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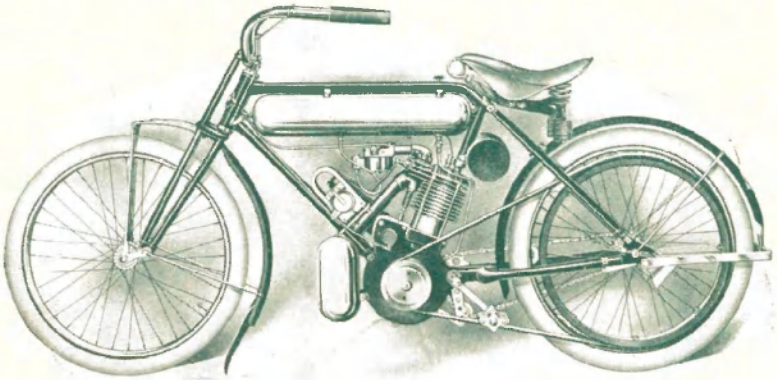

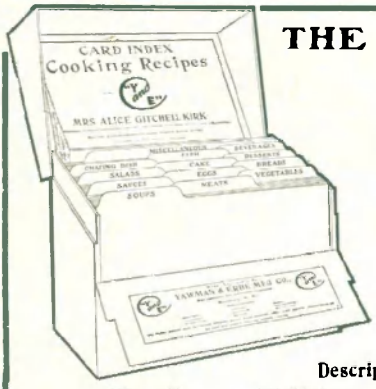

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Contents

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YOUNG'S MAGAZINE

MAY, 1909

THE HIGHER LAW

By Forrest Halsey

CHAPTER I

"MY dear boy, diplomacy is a dog's life for an American. Look at my case—thirty years in the service, never higher than second secretary of the London embassy in all that time. I served the country everywhere—Lisbon, London, Vienna—came to regard myself as a valuable man. Then my uncle, Senator Rollins, dies and I am out. That is the way this country treats its diplomats. Here am I, no money, no training for anything useful, kicking around this vile, little seaside resort in winter because it's cheap, and until I met you this morning in the Pines I had not spoken to a man of my own class in months. Bah!" The speaker blew a cloud of tobacco smoke into the face of an autographed photograph of his late Majesty of Portugal, which stood on the shabby wooden mantel.

"How long did you say you were in the diplomacy, sir?" asked the youth on the other side of the fire.

"Thirty years," replied Clyde Courtright, holding his monacle before the blaze to dry the moisture, formed on entering the warm room from the zero weather outside.

The youth stared. Save for a certain hardness of feature, the man before him did not look over thirty Slender, blonde, high-colored, with a waist that would have raised the question of corsets had not his graceful, free movements denied the suggestion, Clyde Courtright, late first secretary of the London embassy, absolutely belied his fifty years in appearance. People generally thought him to be between thirty and thirty-five.

"Thirty years!" repeated the boy "It—it seems impossible."

"I wish it were," replied the man smiling. "But, throw off your coat.—My God, I always forget the room has no bell-pull.—Excuse me, I must call for my valet. I have some whiskey I got in Scotland, on which I would like your opinion. Those cigarettes on the table are made by Nahmat, the Khedive's man. Help yourself. Excuse me."

Young Macclesfield lit a cigarette and glanced about the room curiously, as his host departed. The "parlor" was the ordinary summer cottage compartment called by that name, while cane furniture and shabby rag carpet made a chilly contrast to the ice and snow visible through its windows. In one corner a fine grand piano showed a polished black expanse, on a rickety table, beside a lamp obviously obtained by means of trading stamps, stood a large photograph of the Queen of England in her coronation robes, whereon the autograph "Alexandria" and the red crown mo-

rocco frame showed it to be a personal gift from the august lady Photographs were everywhere peers, princes, actresses and prima donnas—all the throng so familiar to the young man through the shop windows stood about, each inscribed with some scrawl to his host.

