called for the payment of one hundred dollars every Monday morning and first-class passage to wherever he wished to go.

Even before he realized it, he was lolling in an automobile, scooting along the palm-fringed roads and past marshes that were silvered by the moon, to Waikiki and the beginning of his misadventures.

III

THE strains of an orchestra crooning a fox trot in the hotel seeped in a haunting whisper to the beach. Couples floated mistily along the pier; others pacing the water's edge were flowing phantoms to the pair who stood in the shadows of the grove.

Lazy rollers thudded on a distant sandbar and, awakened by the roar of their own voices, came seething shoreward. Palms rustled sleepily in a breeze that bore from the sea the wail of a gull as the only discord in the soft, impulsive symphony of night.

For four nights now Mort McDowell and Lucille Houston had lingered in the grove, time and tide forgetting, but mutual understanding in every thought or word or silence. Then at long, long last, they would dawdle back past the Aquarium and up to the little bungalow with the unkempt garden, and pause there to catch every delirious surge of parting in an embrace that provoked mad impetuosity and Spartan restraint.

But when "Good night" really was good night, Mort would stride back to the beach to crystallize tangled emotion in bitter self-contempt, "You cad!"

On those occasions he sought the solace of distance and squatted on the sand with fingers locked about his knees, pipe wedged between his teeth, eyes staring into the indigo of merging sea and sky.

His "Hymn of Hate" was of himself and of the mission that had brought him to Honolulu. Just what it meant he never really realized until the first night he met Lucille.

The girl was irresistible. When she came darting through the groves, a flash of white in a deep blue mantle, it seemed only natural that his arms should go out to catch her, to imprison the diaphanous elfin, to hold her there for just that moment too long. But her reproach sounded almost like an invitation. Yet when he left her and reined his thoughts out there on the beach, he swore he would never see her again.

Good old resolution!

He went back to the city to his hotel and resolutely set his face against Waikiki on the morrow. But torrid day wore into clammy dusk; and the narrow streets were filled with the sweaty odor of black and tan and yellow civilization; and the breeze that swept up from the harbor was hot and sooty and laden with the smoke of shipping.

Waikiki would be wonderfully cool. Besides there could be no harm in his meeting her just once more—for the very last time.

The girl was magnetic. About her was an appeal which crowded every safe and sane thought from his mind. Different, far different she from any other he had known. A bundle of lovable and amazing contrasts.

Now as wistful, as soft of soul as a man would hope his sister to be; now cynical, sophisticated, disillusioned, doubting; now cool, clear but as unfathomable as the Pacific; and, again as the ocean, vibrant with deep tides of yearning.

When he was with her he loved her. When he left her he sat in review of his every word and action, wondering why. He was like a man emerging from an alcoholiday with a hundred regrets. He knew his was not love, just fascination, emotional intoxication. That knowledge made him hate himself the more.

Had he only loved her there never would have been a single regret; not even the consideration of his father's frenzy would have checked him. She was the sort of girl who would stand by a man and help him, the sort he ought to marry.

And Lucille? When she crept into the bungalow each night she would sit in a creaking chair and watch through half-closed eyes the man who sprawled on the veranda smoking his pipe and firing an occasional comment at her.

So this was the fourth meeting by the beach.

Lucille's voice came tensely through a pregnant silence.

"Mort, I suppose it's foolish of me to speak thus, but don't you ever think that some day there must be an end to all this, one way or another?"

At times, when by himself, McDowell had prayed for the opportunity for a discussion of the future thus opened. But now he was with her; he loved her in the spell of her presence. For the first time, though, his attempt to draw her into his arms was resisted.

"Please, dear," Lucille whispered. "When you hold me I can't think clearly. And I've got lots of things to think about now. Sooner or later you'll be traveling on—without me, I suppose. Don't deny it, dear. I think I know; because happiness never lasts long in my life. But when you go I want to be with you, perhaps in actuality, perhaps only in memory."

She slipped her fingers into the low-cut V of her blouse, and when she withdrew them her hand was closed. "If I give you something, will you keep it always—always—just to remember me by? Promise!"

"Always, dearest."

McDowell took her hand in his and gently pried the fingers open. In the palm lay the little golden band which had tattooed the telltale circle of white upon her brown finger.

"It's just my wedding ring," she

breathed. "Take it. Forget what I told you about the man who gave it; just think that moulded into it is every hope I ever held before I met you."

McDowell's voice was hoarse, choked. "Lucille, you don't mean it. You can't want me to have it!"

And there was a reflection of the man's emotion in the girl's whisper:

"What else have I to offer? Dearest, a woman's trust in her own love is symbolized in the ring that marriage brings her. What may happen afterwards to shatter that trust no one can tell. But her love remains unbroken. For a while it may sleep like the sun in winter, but it always comes back to her, even in spite of herself. Once I swore that I could never love another man—and then I met you. Once I told you ambitions were dead, but—"

She turned quickly from him, not in tears, but in tight-lipped suppression of herself. When she faced him again there was a steadying smile in her eyes. She closed his unwilling fingers over the ring, and, putting her arm about him, urged him towards the bungalow with just one plea: "No matter what happens, remember me by it."

The journey through the groves was slow and silent. A shadow deeper than the night seemed to have enfolded the girl, while the man felt reason stirring to gather his scattering senses. At the fringe of the thicket Lucille halted him.

"Don't come any further to-night, dear. Leave me here."

Wondering, he looked down at her. "What's the matter, honey?"

"Nothing, only—"

"Oh, you're all upset over something. Why, for three nights now I've said good-by over there by the bougainvillea and it's got to be a habit." He forced jocularity into his voice and, picking up the girl, carried her bodily through the scrub to the bungalow. "I've got sentimental reasons for wanting to kiss you good night over there," he laughed.

And, oh, it was good to hold her thus, bundled deliciously close to him, for the moment. An instant so, and then the girl straining from him instead of to him, and her hand placed on his lips to hush his question.

"Don't—please, Mort! You don't understand."

A calm voice drawled in upon them from the darkness of the veranda.

"No, Luce; I guess he doesn't. But I do, although it's taken me a long time to learn."

The interruption was startling. The girl's hand on McDowell's face grew cold; confusedly he let her slip back to her feet; and the fear which stabbed him was for her, not for himself.

"Who is it?" he whispered; but her reply was a breathless, terrified, "Get away, Mort! Quickly!"

A satirical chuckle came from the veranda. "That's quite unnecessary, Luce. Why don't you bring your dear friend into the house?"

IV

INSIDE the bungalow the two men faced one another in a moment of measurement, greatly to McDowell's advantage. He was in perfect condition, ready to finish anything his opponent started.

True, the other had once been of as fine physique as himself, but years of tropical torpor had exacted their toll, and canker-marks of island dissipation were upon him.

There was neither freshness in his eyes nor will in the cut of his jaw; and while he could not have been more than thirty-five, he was gradually becoming a shell. His clothes hung limply and grubbily about him; his open, collarless shirt emphasized the scrawniness of his neck and the hawky narrowness of his face.

Somewhere behind them stood Lucille, never moving.

"So you're another of those fellows who think, because they are a thousand odd miles from home, they are at liberty to take any man's wife!" The voice was cold with a taunting undercurrent. He chose his words deliberately.

"Wife! Whose wife?" McDowell came back in surprise.

"My wife. I happen to be the man who added Houston to Lucille's name."

"But I thought you were dead!" Stark amazement marked Mort's gasp. "If I had known—"

"Don't alibi! It doesn't go. Lucille!" he called sharply, and seized the girl's arm as she crept forward, avoiding McDowell's eyes. "Did you tell him you were married?"

As yet the damning facts of his position had not thoroughly penetrated the daze in which Mort found himself; but through the fog he caught Lucille's silent appeal, a spur to his chivalry. And he answered for her.

"She did!"

"And in spite of that you told her you loved her, I suppose. That you'd marry her if only I were out of the way? And all the other damned lies?"

Houston's malice showed in his thin smile as neither of the pair denied his accusation.

"Well, I'm going to make you live every one of those lies," he blazed suddenly. With a twist he sent Lucille spinning into collision with McDowell. "You said you wanted her. Well, take her. She's yours. I'm through!"

"Stan, stop! You don't know what you're doing." For the first time the girl spoke, and with hands outstretched approached him. "You can't do it!"

"Can't I? S-a-a-y!" Houston's eyes fixed her left hand. "Where's your ring?"

Involuntarily McDowell's fingers relaxed. Through the moments of the dire interlude he had been vaguely aware that he was clutching something in his hand, that he had held it there ever since he left the beach with Lucille.

Now, in spite of himself, his

grasp was opening. The yellow token of a woman's deceit slipped slowly from his palm and rang on the floor, glistening as it spun, dully menacing when it came to rest.

Houston's glance rose sneeringly from it. "I'm glad you have it, because you'll need it. And as I like to encourage thrift among you—er—you newlyweds, I'll give you the ring for nothing. You can—*Ah! Would you?*"

Misunderstanding Mort's sudden move he fell back a pace, but steadied himself as the other merely stooped to retrieve the ring.

Once more it lay on McDowell's palm. He gazed at it without seeing it. Instead he was looking backwards, watching his father's face and listening to his threat: "Unmarried you go; unmarried you return. Producer and playwright, or Broadway bum?"