"What a queer fish to be in this place," thought Bruce Macclesfield. Bruce himself had felt rather out of place during the last week. For one thing his mother's idea of opening her house near this abandoned summer resort for two weeks at New Year's had not been a success as far as he was concerned. On his arrival he had found the house filled with girls, whom the manner of his mother unmistakably indicated as desirable daughters-in-law Bruce felt that he had been trapped. Left alone, he could have found any one of the girls agreeable, but in the aggregate they made the young fellow, just out of a quiet set in college, feel as if the top of his head and the top of the roof were equally insecure. The uproar and clamor of the house got upon his nerves. He felt as though he was being hurried along the road to matrimony, as an Indian prisoner was hurried to the stake, amid a shouting crowd of squaws. This, of course, was ungallant, but Bruce was just fresh from college, where a gloomy clique of youths took their wealth seriously He was filled with the responsibility of his inheritance, while the set in which he suddenly found himself was filled with nothing but the desire for a week of enjoyment by the winter sea. He also felt that the people upon whom his mother had laid violent hands believed that they were doing her a favor to maltreat her furniture, in that they themselves termed their "rough-house,' and this attitude filled him with resentment. The fact that his mother did not resent her position annoyed him the more. He withdrew himself for long, lonely walks in the pine woods. That morning his solitary ramble had been interrupted by a sudden outburst from his dogs and, dashing to the rescue, he was just in time to save a white dachshund from their attack. A moment later, to his utmost surprise, a gentleman in a monacle appeared at a turn in the path and thanked him for his service to the dog. At first Bruce had thought him to be astray from the house party, but the stranger soon undeceived him and induced him to accept his hospitality The boy, flattered and drawn by the man's manner, now stood examining the photographs in the apartment Clyde Courtright miscalled his drawing-room.

"I wonder who this can be?" thought Bruce. It was a girl's face, very sweet and innocent, smiling a trifle seriously out of a big lace hat. Then the door opened and his host entered, a man following with a bottle and glasses on a tray

"Ah," said Courtright, "I hope I was not gone too long. Here, tell me what you think of this whiskey"

Bruce placed the photograph on the table. His eyes lingered for a moment on the girl's face, and the other man's eyes followed his.

"Don't you think that a pretty face?" said Courtright.

"Very," answered the youth. "So girlish and pure. It's—it's stunning. Who is she?" he asked boyishly

"That is my daughter Efalé," replied Courtright. "What's the matter with you, you clumsy fool?" he cried suddenly, addressing the valet. The man was standing with a peculiar look of arrested attention on his face, allowing the liquor from the bottle to run down the outside of the glass.

"Pardon, sir," he said. Recovering himself, he filled the small glasses.

Courtright smiled at Bruce.

"I think that America has driven Orlyet insane. For that reason I tolerate him—also because I cannot afford a decent valet. Tell my daughter that her father wishes to see her in the drawing-room," he said to the man.

The servant withdrew Bruce heard his steps ascend the uncarpeted stairs.

"What nationality is your valet?" he asked absently "He has a most peculiar face."

"I do not know," replied the other, throwing himself into a big chair Resting on his shoulder blades, he blew smoke clouds, while one ringed hand caressed a neat gaiter "I got him in London," he continued. "My daughter is fond of him and so I keep him, and also because no decent, self-respecting man would stay with me here. I do not blame them. If I had any self respect I would not stay either But I have nothing, not even money—just this cursed cottage which rents only in summer, so in winter I nestle here. *Voila!*" He spread his white, woman-like hands and shrugged.

"But your daughter—doesn't she find it awfully dull?"

A shrug, a cloud of smoke. Evidently what his daughter thought was not of the utmost importance to Clyde Courtright.

"But it must be awful for her," persisted the boy, with a glance through the window at the long road, buried in snow and marked by bare telegraph poles. "Awful!" he repeated.

"My dear sir, my daughter has lived all her life in a convent, and this is very like a nunnery without the nuns. But I hear her step."

A light footfall was coming slowly down the bare stairs. The door opened and a girl entered.

"This is Mr Macclesfield, the rescuer of Yachol. My daughter Efalé, Mr Macclesfield," said the man.

"I am very glad to meet the rescuer of my poor Yachol," she said sweetly, extending a hand to the boy.