Seconds of indecision thus, before the quizzical smile stole back to his face. "Thank you; I'm going to use it," he said to Houston, and then, walking deliberately across to Lucille, took her hands. "You said you would go away with me, dear," he murmured.

But the girl's eyes were turned to the floor, her head was bent forward and she seemed to be swaying. In the tense quiet he could hear her breathing, sharp little intakes which sounded like sobs. Slowly she freed her hands from his grasp and held them behind her, limply, yet away from him.

"Morton — Morton — don't touch me," she pleaded without looking up. "I'm—oh, God! I'm worse than a leper—and this is a frame-up."

Low though her voice was, it carried to Houston. "Luce!" he threw at her in a hiss of warning; but she spun on him.

"For God's sake don't make me any lower than I am. Let me be clean just once!"

Again she turned to McDowell. "Mort, you ought to kill me—and him. But we're not worth it. This *is* a frame-up, the sort of thing we've been working for three years along the beach.

"But before, when we caught them, they were always willing to to pay to get out of it. But—but you're the first man to want to marry a—a—a—oh, Mort, you must know what I am!

"We framed you the first day we saw you on the pier. I went after you to get you—and instead—you got me. To-night I tried to tell you, to keep you away from the house, but you wouldn't let me. We had everything fixed—except this!"

Another long pause, wherein Houston, who had been hovering uncertainly beyond McDowell's reach, edged to the door. He had it half open to make his exit when Mort started towards him, but the girl clung to his arm.

"Let him go," she pleaded. "When he comes back I won't be here."

"Then you still think—"

"I don't think, Mort. I know. If I said I wanted to go away with you, even now, you'd take me.

You're that kind. But I wouldn't go with you, not if the whole island erupted. You're straight—the cleanest thing that has ever come into my life; and if I went with you I'd—God! It would be desecration."

Wearily she walked away from him to the veranda. It was cool, peaceful there; night brought the soothing calm of the infinite very, very close; and refreshed by it Lucille returned to the room.

"Mort," she whispered. "Will you shake hands and say good-by?"

Slowly he extended his hand to her. Again he became aware of the ring which in preoccupation he had slipped on his little finger; and his eyes asked a question. Her answer was from her heart.

"Keep it, please—as you said you would. I told you many lies, but I meant every word I said about that. A woman's trust in her love is shattered sometimes; but her love itself remains unbroken. That's why I want you to keep it, just for my sake. No one else in this world has a right to it, not even I; because it was never given to me."

Confession brought a pitiful little break in her voice. "I bought it myself. But I'm glad of it, because there's just one thing you have made it do for me—show me myself as I am."

As McDowell stepped thoughtfully through the groves the talking machine in the bungalow broke into a nasal wail. His ears picked up the air.

The composer of "Second-Hand Rose" may have thought he was adding to the gayety of nations.

But if only he could have heard it out there!

A woman's idea of promptness is that it consists in spending her husband's salary a month before he earns it.

The Embrace in the Dark

By Fred B. Mann

Darkness, even as distance, lends enchantment .

THE realization that he had been walking in his sleep came to the young man with a thrill of horror.

He had been in the rooming house only two nights, and now in the middle of the second he found himself standing in a strange room. He knew this by the darkness. His own had been dimly lighted by the electric lights on the street.

None of the occupants of the house was known to him. He had seen but two of them, the old lady who had rented him his quarters and who slept, he knew, on the ground floor, and a girl who had preceded him up the stairs that evening. When he had reached the top, the girl was gone.

He wondered now whether he was in a male or a female room.

Not a sound could be heard in the darkness, that seemed to clamp him like a vise, except the beating of his heart. That sounded to him like a steam hammer at work.

At length he felt that he must hazard a move. He must make an attempt to get out before the occupant shot at him or summoned the household with a scream. Shrinking deeper into his pajamas, he took a couple of cautious steps forward. Nothing happened. There was still no other movement within the room, no sound of breathing from him or her who must occupy it.

He had taken a few more steps when he stopped, his heart in his mouth. Standing silently before him was a white figure.

The young man was at a loss for words for a moment. The excuse of walking in one's sleep seemed, all at once, to be so threadbare, so flimsy, so bagged at the knees. It must have been used so often by gay Lotharios when discovered in the bedroom of a young woman.

At last, however, it seemed necessary to speak. "I—I beg your—your pardon," he began in a stuttering whisper. "I—I—"

His words hung helpless in the air. He seemed to have lost the power to send them to their destination equipped for proper landing.

Then to his great surprise that white form gave no indication that it had heard. It spoke not a word, and there was no movement from it save the gentle flutter of the feminine garment in which it was clothed.

Suddenly there came to the young

man recollection of the scene upon the stairs that evening. The unknown girl had looked back then—and smiled.

Remembering this, his mood changed. He was no longer afraid of being found in the room. He was no saint—if it pleased the girl to have him there, he was willing to be found.

She probably was making no noise lest others in neighboring rooms might be shocked. He took a chance—reached forward and started to throw his arm around that slender waist.

It was only a start. His hand came back before his arm had an opportunity to follow. He had encountered a pin. But he had run afoul of pins before. The lure of the girl's presence there in the dark led him to try again. This time it seemed as though a dozen of the barbs sank into his fingers.

"Say," he whispered, when he had removed his hand from his mouth where he had thrust it for relief, "your—your—er—costume must be trimmed with barbed wire."

Still no answer from the girl. But her silent coquetry was more alluring than if she had whispered loving words through the darkness. Though she were a walking pincushion he was determined now to hold her in his embrace. With a wide, very cautious sweep of his arm he, at last, clasped her around the waist.

At once a hundred pins seemed to be lancing him from shoulder to finger tips, and along with the pain of their presence there came to him a feeling of deep disgust. No yielding female figure was this inside his arm—he had been making amorous advances to the dressmaking form of the landlady.

Swearing softly, and feeling more foolish than a boy deceived into kissing his chum at a masquerade party, the young man stepped back. His arm did not follow. Though he had lost all desire to make love to that demure figure, he now found it firmly attached to him.

Apparently, a thousand pins had snagged the sleeve of his pajama coat and held it secure. Desperately he tugged to release it, and as an aid, threw out his free hand to push away the dummy. A million pins seemed to enter that hand.

And then, in his anger, not caring what noise might result, he freed himself violently, ripping from the stuffed siren—yielding to her pointed blandishments the greater portion of his pajama coat—even as Joseph yielded his coat to Potiphar's wife. The bruskness of his departure toppled her over, so that she crashed loudly to the floor; then lay quite still, a fallen woman of sawdust.

Storm Tossed

(*An Uncritical Review*)

By Thomas Grant Springer

EUGENE O'NEILL is one who walks by the side of the sea, seeking among the flotsam and jetsam that it casts up for salvage in the form of wrecked humanity. Even in "The Emperor Jones," that masterpiece of the jungle reaching out for its own, there was the murmur of the sea stirring through the leaves. In "Dif'rent" it is the sea and its ways that wrecked a woman's life ashore, and in "Gold" the treasure that lay across the sea was the tragic magnet that lured. All through "Beyond the Horizon" over the dim and distant hills the horizon stretched even beyond the sea itself.

And now in "Anna Christie" it is the sea's salt breath that washes clean a woman's heart and soul, even though it was the very sea that had first tainted it. And possibly, let us hope, the sea that he has loved and hated, the sea whose soul he has given us moaning through all the pitiless realism that he has depicted so vividly, may bear him up to a success that he so richly deserves, a commercial success I mean, for an artistic one he has always been to a few discerning souls whose hearts were fuller than their pockets.

Perhaps, like the sea, his own genius will wear down the rocky wall of convention, the seawall of architectural play-writing that has so long protected Broadway from the tide of thought, and will let in a little trickle of realism that, like the tiny stream in the dyke, may lead to a real flood that will carry audiences into depths that will be good for their dust dried souls.

In the first act of this moving episode we are asked to step into a low, waterfront saloon, one of those barnacle infested dens where sailors poisoned their minds and their bodies with liquid sin and met the sloppy sirens who haunted the slimy rocks of every port's waterfront.

Here we meet Chris Christopherson, a degenerate son of the Vikings, once a deep sea boson, now, sunken in age and drink, captain of a coal barge plying between New York and Boston. The captain's consort, one of those old harpies whose catering to mariners has robbed her of youthful charm, and whose long sharing of their vice, drink, has made her loving song a croaking echo, is waiting for Chris to finish his trick ashore before they again take to the sea together.

Marthy is a philosopher in love, a true sailor's sweetheart, ready to shift with any change of tide, and now the time has come for her to shift, for Chris receives a letter from his daughter, whom he has not seen for fifteen years, that she is coming

on from St. Paul to the only address he has ever given her.

Now Chris has always had a horror of the sea, for it has robbed him of his father, two brothers and two sons, and of his own manhood. He has told Anna that he is a janitor and left her all these years with the only relative his wife had, an uncle and some cousins in Minnesota. He is much perturbed that she is coming on, and more so that she may find him with such an amorously battered old hulk as Marthy, for, no matter what he has done himself, Chris has the masculine standard of feminine virtue.

He wants his girl to be clean and pure, and that is why he has left her in the country, and wishes her above all things to marry a man ashore, a man who tills the soil instead of plowing the sea, reaping the corruption of the filthy ports.