He took it, the blood rushing into his clear, fresh face as he looked at her She was so delicate, quiet and dainty, so unlike any other girl he knew He was very glad that he had come and that he had met her

"Efalé" said the lounger, who was still on his shoulder blades, "Mr Macclesfield wants to know if you do not find it awful here."

The girl smiled a quaint, sweet little smile. "Yes," she said simply "I do."

"I knew it"—Bruce's eyes twinkled—"I do, too."

"But you have a big house party," said Courtright, reaching languidly out to grasp the dachshund by the neck.

"I know, but I get tired of bridge and picnics with bonfires and footmen."

"I would not get tired of picnics," said the girl.

"I wouldn't either if I had people I liked with me," blurted out the boy She smiled at him, and suddenly, as he twinkled in return, the blood spread over his face. The man in the chair watched him through the chinks of his eyelids. The dachshund yelped.

"Clyde, you are hurting him," cried the girl. "Mr Macclesfield, make him let go his neck."

"Yachol is safe with me," said Courtright, lifting the dog on his lap. "Efalé, play that dance of Rose St. Denis for our guest."

The girl rose and went to the piano. Bruce followed her and turned the leaves of the music. The man in the chair closed his eyes.

An hour later the girl stood at the window, watching Bruce Macclesfield breaking a path homeward through the icy crust, in which he sank ankle deep at each step.

"May I ask," she said, without turning her head, "what your game is?"

"My game?" came the sleepy drawl from the man by the fire.

"Yes. Why did you introduce me as your daughter?"

"I made you my daughter for the occasion, because I mean to go to the house party and play bridge. Now do you see?"

"Scarcely"

"Well, they would not invite me if they knew I was living here with a mistress, but a daughter is *so* respectable. So you will have to be respectable for a little while, *belle petite*."

The girl laughed and crossed to him.

"How droll it would be to be respectable. I wonder if I will like the sensation." She laughed and rumpled his hair, putting her face close to his.

"You can't tell until you try Did you ever try in all your life, Efalé?" smiled the man and blew smoke into her hair

CHAPTER II

"Bruce, do you mean you wish me to call on them?"

"Yes, mother They are gentle people and they must be very lonely Mr Courtright is charming, polished, witty Mother, you *must* go."

"My dear boy, when you have lived a little longer you will learn to beware of polished, witty gentlemen at the seaside out of season. I dare say he's a burglar," and Mrs. Macclesfield settled the voluminous draperies of her ample form as though they were a judge's gown.

Bruce frowned. He was a serious youth, but at times his mother's lack of humor galled him.

"I scarcely think a burglar would have autographed photographs of royalty sent to him," he said, with some annoyance.

"Autographed photographs of what royalties?" inquired his mother, in a tone which implied that only the very first quality of royalty was worth the attention of the set in which she moved.

"Well, the Queen of England!" growled the youth. The interview had been long and both tempers were tending to shortness.

"Never heard of such a thing in my life," sniffed his mother "The Queen giving her photograph to a man who lives in a summer cottage in winter! I don't wonder they speak of abolishing the House of Lords."

"Mother," said Bruce, pleadingly, "won't you call on them? I told Mr Courtright you would."

"I never had a person who lived at the seaside in winter on my visiting list. I dare say they are escaped lunatics. I hate lunatics. Their eyes glare so—people whose eyes glare are never good form, and I always consider them insane."

"*Will* you call on them?" interjected Macclesfield.

"Don't you glare at me, Bruce. I won't be glared at by my own son. No, I will not call. I dare say the man is some criminal who wants to be invited here to discover where the jewel safe is concealed."

Her son sprang to his feet in wrath.

"Mother," he cried, "kindly refrain from insulting my friends. I withdraw the request that you call on them."

"Your friends! Why, you only met them yesterday Don't knock over the furniture, Bruce, just because I cannot enlarge my visiting list by adding to it people so lost to all sense of decency as to live in a summer cottage in winter Don't slam the door"

But the door crashed behind her departing son.

"Oh, dear!" commented the lady "How unfortunate to have him meet people he likes, who will take him out of the house!"

"Why?" inquired a voice from behind a huge chair back, above which from time to time curled the smoke of a pipe.

"Oh, John!" snorted Mrs. Macclesfield to her concealed husband. "How can you—when Bruce is behaving so terribly? Angelica Gaylord is just doing all she can to give him the chance to propose. She would take him in a minute, but he won't look at her"

"I don't wonder," drawled the voice. "There is very little to see of Angelica, and that little is spread out along the ground. Angelica is like an English castle—not much in height, but makes it up in groundwork."

"How can you talk so, John? You know she is one of the Gaylord-Gerrys. Look at that!" exclaimed the lady, breaking off abruptly

From the window where she stood her glance commanded the wide sweep of snow-covered lawns and terraces, which fell by long grades to the black ice of a narrow river, where huge bonfires, tended by footmen, were surrounded by figures whose gay-colored sweaters contrasted with the bleak landscape. Out on the ice, the first skaters were beginning to move about. Mrs. Maccles-

field's ejaculation was caused by the sight of her son's back turned to this gay scene and rapidly disappearing in the direction of Courtright's cottage.

"It is infamous!" she cried, turning to the chair-back in wrath. "Imagine his wanting me to call at a summer cottage in winter Why, I would get pneumonia, and probably have my pockets picked as well."

She continued her harangue until the sound of an unmistakable snore told her that her husband was, as usual, blind to the perils and dangers which beset her life.

Meanwhile Bruce was striding through the snow He was very angry with his mother for refusing his request to call upon his new-found friends. He was sensible, too, that Courtright's loose, easy manner concealed an iron social code, which would probably shut the door in his face if the house of Bruce's mother did not open to him. It was with a sense of uneasiness that he rang the bell of the little cottage. Aftr a time the door was opened by the valet, whose seamed mask of a face showed no recognition of the young man.

"Mr Courtright is not at home, sir," said the servant, in answer to his question.

"Is Miss Courtright in?" inquired Bruce.

"No, sir" The lips of the pale mask before him trembled curiously

Bruce turned impatiently away He had reached the gate before a sense of being watched made him turn. He saw the man still standing with his eyes fixed upon him, but as Bruce turned he closed the door The little cottage in the bleak snow looked wretchedly shabby; its curtainless window gaped black, like the eyes of a dead thing.

"They must be very poor," thought the young man. What an end after the gayety and brilliancy of royal courts! The girl, though, had seen no royal courts, only the convent. Still it was horrible to think of her alone there, with her father and that yellow-faced servant. Suddenly his attention was arrested by a trail of little footprints in the hard snow With a glow, he realized that here was a means of tracing her. and, with swinging strides, he began to follow them.

After a while the trail left the road and mounted a little hill. High on its crest three wind-twisted firs stood against a hard, ash-colored sky As he went up the incline, the sound of the ocean came to him and gradually rose to his view, a long curve of surf breaking upon the icy sands, pounded hard as iron by the winter sea. Behind him other trees stood against a sunset of cold red, little crackles of frost from the coming night sounded, away out at sea a single gull swooped across the lonely reaches of a sky on search for prey

"How do you do, Mr Macclesfield?" said a voice. He turned. On a log half way down the fall of the dune sat a girl. wrapped in a man's coat. A scarlet skating cap contrasted with her rich, blue-black hair

"Why, Miss Courtright—what a surprise!" he cried, and scrambled down the dune to her side.

She made room for him on the log. Over the high fur collar her eyes danced with merriment. The vigor of the cold called up all the vigor of her young blood to battle. Her cheeks seemed like pink flowers in the snow to the youth beside her

"Do you know, I followed your footsteps?" he confided, boyishly She laughed and hugged the coat tight about her

"Oh," she said, "isn't this heavenly? Days like this make me want to live forever See—see, he's got it! No, he didn't! Oh, I am so glad!"

The gull had swooped at its prey, but the fish escaped. The bird rose with a savage cry To Bruce it seemed part of her sweetness of nature tnat she should rejoice at the escape of the hunted thing. He looked at her, his eyes kindling. How different she was from the hoydens at his mother's house. Efalé saw the look and smiled.

"You think me silly?" she asked. Darkness was coming now Behind them the crimson had changed to a cold, clear

green. The sea was growing black. He felt as though alone with her in a world of shadow, but he only said

"I think you are very tender hearted."