Now Marthy senses all this and, being a sensible person, sees that it is time for her to change her sailing master. She is a good old soul used to casting anchor wherever most convenient, and, as the only place Chris can bring his daughter is the scow, realizes that it should be free of her contamination if a young girl, unused to sailors' ways, is coming to ship with a father who has always been a stranger and now, with awakening parenthood, must steer his child's course through clean waters.

Chris is so delighted with her sensible outlook that he celebrates, not wisely but too much, and finds himself in a condition that requires food, so he retires to a nearby beanery for a bowl of beef stew.

Scarcely has he gone when into the siderоom comes a girl, only too plainly marked with the travel stains of those who walk the easiest way. .

She sets her battered suitcase down, looks about the place, notes Marthy and its general character and, true to type, orders whisky and a ginger ale chaser. Apologetically she asks Marthy to join her, explaining that she has been two days on the train and just out of the hospital.

Marthy accepts a tub of suds, but is for explaining her own character, when Anna—for it is the expected daughter—recognizes her as one of the sisterhood, in fact remarks that Marthy is herself forty years hence.

Then Anna tells her story, simply, as one woman to another and part of the life that each has led. She had been ruined by her cousin at sixteen. She had hated him and what he had accomplished, the drudgery of the farm and the continuance of the detested relation, and so had run away to St. Paul and become a nurse girl.

But other people's children did not protect her from pursuit. The hunt kept on until at last it drove her into a house. There she stayed for a year, hating it and its frequenters, until the place was raided. Thirty days in jail had terminated in two weeks in a hospital, and then, needing rest, she turned to her father.

Marthy, with the larger charity of her kind and experience, forbears

commenting on the simple tale, but attempts to correct the girl's bitterness by telling her that men are men, and some are good and some are bad, and so they must be considered. And with that Marthy drifts out, looking for another drifter to whom she may attach herself, leaving Anna to face the future, whatever it may be, in the person of her father.

Now Chris has an idealism, shared by many rovers, of the purity of the land, especially the soil itself. He welcomes his practically unknown daughter, and their getting acquainted has an element of simple pathos seldom seen in the false and bombastic sentiment of the theater.

He excuses their long parting, laying it, as he does all other of his own shortcomings, on the sea. He tells her it has ruined him, it has ruined his family, and ruined her mother's life, therefore he has kept her inland where she would be safe from contamination.

She does not tell him of the tragedy of his mistake, she does not upbraid him for his lack of care or help, but only says she could not stand the farm and its drudgery, and that she has been ill in the city and now needs a rest. This he promises, saying that at least the sea shall give her that, for he will take her aboard the barge, where she will have nothing to do but rest.

And then he proposes a mild celebration to seal their reunion, a glass of port wine for her, something that will but warm her, and then he toasts her with the old Norse toast, "Skole," which Anna herself has retained since babyhood, with just the trace of an accent. So, as the curtain falls, the two make ready for the sea, the one old, the other young upon it, but both with the salt tang of it stirring their blood.

The second act shows us the deck of the barge, becalmed in a fog off the coast. Old Chris curses it for one of the sea's black moods, but to Anna it is as a mental and spiritual bath, a kindly mist wiping out the past with a pure breath, and she is content.

Then from out the shrouding mist, from out the mystery of the very sea itself comes a hail, and a rowboat with four survivors of an ocean tragedy bumps against the side. Chris helps them into the cabin, all but their leader, Mat Burke, a husky sea dog, a stoker who has defied storm and wreck and exhaustion, and even yet defies the weakness of his own overtaxed body, for he remains on deck where Anna finds and cares for him.

And even spent as he is, worn with his toil with death, this ruddy Othello of the ocean cannot forbare to spin his gruesome yarn to the golden-haired Desdemona of the barge, wooing her for the purity of her face, which, to him, is but a mirror of the soul beneath.

And Anna is won, won by the defiant strength of him, by the eyes that see in her not the sirens of the land, the port harpies that all sailors know before they find the magic of love in some woman, and feels herself clean

as he supposes her to be. All that stops the torrent of rough, boastful, but tender words with which he feeds her eager ears, is Chris, bundling him off to the cabin and his mates, and turning then to curse the sea that brought him.

The third act shows us the cabin of the barge, moored a week later at a Boston dock. Outside the sun shines, warming the cheery cabin, made even more bright by Anna's presence, for the rising sun of love has touched her face, clearing it of the shadows of the past so that it now radiates a light as bright as that which burns within her heart.

But Chris' mood is cloudy. This wild bird of the ocean that lit upon their deck is a fowl of ill omen to him, coming as it has from his enemy, the sea. Mat has lingered with Anna, taking her ashore to movies and other simple pleasures of the poor. Chris takes her to task for this.

If she must look with favor on a man let it be one of the stable land, not a storm petrel riding the scud of the sea. What can she see in a common stoker, a roister of vile ports, spending the hard won earnings of months on a single night of red riot? For Chris knows his kind and will not spare them.

But Anna cuts all this short by a stroll ashore. Let come what may the day is bright to her, and, though there may be no to-morrow, she will not cloud the clean blue sky that stretches so kindly above her for the moment.

And then into the cabin comes Burke, who, in his own wooing, has made up his mind, which, to one of his fierce force, means that of all his world. Chris and he have been ought but friends, but as he's Anna's father, Mat feels that he must extend a kindly feeling to him.

Therefore he tells the old man that this day he and his daughter are to be married, and out of respect to their future relationships he is disposed to be friendly. Not so Chris. His temper rises like the tempests he has weathered. He will not have his girl the legal sweetheart of a roving ocean Lothario. Too well he knows the men of the sea, having grown old with them in toil and sin, having himself wrecked one woman's life, and that Anna's mother's.

The sea shall not salt his daughter's tears. He will not listen to Mat, nor must she. He tells him that he shall not have the girl, that he will kill him first, and to show this is not an idle threat he attempts to knife his would-be son-in-law, who only saves himself by the strength of a hand that all but breaks the arm as he wrests the knife from Chris.

Before either can recover, before the overturned chair can be righted, before the dropped knife can be picked up, Anna returns. The aftermath of storm is still in the air. The lightning of wrath is still upon both faces. She looks from one to the other with sudden realization. She returns the knife and the chair to their places and then turns to face the issue.

Mat tells her awkwardly that they

had an argument. She replies "Some argument," knowing instinctively what it is. At that Mat bursts forth in a torrent of rough words as if to sweep her to his side with his love. Chris breaks in with the horror of the sea and his knowledge of the men who follow it, not sparing himself.

Each pleads his side, the glory and the terror of it, and Anna's face reflects both, but most of all the lure, the love, the mystery of it all. To Mat's love she makes but one reply. She offers her lips for their first kiss, and their last, for, drawing back, she says it is good-by. He can not understand.

Doesn't she love him? Yes, she admits she loves him, but she cannot marry him. She will always love him, but, loving him this is good-by. He will not have it so. He asks her if she is married. She tells him no. Then he insists that nothing else can keep them apart. Chris says that Anna has decided and orders Mat out.

Each one seizes her, one pulling this way, one pulling that. It is a primitive struggle for a woman, and Anna's face reflects it, reflects the horror, the terror of male possession. Each is claiming her as though she were a thing, a chattel. She throws them both off and stands defiant.

They must have reason. Very well, they shall have it, both of them. She belongs to neither of them, neither parent nor lover. Whatever she is, she only belongs to herself, and she will tell them why. Men are all the same. She will prove it to them, for she will tell them why she makes this decision, and she will spare neither.

Mat has said that if she were not married there is nothing that can keep them apart. Her father has said that he will not let her go to a man of the sea because they are vile. Well, she will see their standards measured by her own.

She tells them what she is, what she has been. Man has made her that, one with lack of protection, by sailing the sea and letting her shift for herself among the beasts of the land, others by desiring her even as Mat desires her now. Well, men have had her. She is no more pure than her lover, and he dare not tell her what he is.

At least the sea has washed her clean, and, if he can cleanse himself they may both be saved. It is for him to decide. They are at least equal.

But the ego of the man rises. The woman has tumbled from the pedestal on which his idealism placed her. It is not what he himself has been, it is what he expected her to be. She is no better than the harpies of the ports that he has known and who have known him. Not having all to offer he expects all to be given him. That she cannot give it, is offensive to his idealism.

He curses her for the wreck she has made of that. In the fierceness of his anger, as fierce as his love, he swears that he will kill her for the death blow she has given his ideal. He seizes a chair to fulfil his threat.

She stands calmly waiting the blow. That will be the easiest way out. Let him strike and kill the thing that he has made out of what other men have unmade.

But he cannot do it. With her eyes upon him his hand is powerless. He can only curse her futilely. Well then, let him go. The sea has washed her own soul clean, that she knows, if her soul's purity cannot make up for the lack of her body, if love and lust are after all one, let him go.

And go he does, out to the land to drown himself in drink, to forget the false shrine at which he has worshiped, never thinking of the other shrines at which he has bent his knee. He cannot see the honesty that would not let her deceive him, even for her own love. He cannot see that in her, too, is an ideal, an ideal more pure, because it is instinctive. He can see nothing but that the thing he desires to possess has been possessed by others, others whose hands were no cleaner than his own.

Nor can her father stay either. He cannot see that he has let her feet stray unguided. He cannot see that he has any responsibility in what has happened to her. He chose the land to be her keeper rather than the sea, but does not realize that he himself was her betrayer. No, he blames it on the sea that he hates, and knows but one remedy, the cleansing flood of drink that dumbs the senses, that stimulates self-pity, that clouds all issues but the maudlin ones it raises to justify one's self.

He will go ashore and drown his sorrow, and Anna stays alone, alone to face the past that mocks the future, to see that men are selfish always with their own.

Only the sea is pure and clean, for it was its breath that breathed upon her sleeping Norse conscience and bade it awake, even to sacrifice, so that she might look herself's soul in the face and be not ashamed.

The last act is two days later. Two lonely days she has spent alone. Her father returns, sodden with drink, having solved the problem to his own satisfaction at least. He has shipped again before the mast. He is going back to the sea. To-morrow he will leave for South Africa on the *Londonderry*. His pay he will leave to be paid over to her, but he must go.

It solves his problem, if not hers, and so she accepts it, for, after all, she finds it is the man who decides, for good or ill, according to his judgment, or lack of it. So that is done, she is abandoned again, for the sea. She tells him to go to his bunk. He will need his head for the morrow.

And then Mat appears. He, too, has wooed the cup, but he could not stay away from the lure that draws him to her. He tells her this, tells her hopelessly, helplessly. He cannot believe what she related. There is no trace of it in her face, in her eyes. She tells him there is none in her heart, nor in her soul. The sea had washed that clean before love came, and love had been a stranger to her until the sea had brought it too.

He bids her swear an awful oath

upon the cross he wears about his neck. She swears it, though her eyes have always done that for him. Of what use is the oath with her eyes? This he realizes when he finds she is no Catholic, but a Lutheran by birth, as Chris, struggling from the bunk, informs him.

But Mat too, she finds, has signed to sail, on the same ship as her father. "The sea giveth and the sea taketh away," but so it has always been with the women of her race.

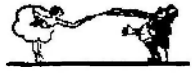
Her heart is safe upon it, and his will be safe ashore, for now he has run to port, the port of love, more welcome for the storms that both have known. So there let us leave them by the waterside, her eyes upon the deep that taught her all her simple heart desired to know, and with its lashing waves cleaned all her life.

Not only is the playwright to be thanked. Mr. Hopkins has given to the play all that an author could desire, but most of all Pauline Lord, an artist who will haunt our memory for many a day. Never by look or word or gesture was she ought but Anna Christie, the groping soul seeking out of the muck of earth the cleanness that her blind instinct knew was in the sea.

The halting, faulty speech, the commonness of manner, that veneer of environment that crusts a soul, the hopelessness of an idealism but half-understood, yet followed steadily, all, all that goes to make up a perfectly realized character.

Hers was a sermon for the larger charity, for a single standard of morality, for a liberty unfettered by the body. Miss Lord has read life deeply and interpreted it sincerely. No actress could do more.

George Marion gave her every assistance that could be rendered as Chris. Always a great actor he was a worthy satellite of a brilliant star, and swinging close beside him was Frank Shannon as Mat Burke, rounding out a trio that makes us hopeful of the serious drama in an all but hopeless season.



Patience—something which is rewarded by insurance.

Women are like bees. They either give you plenty of honey or sting you good and proper.

Love-Everlasting

A TWO-PART STORY—PART II

By Mary Lanier Magruder

EVEN to unsuspicious Margaret Howell it seemed Lydia was fairly insistent about the story of John Severance. She came into her mother's room and sat perched on the bed in defiance of the sacred hour of the siesta so necessary to pretty, indolent Mrs. Howell.

"It is not a nice story," Margaret protested.

Lydia regarded her cynically. "I was not brought up on the Elsie books. Who was the woman in the case?"

"His—well, let's say his housekeeper. It sounds better anyway. Mag Seeley was her name."

"Why did he—"

"My dear Lydia, how on earth should I know? Except that men get tired of those women and quarrel with them. I think, too, there was some money missing.

"She had sold some land that had become suddenly valuable and as ignorant folk often do, kept the money by her instead of putting it in a bank. They never found the money, though. Severance had hidden it too well."

"Provided he took it," Lydia said.

"Well, they hung him for it, anyway," her mother said. "This Mag Seeley came here from God knows where, to nurse Mattie Severance through her last illness—consumption. After Mattie died she stayed on to take care of John and the boy—this Alan, you know."

"I know," Lydia said. "Go on."

"Well, it was an October morning and the forest fires were out. John Severance's fence caught fire, so he said, and he fought the fire till noon. When he came in, a neighbor with him, he found Mag lying with her—skull crushed in.

"Someone found a club, cut from a hickory sapling in John's wood lot, half burned in the fireplace. Severance said he had killed a hog with it that had shown signs of rabies and had burned the carcass in his charcoal pit. Of course there was nothing found in the pit; it is possible that the animal had been entirely consumed in the intense heat. But the mob hung him."

"Of course he was innocent," Lydia said. "A guilty man would have buried the body or disposed of it, destroyed evidence, and said she had gone away somewhere else to live. That would have been easy in her case, if she had no relatives to get curious."

Mrs. Howell stared at Lydia.

"That is what your grandfather always said. He was not employed in the case; I think he was abroad when the murder happened, but he took much interest in it. He always

thought John Severance innocent.

"I used to wonder about it; I knew John slightly, a quiet fellow who kept to himself. Rumor had it that he had come of a family that had lost their money, and left Virginia for this new country for that reason. But tell me, why are you so interested in this by-gone business?"

"Perhaps because I've inherited the legal habit of mind." Lydia rose, yawning like a sleepy kitten. But her eyes were dark and bright under her narrowed lids. At the door she looked back at her mother.

"And perhaps, too, because I am interested in Alan Severance."

A remark that effectually disposed of Margaret Howell's afternoon sleep.

Lydia went downstairs, ordered the car around and, going out, met Dale Allison on the steps. His look was black as a thunder cloud.

"Come back into the house," he commanded her peremptorily. "What I've got to say is for no ears but yours."

Lydia's shoulders straightened.

"When your command becomes a polite request I may lend you a more willing ear. Otherwise—"

Allison's mood was too dark for quibbling. He caught her elbow and, wheeling her about, propelled her into the hall.

Lydia's eyes blazed but Allison's grip was remorseless. Once in the living room he released her.

"It's about you and that Severance. That night—in the granary! If it's idle gossip they put out between them, I'll kill Kelly and Severance too!"

The color leaped from her face to fly back in crimson flags to her cheeks. Her glance became fixed and defiant.

"What do you mean by idle gossip? I took refuge in the granary with Alan Severance during that dreadful thunderstorm in September. What do you make of that?"

"But that beast Kelly swore to me that he saw you in Severance's arms —that—"

Lydia's gaze was undaunted. "He saw me with my face buried on Mr. Severance's shoulder. That is true. You know how lightning terrifies me, Dale. I would have huddled against a blanket Indian if that would help hide me from the flash and crash. Mr. Severance was the soul of courtesy."

Allison's laugh was not pleasant.

"You have not met or seen him since? No car rides together?"—he paused, and when she did not speak, his ugly laugh rang out too loud, too hateful with the doubts a jealous man may harbor as a reflection of the hidden plague spots in his own soul.

"Perhaps he kissed you," Allison said, leaning nearer. "I've heard it hinted you were easily kissed!"

The flame that swept through Lydia was so raging, so red, that it was through a wavering mist that she saw Allison's face distorted in its unworthy passions.

In the uncontrollable impulse of

her disgust and rage she struck at the white, passionate, sneering face before her, struck with the hard gauntlet of her glove across Allison's mouth.

"You blackguard!" she said.

With that word flung at him she passed like a whirlwind out the house, down the steps, and into her waiting car.

She felt as if there were not power and speed enough in all the world to carry her away from the emotions that surged over her—introspection, humiliation, shame and disgust. Had Severance too, judged her as Allison and King Kelly?

Lydia never wept. Since her childhood the refuge of tears had been scorned by her. But now great hot tears welled up from some brimming fountain in her heart and rolled down her cheeks. Was it because after all Dale was such fearfully common clay and was she crying as children do for broken toys?

Lydia did not know.

Or was it, indeed, for some beautiful thing her girlhood had missed? She had been begging life, through vague experiments for that touchstone to happiness, and because men had now and again held her briefly in their arms or kissed her hair or her lips, they had held her cheap—too cheap!

As the tumult that possessed her subsided Lydia looked away from the narrow road trailing on to remote stretches of the back country. The way lay between fallow fields climbing up to hills serried by gullies and overgrown with the silvery gray of the wild flower of the Purchase hills—the life-everlasting.

"Love-everlasting!" Lydia thought. "For women, maybe, but not for men. For foolish women the love-everlasting!"

The lane curved, merged sharply into a small forest dappled with entrancing shadows, then the trail led up to a sandy ridge, and Lydia found she had come upon a little hamlet tucked away at world's end.

A neat row of cottages flanked the one store and the blacksmith shop, and a two-story building bore the sign "HOTEL" in staring letters across its front. On the piazza a man sat with folded arms leaned upon the railing; he was looking into space, his cap low over his eyes. Lydia's careless glance resolved itself into startled recognition. The man was Alan Severance.

The car skidded sharply in the sandy road. Then Lydia got it under control. Her face burned with indignation at her own blundering.

The nod she gave Severance was so cool and indifferent that she failed to note the cold aloofness of his response. For since that night by the gate of the garden Severance had resolved to see no more of Lydia Howell.

But something stronger than her mood or his resolution projected her into the scheme of his days. Two hundred yards beyond the store the car stopped.