"I am," she replied, "I wish I were not. Tender-hearted people are so out of the world—they are the only real fools."

Her voice had an edge of sadness. She gazed out over the darkening sea. He thought that she was unhappy and the loneliness of his own life found complement in hers. They sat, talking at infrequent periods, while behind them the sky turned to the black blue of a winter's night, hung with an icy moon. Far out over the sea the savage cries of the gull began again.

"It has missed once more," said Efalé. Suddenly out of the blackness came the fanning of the wings and the gull passed over their heads, something white gleaming and twisting in his claws.

"Oh," said the girl, angrily, "the silly fish! Why couldn't it stay deep enough?"

The youth made no reply He was gazing at her intently She seemed in the first faint moonlight like some delicate, little spirit of the cold night, come out of the winter sea to charm the lone wanderer. The gull's cries died in the distance.

"It is late," said the girl abruptly "I must go home."

After seeing her to the door, Bruce's homeward way was beset by sensations and thoughts that were rather new to the serious, young man. Remembrance of a scarlet skating cap set upon blue-black, wavy hair, caused him to whistle in satisfaction out of all proportion to the picture. He visualized a pair of wide, blue-grey eyes gazing out at a darkening sea. The sight of the vast mass of his mother's lighted house brought recollections less pleasant. Frowningly he repelled the noisy greetings of the dogs as he entered the hall. The rite of bearing the tea-tray in majesty to the fireplace was in progress and the footman was performing it with his usual gravity About the crackling logs a gay group, still in skating costume, was having an unusual amount of enjoyment. Evidently some new and very popular person had arrived.

The group parted to allow the placing of the tray Bruce saw his mother in assiduous attention upon a monacled gentleman who lounged upon his shoulder blades, while he chaffed the young people. Too astonished to move, the youth stood, almost breathless.

"Ah, Bruce, my boy!" said Clyde Courtright's careful, languid voice. "I have just been making my apologies to your mother for my extreme rudeness in not calling before. I have become such a reculse as to be almost a barbarian in regard to social usages. But, as I explained to her, I did not know she was the Mrs. Macclesfield that my friend, Mrs. Gaylord-Gerry, asked me to look up until I met you this morning."

"And Bruce," purred Mrs. Macclesfield, "Mr Courtright has promised to bring his daughter to-morrow and dine with us. She is going to do the snake dance all Paris is wild about. He says she learned it from Rose Saint Denis. Oh, I am so glad you were so charming as to take pity on us, Mr Courtright."

CHAPTER III.

In the drawing room, visible through the open conservatory doors, bridge, that curse of modern hospitality, was in full tide. Bruce, from his seat among the faintly illuminated shrubs and exotics could see the long, luxurious vista set with the successive little wicker tables, each surrounded by its gamblers. In front of a towering rosewood mantle, Clyde Courtright's monacle glittered in the firelight. From his white, jewelled hands, as he dealt the cards, other lights scintillated. The sight caused Bruce to turn to the girl whom he had just led out of the apartment and say

"I think your father is really the most remarkable man I have ever known."

Efalé sank down upon the cushioned marble bench, deftly drawing her skirts aside to make a place for him.

"He is remarkable." Her eyes, as she replied, glanced at the cynical, laughing profile. "Everyone admires him. He

is what so few of you American men ever are, a social success abroad."

"You Americans!" repeated Bruce, with a quizzical smile.

"Oh, I am only half American," corrected the girl.

"I suppose your mother was English?"

"Yes. Why is it you don't care for bridge?"

"Oh, you see, I am such a stupid yap, and the women here scold so when you make mistakes."

"You know it is stupid to make mistakes," she smiled.

"How do you know? You never make them." He had forgotten the drawing room now—forgotten everything but the little figure in white that lit his young blood into tingling appreciation of her pretty nearness. There was a something that set her apart from the other women that he knew—a shy, mocking air, charming and refreshing to a young man accustomed to "whoop hurrah" of his mother's set. Day by day, in the five days he had known her, he discovered some new delight of her person or manner She was always bright and always soothing. Full of pulsing, vital youth, she could skate beside him for mile after mile down the frozen river, yet in the drawing room she seemed some delicate flower of girlhood to be sheltered from the slightest wind.