No persuasion of Lydia's induced it to take up the trail. The store-

keeper came out and inspected the machine. The tank was empty.

"And I don't keep gasoline," he said. "Nearest is four miles away. But I guess you can borrow from Mr. Severance." His easy gesture, over Lydia's protest, summoned Severance.

"Got any gas, Alan? This lady's plumb dry."

A reluctant dimple stole fleetingly into Lydia's cheek to find its counterpart of humor in the twinkle in Severance's eyes.

"I've a little," he said. "I doubt if she can get home on it."

"I'll not rob you," Lydia said quickly.

"I was going to suggest this: that I run over to Ogden—I've gas enough for that—and get a supply for both of us."

"If I may go with you," she said instantly, looking at him.

Severance did not reply at once. Then:

"I shall be delighted."

But he knew that for those minutes of delight he must pay in hours of torment.

For she belonged to Dale Allison; if it pleased her to play at friendship with him he should at least be grateful for her human sympathy and her kindliness.

She had nothing to gain and much to lose by espousing the cause of a man at once friendless and under a sinister shadow, but Severance knew that it was neither kindness nor pity that he wanted of her.

Ogden overlooked the headwaters of Clear Lake where Dale Allison had built his hunting lodge. At the mention of the village a picture had flashed into Lydia's mind; she had no scruples about using Severance as a buffer to Allison's wrath.

She knew she could offer Allison no greater proof of her contempt than by appearing publicly with Severance. Possessing her own soul and sure of her motives Lydia meant to fling her defiance in Allison's face. She had one prayer—that she might, with Severance, meet Allison face to face.

Under the urge of her own thoughts Lydia remained indifferent to Severance's silence, until his words jerked her back to the reality of the situation.

"I have left Kelly's, Miss Howell. I am staying at the Ridge."

"Left Kelly's? Was he resentful or angry?"

"I don't know. I was angry and walked out."

"Have you any light, any clue?"

"None. Every turn leads into a blind alley where I grope."

"It is so long ago to pick up the threads. And people forget."

"There is one thing they do not forget—that I am John Severance's son. Nor should you."

Lydia looked at him steadily. "You did not want me to come."

"It is never a question of what I want. What about Dale Allison? What will he have to say about you—and me?"

"We shall soon see," Lydia said calmly. But her heart was pound-

ing. "I think that is his car ahead of us now."

Then she leaned to Severance a little, but near enough for him to sense again the ineffable sweetness of the lemon verbena in her hair.

"Your friend King Kelly has been busy with tales to Dale, and we have just quarreled bitterly. I hope he does not misbehave, but if he is in an ugly mood, please say nothing to him, Mr. Severance."

"What tales?" Severance demanded, suddenly white.

"That—that night in the granary. Ugly things that—but you knew I was so frightened I acted foolishly. *You* knew and understood?"

Her eyes entreated him, her face pleading and pale. For Lydia found herself suddenly and terribly in earnest.

"I am glad you do not rank me as one incredibly stupid," he said.

Lydia drew a long breath.

"I am very angry yet with Dale Allison. Yet I am glad I saw him to-day as I might never have seen the real Dale Allison until it was too late."

Severance's knuckles were blue-white in their grip on the wheel.

"You mean—"

"It is impossible now for me to keep even friendship with Dale Allison."

A thousand things crashed through Severance's brain, phantoms somber, brilliant, interwoven.

"Lydia!" he began. But checked his speech with the one word. Lydia, with one oblique glance at him, stared straight ahead. When she spoke her voice was measured, controlled:

"It was Dale Allison."

Allison, turning a casual glance toward the car, halted in his tracks. His face in that moment of transition was not pleasant to see, and its expression was not improved by the purple bruise on the upper lip from the silver button on Lydia's gauntlet.

Severance backed the car round to the gas pump and Lydia looked interestedly on, ignoring Allison's presence until his face was thrust close to her elbow. She turned a cold gaze upon him with no word or greeting.

"If I've wanted proof I've got it," Allison said thickly. "Hereafter you may keep your kisses for his kind. I'm off you for good and all. I'm done."

The sheer brutality of it turned Lydia white as a ghost. There was a hateful silence broken by Severance, who was slowly comprehending the scene.

"But I've not done with *you!*"

The next minute he was out of the car and rushing Dale Allison. Lydia never uttered a sound. In her heart of hearts she had gone berserk as Severance. "I hope he kills him!" she thought. "I hope he breaks and smashes him to pieces!"

Allison was a trained athlete but Severance had the bone and brawn of a great frame and an enduring rage behind it. The contest was sharp and unequal, for presently Severance lifted Allison into the air, shaking him as a terrier does a rat before he flung him to the earth. There was

a sickening thud and Allison sprawled and lay still.

Men had appeared, running from the garage and the store. Lydia, now dazed and a bit frightened, saw Severance stand panting with folded arms and a face suffused with exertion and anger. One man put his hand over Allison's heart.

"Just knocked out, I guess. He'll come around."

Presently Allison opened his eyes; his gaze centered, black with hate, on Severance.

"Cain's son!" he said. "Damn you!"

Severance looked down at him.

"Another word from you and there will not be enough of your filthy carcass left to bury. I'm not through with you anyway, but I'll lay off a man that is licked—even if he doesn't know he is down and out."

Severance turned to the car; Lydia saw that he was intensely pale and that the hand on the switch shook like a leaf. She felt curious eyes upon her and forced her gaze to meet theirs proudly.

And as she looked slowly with that high indifference around the circle, the face of King Kelly appeared in the background, smiling, hateful, sinister.

VI

"It seems so utterly superfluous to try to thank you," Lydia said as the car sped down the avenue of beeches. "I am glad you did not hurt him, although at first I wanted you to kill him."

Severance's eyes as they met hers sent a sudden chill through her body.

"Lydia, you can't play with men as children do with puppets on a string. They're dangerous playthings."

Even her experience with the moods of men gave her no clue to what lay behind Severance's grim smile. At once some curling flame of confession in her leaped toward the man who had fought for her and chastised impertinence till it bit the dust.

"Why do you think I've played with Dale Allison? I let him kiss me—yes. A dozen times, maybe—I don't know. And other men have kissed me. I didn't like it particularly. Their lips were too hot—or too cold. Or something. Sometimes the wine on their breath or the tobacco—I don't know what, but it sickened me. But how was I to know? That was a test. But Dale—somehow I wasn't sure until that last night—"

"On the piazza?" Severance said.

He saw her startled face, blank, swept then with scarlet.

"B-but how did you—"

"I was at the gate of the hedge."

"You were there?" Incredulous astonishment swept away all of whatever she meant to say of Allison.

"I was there. I don't know if I meant to go in. . . . I had left Kelly's for good, and I was, for that hour, rudderless. In the moonlight I had come round to that gate . . . and I heard the music playing and saw you . . . in his arms. . . ."

"Oh!" She said the one word softly, so softly that with a start Alan Severance pulled himself up from the brink where for an instant his resolution had trembled.

"I should not have let you go with me to Ogden."

"Let me!" she said satirically. "Could you have helped it?"

"Yes," he said relentlessly. "The shadow of my life has already fallen on you. I regret this business at Ogden—for your sake. For no other reason. That damned cad needed punishment. But Lydia, you live here in a narrow world—"

"I can leave it any day."

"But things follow one. . . . We must keep this friendship a memory, just as in my heart I keep a memory—"

He caught her sudden upward look, illuminated, lovely. But he kept his voice level, expressionless:

"The memory of a woman whom I love but from whom I am forever separated unless I may clear away the black thing that lies between me and happiness. Then and then only may I go back to her—across the miles—"

"Across the miles!" Lydia repeated. For one instant her lids fluttered. Then she lifted her eyes and Severance saw they were smiling and steady:

"Isn't that still another reason you need friendship and regard? To keep up your courage?"

What Severance's thoughts were as he watched the car plunge into the shadows are known only to Severance and his God.

But strange laughter curled Lydia's lips; she was wondering if all the inheritance she had had from her lovable scapegrace father was the faculty of championing the under dog and keeping, under all stress and luck, the poker face.

Margaret Howell looked up from her book with lifted eyebrows as Lydia entered the living-room.

"You keep interesting hours, child. Dinner is cold and Dinah cross."

"But you aren't cross," Lydia said. "I think you ought to play stern parent sometimes. My gas gave out 'way at the back of nowhere, but I contrived some and here I am. But I'm not up to dinner to-night, Peggy."

"You look fagged," Margaret said. "Let me tuck you up with a cup of hot milk."

Lydia smiled at her from eyes suddenly tired.

"I adore being tucked up, but I hate hot milk."

When her mother came up she found Lydia lying with her bright hair in long braids across the pillows. The blue circles under her eyes had deepened, and the girl's face was white and drawn.

But she managed a drowsy smile as her mother fussed about the room and presently Margaret decided she had fallen asleep. But in the darkness as Margaret rustled softly downstairs to the comfort of chocolates and a fire, Lydia's eyes were wide open and staring at the tiny rift of moonlight through the shade.

"He told me because he thought I might care—that I did care—too much!"

Lydia awoke to find the east wind blowing and a fine drizzle against the pane. A strange lassitude held her; it was noon before she came into the library to curl in a deep chair and think her own thoughts.

The wind sighed through the cedars and the light faded early. At dusk the rain had gone into the dreariest sleet. After dinner Lydia moved from room to room with restlessness so feverish and strange that Margaret let her hands crash on the keyboard as her glance clung to Lydia.

"Lydia, you are eerie in your moods to-night—positively uncanny. Sit down and let me play 'Humoresque' for you."

Lydia, strangely docile, sank into the deep chair and closed her eyes. For a while she listened resolutely, then her thoughts went back with terrifying persistence to the inevitable round—the night in the granary, the scent of the wildflower mingled with good tobacco, that day beside the river, and yesterday when Severance had said there was one waiting across the miles—

Lydia sprang up; someone was calling her name outside:

"Lyddy! Lyddy!"

She ran out to the hall and flung open the door.

"Who called me? Who is there?"

"Nance—Nance Kelly!" The woman's form bulked large before her, and Lydia saw that she carried a bundle in her arms. "Neddie's sick. Seems like he's choking. King don't believe in doctors—and so I came to you, Lyddy."

Lydia drew Nance into the hall, shut the door against the storm. She led the way into the warm, bright room and Nance sank into a chair, spent, breathless.

Kneeling, Lydia drew the wet blankets from the child's body. Neddie, awakened from a feverish doze coughed hoarsely and struggled for breath. To Lydia the sound was ominous.

"How long has he been like this, Nance?"

"Since yesterday. He woke up with a fever."

Margaret Howell had been looking on with astonishment and sympathy in her face. Now she spoke:

"Get off her wet cloak, Lydia. I will hold the boy."

"How did you come, Nance?" Lydia said.

"I walked."

"*Walked?* And carried Neddie? Five miles—in this weather!"

Nance nodded. For a minute Lydia looked at her wonderingly. Then she ran out of the room to return presently with a tiny electric light bulb. "I must see inside his throat, Nance."

Her examination, under difficulties, for the child moaned with fright and struggled, left her face sober.

"It looks like diphtheria. He must have anti-toxin at once."

She ran to the telephone and called the family physician at Barstow.

"There's not a unit of anti-toxin here nor in Laclede," he told her. "We expected a supply from the city on the evening train, but it did not come.

"There's an epidemic of the disease in the country. You'll have to send for it. . . . Or to save time, Lydia, it will be safer to take the child to the hospital; there's an isolation ward. And—you'd better hurry, too."

To Lydia Howell, who for four eventful months had driven a camionette in France, the thirty mile journey to the city had no aspects of an adventure.

The chauffeur, who was also man-of-all-work, had broken his arm and there was no other in whom Lydia had as much confidence as in herself. She kept a speed like the wind, and there were times when the car skidded perilously on the icy road.

There was no sound except the throb of the car, the pelting of the sleet against the windshield and now and then the child's cough, rattling, ominous.

At last the lights of the city broke through the storm, and presently Lydia with Nance and the child were swept into the isolation ward. Lydia sat in the corridor awaiting the verdict when the swinging doors should open. After awhile a nurse came out.

"A very severe case of diphtheria, Miss Howell. We have hope, but if you had been an hour later even—"

Before morning it became necessary to put a tube in the child's throat.

Nance would neither eat nor sleep unless Lydia sat by the boy in her stead. The long day, burdened by anxiety and the sight of the child's suffering, dragged out its weary length.

The sleet had weighted the wires and Lydia could get no word through to her mother. But Neddie's breathing had eased a little, only a little, but — there was hope. And so another night passed.

Lydia awoke before the dawn to see the stars shining. But to Lydia joy had not come with the morning.

In the mid-morning she went into the sunroom with a book she at once forgot to read. It was here the pretty red-haired day nurse found her.

"Oh, Miss Howell!" she cried. "Here's the morning paper. There has been a dreadful attempt at murder down in your country, and the sheriff has just rushed the accused man in to our jail here—there was a mob forming!"

VII

THERE seemed no reason Lydia should go so terribly white; the hand that took the paper shook like a leaf. There in headlines on the front page she read:

"DALE ALLISON FOUND UNCONSCIOUS AND DYING IN HIS HUNTING LODGE AT CLEAR LAKE, FROM WOUND IN THE HEAD. ALAN SEVERANCE ACCUSED OF MURDER AND SPIRITED AWAY BY SHERIFF TO ESCAPE VENGEANCE OF AROUSED CITIZENS."

And lower in the column:

"There are rumors of an encounter between Allison and Severance several days before the assault; the quarrel originated over Severance's alleged conduct toward a prominent young woman of the neighborhood. Older residents of the county will recall that the father of the accused man was lynched by a mob for the murder of his paramour twenty-five years ago."

Lydia read to the end. Then she cried, "It's a lie! Alan Severance is no more guilty than I am!"

The nurse stared, startled. "Oh, do you know—"

"I am the young woman referred to," Lydia said grimly. "There's no use in suppressing the truth. But Alan Severance threshed Dale Allison for being impertinent to me. That's the straight of that."

She went out past Miss Simmons, who still stood startled and flushed.

Nance sat with the child, her chin in her palms, her gaze fixed upon Neddie's flushed face.

"Nance," Lydia said in an even undertone, "someone has tried to kill Dale Allison. They tried to hang Alan Severance for the crime, but the sheriff has brought him here for safekeeping. But they'll get him, Nance—they will hang him mainly because he is John Severance's son."

Nance got to her feet; she swayed toward Lydia like a woman dazed with shock or horror.

"Alan—for murder? *Lyddy!*"

"Murder," Lydia said. Then she seemed to waver, to stumble toward the door. "*Murder,* Nance! *Alan!*"

For that one moment she leaned against the wall, her fingers fumbling at the door. Nance had left the bed; Lydia felt her hand cold as ice upon her own.

"He's your man—Lyddy?"

Lydia wheeled, her face a tragic mask distorted by a wild smile.

"He's my man all right, I guess, Nance. But—"

Her fingers found the knob, jerked at it: the next moment Nance was listening to her footsteps down the corridor.

The day nurse came in; she looked keenly at Nance, then made her professional inspection of the boy.

"We will take the tube out to-morrow. We think he is doing fine. Dreadful about the murder. Miss Howell's friend, too. She is a lovely girl. You owe your child's life to her, Mrs. Kelly. An hour later—"

The nurse shook her head at the retrospection and went out smiling. But Nance Kelly stood staring into space, as if it were peopled with

ghosts that menaced her out of a past that would not die.

Alan Severance in his cell heard the grating of the key and the jailer's voice, deferential, courteous:

"This way, ma'am," and then—Lydia.

And so she had come to him! Even after that last hour on the Ridge in the forest when he had chosen the surest way, to a proud woman, to thrust her deliberately out of his life, she had come to him in his hour of extremity and peril.

Severance was so tremendously moved and shaken that he stumbled back awkwardly in the narrow space. He heard her voice speaking as a voice far off, but still pierced through with sympathy and understanding:

"Sit down, Alan, and tell me."

He dropped his head into his hands. He could not trust himself in those first minutes to look at her. The burden of the haunted past, the unfulfilled dream of his years, the dreadful fate from which he had so narrowly escaped and that still menaced him, all this had rolled down upon him a weight crushing, obliterative. He was broken at last—ground between the upper and the nether millstones.

"Alan," she said, "you do not need to tell me you are not guilty!"

He looked up at her then, a dull wonder in his heart that God Almighty had made such women in a black world that could never reward nor recompense their flaming courage and faith.

"I am not guilty," he said. "I have never seen Dale Allison since that day at Ogden. That's God's truth, Lydia.

"They have got no real evidence against me. That night of the sleet my car was out of commission. I was pretty restless and I went out to walk in the storm; a man who has fought western blizzards and lain in the trenches in France does not regard a Kentucky sleet storm as formidable weather.

"I tramped to Ogden and as the post office was closed, I put my letters in the door box. I walked on and on, God knows where. It was eleven o'clock when I got in to the hotel. I recall meeting two men somewhere on the trail below Ogden—they say I came out of the road leading past Allison's lodge. I don't know. . . . Perhaps I did. I was having a bad hour with myself—"

He broke off; for a moment his gaze remained fixed upon the floor. Then he lifted his haggard face to Lydia's.

"I don't know who tried to kill Dale Allison, but it was not I."

"Alan," Lydia said, "our first step to-day is to attempt to reverse public sentiment. It must be with bold strokes and rapid work. I want you not to contradict nor seem surprised at anything I may give out to the reporters.

"You will understand why I do unaccountable things. And there will be plenty time afterward for explanations to those to—to whom explanations will be due."

"Lydia," he said, "such an assurance surely is not necessary."

"I haven't a minute longer," she said. "I don't know if there's much I can do but at least I will stand by."

Through the dim corridor into the sunlit hall and out into the brilliant November day Lydia took her smile and her poker face. But in her room at the hotel, before she summoned the reporters, Lydia had her short season of white despair and wavering courage.

Then at the bell boy's knock she pulled together the frayed cord of her resolve and knotted it anew.

"After all it's not a question if it's saving him for me or for the other woman. It's just saving him!"

The afternoon papers went to press at four. To Lydia, pacing the floor, the minutes dragged interminably. What she had given to the reporters might help halt public opinion; she had lent her clean and honorable name and only fate knew what complications that fact might make in her own life.

But as for that, Lydia did not care. Her fists clenched fiercely as she thought of laws wantonly and riotously set aside. Order, justice, decency meant nothing, as Severance had said, to men mad for blood, the stark and primitive lust stronger than all super-imposed codes of so-called civilization.