There were certain things about the girl's character and attitude towards him that an older, more experienced man would have questioned. She was, if anything, too pliable—too quick to detect a change in his mood and adjust herself to it. The sweet plasticity of her manner would have suggested to the eye of the experienced male too much of a knowledge of his sex. But young Macclesfield saw only her prettiness and knew only that she charmed and delighted him, and that the hours since he had known her had been full of an awakening interest in life, that he had not thought possible away from the companions and pursuits of his college.

To-night the soft, flower-scented dusk of the conservatory was full of a gentle, delightful spirit. The drawing room gambled feverishly, but here, among the violets and magnolias, a peace seemed to settle. The world, as represented by the bridge players, was swept out of sight. The dusky palm leaves might have hidden the dryards of old Sicily and the little, white girl beside him might have been some shepherdess Persephone. He was very young—still fond of the idea of shepherdesses.

"Do you know, you did not answer a question of mine?" he said, finally

"And what was that question?"

"I asked you about your mother—if she was English. Don't think me impertinent, but I am interested in all that concerns you."

"My mother," said the girl, sadly How absolutely neglectful Clyde was of all trifles. He had told her nothing of what mother she was supposed to have. This whole game was very hazardous, amusing for him, yes, and profitable, too, but for her far from simple. And this serious, young man beside her—this easy capture—what earthly use was he to her? She looked out into the drawing room. Courtright had just risen to greet a late arrival, a middle-aged woman, handsome, of imposing manner, someone doubtless from one of the nearby house parties who had motored over, as was frequently the custom, to join the game.

"You asked me about my mother," she said, aloud. "Poor mother!" Her voice had a tinge of sadness. "I only remember her indistinctly She died when I was quite young."

The first part of this sentence was correct. She had not known her very well. In fact, she had not known her at all, but whether or not she was dead she was ignorant.

"Pardon me!" he said. "I didn't mean to hurt you."

He bent toward her How beautifully young she was. Youth spoke from every curve and tint of her All the youth of her called to the youth in him in that wonderful free masonry of life's springtime.

Meanwhile, in the drawing room, Clyde Courtright had risen to greet the lady whom his hostess had brought up

to his table.

"Oh, I am so glad that you came over to-night, Mr Courtright. Here is you dear friend, Mrs. Gerry," said Mrs. Macclesfield.

The man smiled and held out his hand to Mrs. Gaylord-Gerry.

"Why, Blanche, how are you? It's years and years."

The handsome, middle-aged woman looked at him rather gravely and then bowed.

"Mr Courtright," she said.

Courtright turned to his hostess.

"I am going to give my place at the table to whoever wants it. I want to have a chat."

After a few moments, necessary to arrange his substitute, he led the last arrival down the long room. They seated themselves on a fauteil at some distance from the card players.

"Of course, I could make a scene here to-night," said the woman, opening her fan.

"My dear, good Blanche, this house party was, as it were, thrust upon me. I could not escape. I should think you would be satisfied that I did not choose this," a slight wave of the hand at the overdecorated drawing room, "for my pleasure. Besides, you may as well know now, I am determined to get back. Must I forego all pleasure in the world?"

She looked at him for a moment. Then she said, "I have never known you to consult anything but your own pleasure. Do you expect me to lend myself to the pleasant fiction that you and I are friends?"

"Why not be friends, my dear Blanche? It is so common to be enemies under the circumstances. Do let us be original."

The woman looked down at the sticks of her fan, which shook ever so slightly in her hand.

"I see," she said, very quietly, "that you are still the same scoundrel."

"Would it not be a rather stranger phenomenon if I were still a different scoundrel?"

Her eyes grew hard.

"The most surprising phenomenon would be that you had ceased to be a scoundrel at all," she said. How young he looked. In the light from the shaded lamps, his blonde hair and bright blue eyes were almost boyish. She glanced into one of the many mirrors set in the walls, and the sight of her gray hair and pale face stabbed her How unfair—how miserably, miserably unfair!