At last the messenger rushed the first copy, still damp, to her door. The light was fast failing; Lydia went nearer the window, and at once her gaze was drawn to the broken procession of mud-splashed cars moving across Main Street. They came from the west and south and the curtains were closely drawn. They were no city cars, polished and shining, but flivvers and nondescripts that had seen hard service.

Lydia knew then the significance of that procession. The mob was forming, silently, cautiously, after the manner of mobs.

The telephone, sounding at her elbow, seemed like the crack of doom on the silence. Nance Kelly was speaking:

"They say you won't be back, Lyddy. You got away before I saw you. It's about—Alan—"

"Nance," Lydia said. "The mob is forming now. I know the cars from Bar's Bayou."

"Oh, God Almighty!" Lydia heard Nance's voice, interrupting. But Lydia went on:

"They shan't have him alive, Nance. Not while I live. They shan't touch him!"

Nance's voice rose in a sibilant crescendo over the wire:

"Lyddy! You wait. They *can't* have him. I'm coming. *You wait!*"

The receiver clicked. Lydia snapped on the light and read, under the heading in bold letters

NEW ASPECT TO MURDER CHARGE

the paragraph:

"New evidence has been secured in the case of Alan Severance now held for a murderous assault upon Dale Allison. It seems Allison and not Severance had been the aggressor in the encounter between the two men at Ogden on Tuesday, and Severance had chastised Allison for impertinence to a young lady. Further developments are expected, as the friends of Mr. Severance insist that he is innocent of the charge for which he is held. Severance is the fiancé of Miss Lydia Howell, granddaughter of the Hon. Lawrence Howell, eminent lawyer and congressman for four terms from the First District."

A wry laugh twisted Lydia's lips. "It's too late to help with that—now. I'm going to him."

She got into her coat and hat and slipped her heavy Colt's automatic into her pocket. The thought of Nance did not occur to her until she had reached the lobby.

"If a woman calls for me send her to the county jail," she told the bell boy.

She found the sheriff, the jailer, and two armed guards playing cards in the outer office of the jail. Lydia walked in, a straight, tense, slim young thing, but the sheriff said afterward there was death in her eyes.

"I'm Lydia Howell," she said. "Alan Severance is the man I love. And if you hand over the keys of this jail to-night to that mob out there I will shoot you dead at the first sign of your surrender."

"Why—why m-my dear young lady," the sheriff stuttered, "I-I—"

"I am not here for an exchange of courtesies or argument. If you cannot protect the prisoner entrusted to you here in this building, put him in the car at the Seventh Street entrance and get him away.

"Turn him over to me and I'll see that no mob takes him from me. He's innocent, and we can prove it, but that gang won't wait for proof."

A guard had edged toward the door. Lydia put her back to it.

"Are you standing by the law? Or are you quitters?"

The jailer fidgetted; glances went round the room.

"We'll try to do our duty in reason," the sheriff said solemnly.

"You'll do your duty," Lydia retorted. Her eyes shot lambent flame. "If you don't there'll not be one of you left to tell the tale of how the others died!"

"The little devil!" the sheriff thought. "And she means it. Boys," he said aloud, "I guess we stand by."

"I guess we do," the jailer said, nodding.

They sat staring after her when

she had gone. Then the sheriff spoke slowly:

"That's Wild Dal's girl all right. Say, I wish a woman loved me like that. Must be something to this Severance after all, if that's how things stand."

"He doesn't look bad," the jailer agreed. "There's no real evidence as I can see. But give a dog a bad name, you know. I guess they're hanging him from force of habit—because he's John Severance's son."

One of the guards had walked to the outer door. He came back now. His voice held a queer intonation:

"Looks like we're goin' to have to make that promise good."

Knots of men were clustered in twos and threes about the court house square. There seemed no concerted movement, yet the groups were drawing more closely together.

As the jailer stared confirmation into the sheriff's eyes, under the glare of the corner light that suddenly flashed across the twilight, they saw Lydia standing motionless as the stone image by the fountain's edge. And presently another figure, a woman's, gaunt, tall figure, came running across the sward. As the figure halted, they heard Lydia's voice:

"Nance! Nance! It's Lydia."

The two held a whispered converse through the space of a few brief seconds. Then Lydia's cry rang out, and was as sharply checked.

It seemed to the four men standing with guns in their hands at the corridor that Lydia almost dragged the woman along, over the sward, up the steps and into the porch.

"For God's sake listen to what Nance Kelly has to say! Then take her and hide her. If Kelly is in that crowd he'll kill her. I'm going back to tell those men what she has just told me."

Lydia knew, before she was halfway out to the street that the clusters had now merged into a loosely concentrated mass. And one by one faces leaped out to take identity and form. Nance had given her those names—the names of men who had led that lawless multitude a quarter century ago. If any were there—or if their children were among those pressing nearer the pavement leading to the jail—

Lydia had reached the curb. Suddenly she lifted her arms and her voice rose high, clear, without a tremor:

"Tom Raley and Wash Holman and Jap Martin, are you here to-night?" There was a sudden and utter silence. Lydia spoke again:

"I see Jap Martin, and I wonder if you remember another night in November twenty-five years ago when you hung a man on Waycross Hill?"

The susurra of sound was like a vast whisper. Then again, silence.

"You hung John Severance for the murder of Mag Seeley. And so you became a murderer yourself. For you hung the wrong man. King Kelly killed Mag Seeley, and I've got the proof here—with the sheriff to-night."

The undertone swelled, burst into a vast mutter of words and ejaculations. A hateful voice spoke:

"It's a scheme to save Severance."

But Lydia's voice rose above the murmuring, direct, compelling:

"Any two of you may go forward into the sheriff's office and see—hear the proof. Any two."

The crowd surged forward in an excited clamor, to be as suddenly checked. The blue barrel of the Colt's was swinging in an arc.

"I shoot straight—and in curves," Lydia said. "I said any two men you may choose—men who knew about the murder of Mag Seeley. The rest of you will remain right where you are until these two return."

The men chosen stepped forward and disappeared into the shadows. The crowd edged, whispered, wavered—but waited. Seconds dragged into minutes; the lights began to dance queerly before Lydia's eyes, her ears sang—

The sound of a car tearing down the street sent the blood back into Lydia's body. As the machine dashed into the mass, the crowd broke and scattered for safety. Lydia fell back a pace and swung the automatic into line. Then she recognized the young reporter on the *Eagle* in the man who leaped from the car and tore his way to her side.

"Looka here, you are all crazy! You got the wrong dope. Allison's come to; he's not going to die. And he says Severance didn't do it. Get that? He says a man named Kelly. He's made an affidavit—I've got it right here. It's Kelly you want."

VIII

LATER that night in the sheriff's office a stenographer and three reporters wrote rapidly and excitedly Nance Kelly's story of sin and silence.

Severance sat listening, his head bowed. And if sometimes he lost the thread of that story in thinking of Lydia Howell and what she had done for him, one must remember that a living, breathing beloved is likely to dominate a man's dream more than the memory of a father dead before memory could quicken.

Lydia sat by Nance; she seemed too rapt in the tale to glance at Severance. Nance's voice was a strange, hushed monotone:

"King Kelly knew Mag Seeley before she ever came to the marsh country. I guess she wasn't straight then, but she left King and was trying to live decent. There never was anything between her and John Severance; that was one of King's lies.

"I had been married to King a year before he told me about Mag Seeley. He had a way with women; and it made him furious if a woman stood out against him. I guess that is what Mag did.

"After I knew about them I was jealous of her. And on the day of the murder I followed him to John

Severance's house. It was an out-of-the-way place and the woods and the underbrush grew up to the yard.

"When I got nearly to the gate I saw King come running out of the house. He looked wild and dreadful, and I was afraid. So I slipped behind a great oak tree and he never saw me as he went by. But I saw

him. And he had a roll of greenbacks in one hand and a leather blackjack in the other. The blackjack was clotted with blood.

"I watched him running through the woods to the field path that led towards home. Then I went to the house and looked in the kitchen door. And I saw Mag lying in a puddle of blood with her head caved in.

"I never told King I knew. I knew he would kill me. I never thought they would convict John Severance. King said all the time they wouldn't. I always meant to speak before an innocent man should suffer. And when King came home that terrible night they hung John Severance, I dropped like one dead. I'd lost my chance forever.

"After that somehow King knew. He said they'd hang me as an accessory after the fact. I wished sometimes they had. Hanging ain't any worse than living twenty-odd years with King Kelly.

"You will find the blackjack and the money in a secret place in the chimney upstairs. The money never did King any good—Mag Seeley had written her name in red ink on every bill.

"This is all the truth, so help me God. All I ask, Lyddy, is that you and Alan see that Neddie grows up a good man. There's a school the nurse told me about that will teach him. They say he's a deaf mute. I guess I'm ready for my punishment."

"You've given the State evidence, Nance," Lydia said gently. "And the law can be merciful as well as just. We—I will look after Neddie."

Perhaps Lydia contrived it so there should be for her no speech with Severance alone; only in the corridor she turned for that brief minute to give him her hand and her smile:

"You must be a happy man tonight, Mr. Severance. It's good-by; I fancy I shan't see you again, for I know you will not lose an hour in going back to the one who is awaiting you—across the miles!"