"My dear Blanche," said his languid, amused voice, "neither you nor I are to blame for this. I thought you in the Adirondacks. In fact, I saw in the papers that you were there."

"I am with the Blakes at Allendale."

"I know, but this is the last place one would expect you. You were noted for the rigor with which you kept the social lines."

"My niece is here. Besides, I have ceased to care about social lines. I try to amuse myself."

"Then, my dear, we are as one."

She drew away with an involuntary movement of disgust.

"Pardon me! The words were meaningless," he said.

"I am going at once, but before I leave I shall see to it that it is no longer possible for you to use my name as a passport through these doors."

"What do you intend to do?"

"Tell your hostess the truth about you."

He tapped her fan with one long, tapering finger

"My dear, do you know that you are an absolute surprise to me. Your courage is perfectly astonishing."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean the way you face me in this superb manner" His glance was like the sudden glitter of drawn steel. She drew back and looked at him. Slowly her eyes met his until she had given him the full measure of her scorn, then, rising, she left him. He turned and watched her sweep down the full length of the room, saw her bend and whisper to her hostess. Mrs. Macclesfield rose and, in some bewilderment, followed her guest up to where Clyde sat. He stood up.

"I have asked Mrs. Macclesfield to spare me a moment in private. I wish to

tell her something in your presence," said Blanche Gerry

Their hostess gazed in startled bewilderment from one to the other The man bowed and drew aside a heavy rose-velvet curtain to a room in which the lamps and firelight shone upon walls of gilded book bindings.

"I have observed that the library is always empty," he said, with a half smile.

They entered and the curtains fell, shutting out the brilliant lights of the drawing room. In the dusk, bronze busts caught little life-giving gleams from the fire and the three standing about the table seemed to have an audience of dead authors and poets. For a moment there was silence, then Blanche Gerry cleared her throat and said, very quietly

"Mrs. Macclesfield, I must tell you that when you admitted this man as my friend, as you told me you did, you were under a misapprehension, one that I wish to correct at once."

The stout figure of the hostess seemed to shrivel. Her hands opened helplessly, but it was to the man she turned.

"Oh, Mr Courtright, what is this?" she moaned. Then, looking in terrified bewilderment at the woman, she repeated, "What is this?"

"This, my dear lady," replied Clyde, one white hand resting easily upon the gilded leather of a huge chair—"this is a little drama of Mrs. Gerry's."

His insolent eyes dared the tall, handsome woman who confronted him across the table. The faces of the two were curiously illuminated from below by a lamp, which stood between them.

"You cannot intimidate me," replied the woman, coldly "Allow me to tell you," turning to her frightened hostess, "that the man who is your guest has been cast out of all decent society in London. He is a social pariah. In New York he dare not set his foot in a club, nor in the drawing room of anyone who knows him. In England he only escaped prison for conspiracy because I would not prosecute him."

"You!" exclaimed the hostess.

"Yes. I—I was once his wife."

There was silence for a few moments. The man still lounged against the chair and swung his monacle on its string. The lamplight caught the little circle of glass inalternating flashes.

"Continue," he said, "or shall I?"

"He will tell you," continued the woman, calmly, "that he entered a cross bill against me, and he could tell you what all London knows, that he conspired with one of his vile creatures to blacken my name and take my child, that he might keep his grip on my money"

"There you're mistaken, my good Blanche," smiled the man. "You don't do my paternal affection justice."

"But—but," Mrs. Macclesfield's fat, trembling hands spread themselves toward the haughty woman by the table. "He has the child—she is here—your daughter is here!"

The woman started.

"What?"

"In the conservatory now with my son."

Blanche Gerry turned to the man, her eyes lit with angry scorn.

"Another of your lies. Even your dead daughter is not safe from you." The fan broke in her clutch. She began to tremble.

"You daughter is dead?" cried Mrs. Macclesfield.

"Then years ago," replied the woman. "Clyde—Clyde—how could—how dared you?"

"Then — then," Mrs. Macclesfield's voice rose to a whispered scream, "who is that creature?"