Again her quick, bright glance and smile, the pressure of her cold little hand and she was gone past Severance's dumbfounded silence, broken at last but too late by his hoarse cry:

"Lydia, Lydia!"

A November evening with a high

wind out of an enchanted west blazing with orange and rose; the living room at Land's End brilliant with fire glow; a window ledge crowded with great pompoms of lavender and white and gold chrysanthemums; and Severance beside the hearth waited with a pounding heart.

Now for a night and a day he had had no word with Lydia; the wires were down because of the high wind. He had come to Land's End and Margaret Howell had received him with such gentleness and tact that any ghost of restraint between them was laid forever.

They had talked of Nance and her future, then of Kelly, who had ended his own life rather than surrender to the law, and then of Lydia.

And now Severance heard her feet on the stair, coming slowly, unlike their wont. He could not know that to Lydia as to other brave and loving women there comes an hour for which life holds no adequate philosophy or recompense.

To Severance she seemed something made of dusk and moonlight in the gown that held the blue of the autumn night and the silver of its stars. She did not offer him her hand; she seemed, indeed, remote, aloof, as she stood looking at him from beneath lids that only half concealed the glow in her eyes.

"I was surprised when your card was brought up. I was sure you had gone."

"I am not going," Severance said. "I was bluffing about the other woman. There never was, or will be, any woman in my life but you."

"Oh!" Lydia said with a strange intonation.

Severance took a step toward her.

"I could not trust myself with you, knowing as I did I'd no right to even your friendship until the shadow over me was lifted. . . . You were so frank and so sweet that I'd no hope it was love for me that made you stand up for me.

"When I think how you lent me your name and all you have done for me—Lydia, if it had not been for you I'd likely be underground with a necklace of hemp around my throat!

"And as I've waited and listened for you to-night with every minute an hour long until you came, I've been thinking that your way in my life is as if an angel had trod there."

"Oh," Lydia said, "Alan, I'm not an angel! I'm terribly human. And I'm so tired of keeping the poker face. Let's put our cards all on the table and quit bluffing. I'd like to punish you in some dreadful way because it tore the heart out of me to think of the other woman.

"Can't you see I'm so in love with you that I don't want gratitude nor fine speeches? What I want is your arms around me—now—this minute!"

After a long while he remembered that she had grown very still and silent, her head pressed against his shoulder.

"Answer me, Lydia!" he said.

She smiled drowsily; but she did not lift her head from its resting place.

"Oh, that night in the granary, Alan! You see, dear, I've loved you from the beginning. It was the smell of tobacco on your coat I remembered—and the love-everlasting."

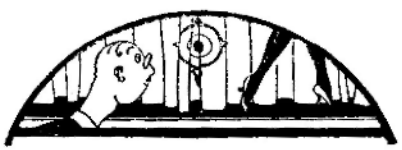
"The love-everlasting!" he repeated. And he kissed her again for memory's sake.

The Censor-ette

By John Hanlon

SHE wanted to be a movie censor, and she was; but between the "want" and the "was" there came a great deal of lobbying among women's organizations, of ogling influential political bosses, of double-crossing her rivals in a refined and ladylike fashion.

She wanted to be a movie censor, and she was. But why? Did she desire to elevate the art, to scrape off the slime that stuck to it? Did she desire to save the young boys of the community from the wicked influence of Wild West fillums, the young girls from being splashed with sex stuff? Not at all! She was eager to discover if uncensored pictures were really as naughty as the adherents of censorship painted them.



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Often when an innocent woman blushes she is only imagining how nice it would be not to be innocent.

"Nothing can come between us," they swore. No, they were not rash lovers; only jazz dancers.

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—and paved the way for a better one!

IT was written to his employer by the International Correspondence Schools. It told how "Robert Johnson had enrolled for a course of home-study and had received a mark of 94 for his first lesson."

Bob answered the summons to the Chief's office with just a little fear and trembling, for a lot of men were being dropped—a lot more were having their pay reduced.

But as Bob came in, his employer did a surprising thing. He got up quickly from his desk and grasped Bob warmly by the hand.

"I want to congratulate you, young man, on the marks you are making with the I. C. S. I am glad to see that you are training yourself not only for your present job but for the job ahead.

"We're cutting the pay-roll. Until I received this letter, I had you in mind as one of the men to be dropped. But not now. Keep on studying—keep your eyes open—and pretty soon there'll be a still better job for you around here. We're always looking for trained men."

Won't you let the I. C. S. help you, too? Won't you trade a few hours of your spare time for a good job, a good salary and the comforts that go with it? Then mark the work you like best on the coupon below and mail it to Scranton today. That doesn't obligate you in the least, but it will be your first big step towards success. *Do it now!*

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☐ Gas Engine Operating	☐ **BOOKKEEPER**
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☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Certified Public Accountant
☐ **MINE FOREMAN or ENG'R**	☐ **TRAFFIC MANAGER**
☐ **STATIONARY ENGINEER**	☐ Railway Accountant
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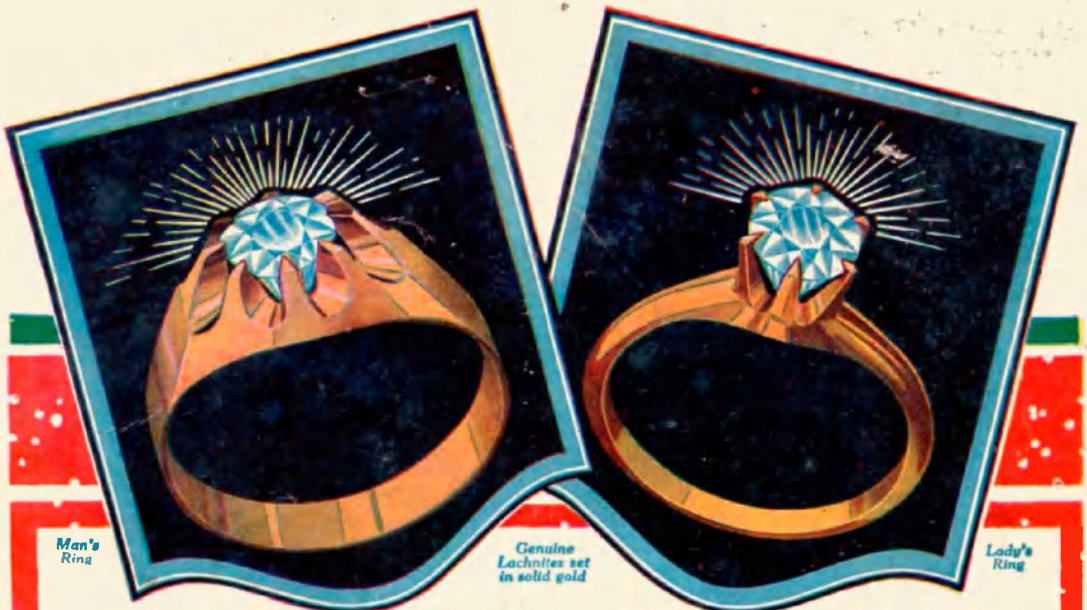

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A few years ago an important discovery was made by the world famous scientist, M. Verneuil. While studying the effects of the terrific temperatures at which diamonds vanish into vapor, Verneuil accidently created a new and unknown gem stone. His associates examined the new gem and declared the secret of making diamonds had been discovered. Scientists and jewelers scrutinized the new gem in every way. put it to every test and pronounced it a dia[illegible] alone was undeceived. The new gem he said, flashes like a diamond, acts like a diamond in the chemical tests, and will last forever, but the composition is not identical. The **new** diamond-like gem stone was given a new name—Lachnite.

Already over 300,000 Americans wear them in place of diamonds. The cost of a Lachnite is nominal. These 300,000 people have probably saved over $150,000,000.00.

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This table shows the astounding similarity between Lachnites and diamonds. They defy the same corrosive acids. They resist the same fiery temperatures. They flash with equal brillance. No wonder men can not distinguish them, even when they are placed side by side. Knowing that Lachnites are produced slowly and so have never been plentiful, a number of firms have attempted to take advantage of the Lachnite reputation. You will find the Lachnite name and advertising extensively copied. But Lachnite quality you will find only in the original genuine Lachnite itself, sold in America by Harold Lachman Company alone.

Tests	Diamonds	Lachnites	Imitations
Hardness	10 (highest known)	9.4 (next highest)	5 to 6 (very soft)
Resistance of Hydrofluoric acid	100% (not affected)	100% (not affected)	0 (easily dissolved)
Melting Point	6970F.	6060F. (platinum melts at 3187 F.)	2200F. (quite low—melts as easily as lead)
Chemical Composition	contain no lead nor glass	contain no lead nor glass	contain both lead and glass
Color	variable—brown to blue white	blue white only	transparent white
Refractive Index	2.417 (very high)	2.105 (very high)	1.98 (only when new)
Reflective Index	.042 (very high)	.021 (very high)	.361 (very low)
Cutting	58 facets (hand cut)	58 facets (hand cut)	28 facets (machine cut)
Permanance	everlasting	everlasting	a few weeks
Value per Carat	$800 (good quality)	$14.50 (unmounted)	10c to 40c

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Send the coupon and only $1 deposit. When the Lachnite arrives wear it for ten days. Then if you or your friends can tell it from a diamond send it back. We will refund your deposit at once. If you decide to buy send only $2.50 a month until $18.75 has been paid.

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