The man adjusted his monacle and surveyed her calmly

"A daughter of mine, nevertheless, madam. Illegitimate, I am sorry to say—but," smiling at the woman across the lamp, "you did bore me awfully, you know, Blanche."

Blanche Gerry dropped the broken fan upon the table. Hardness obliterated the emotion on her face. Mrs. Macclesfield's hands shook with rising hysteria.

The curtain to the drawing room was torn open by a joyous hand. Bruce, glowing, blushing, his eyes dancing with boyish delight, stood in the doorway

"Mother!" he cried, "mother! I have just proposed to Efalé and she has accepted me. Congratulate me, mother!"

Gazing wilde-eyed at her son, Mrs. Macclesfield screamed and burst into hysterics.

CHAPTER IV

Courtright lit the lamp. The sudden light disclosed all the mean poverty of the little "parlor" By the hearth the girl, still in her furs, leaned wearily against the mantel.

The man advanced and relieved her of her wraps, throwing them at a chair, which they missed, falling in a shapeless bundle on the floor The valet entered with wood and proceeded to make the fire. When the sticks were crackling he crossed to the girl, stooped and drew off her overboots, then, after performing the same service for the man, he set whiskey and glasses upon the table, gathered up the discarded furs and coats and withdrew As the door shut Courtright said

"How in the world did you think you could get away with it?"

"You mean accepting his proposal tonight?"

"Yes, my little one, that was stupid. Our bluff was not such a strong one as to stand you as a prospective daughter-in-law."

"I don't know what made me do it, Clyde." Her voice was very low, with a note of weary wonder in it. "It all happened so suddenly You will not believe me, but I never thought of him in that way No," a little angrily in reply to his smile, "I only regarded him as a wholesome boy He amused me. I have had very little experience of wholesome boys. So to-night in the conservatory, when he began to make love to me, I let him. I always let them. I was watching you—wondering how soon you would turn me adrift. I know, I can read you so well. Oh, I admit I thought of the boy as a possible refuge, then suddenly he asked me to marry him, and, Clyde, it came to me all at once that he meant it. He is the first man who ever asked me to marry him."

"You forget the drunken waiter at the 'Greche Mericulures,'" said the man.

The girl turned upon him. She was trembling with fury, her eyes black with hate. He grinned sardonically

"My dear, little one," he said, "you look as if you could kill me. I am only truthful."

His evening had been a bitter disappointment. The glimpse into the old luxury that had once been his life had slipped away like a mirage from the desert of his poverty He felt that he had handled his crisis very poorly, and he was angry at her for obtruding her own blunder upon a situation already sufficiently delicate.

After a moment she controlled herself and lit a cigarette with a hand that was almost steady What a fool she had been to follow him to America. Why had she done it? Waif of the London studios though she was, she could have done better Her association with great artists had given her the superficial polish that women of intelligence are so marvelously quick to assume. But there had been a difference, a certain courtesy in his relations with her that had been a balm to the bruises given her spirit by the ordinary lover of the studios. So she had followed him, and now—she had been a fool—back there among the dim flowers of the conservatory—well, what was the use of quarreling?

"I am sorry, Clyde," he said, aloud, "but what is done is done."

"It is of no consequence, after all." He drank some whiskey, then added, "I made enough for a little run to the city We will go to-morrow"

She brightened. "I suppose by this time mamma has recovered from her hysterics and informed her son what caused them," he said. "You know, I was delighted to be able to make mamma's seizure the excuse to leave at once. Poor Bruce! How he was torn between having to say good-bye to you and minister to mamma. Did you notice how she clutched him? Samson himself could not have broken that hold."

She shrugged. It did not matter—nothing mattered. She was glad that

they were going to New York. What a nice boy Bruce had been! That type was one that, after all, a girl of her kind saw nothing of. The manner he had shown her was evidently the manner of men toward women they met in their homes—but, well, no matter She crossed to the table and filled a whiskey glass.

"Here's good-bye to respectability!" she said and, raising it, smiled at him.

A sudden ring of the doorbell arrested her Courtright saw the color fade out of her face. She set the glass on the table. The valet's steps creaked down the hall. They heard him fumble the chain.

"Clyde," whispered the girl, "he's come—he has! I won't see him. Hide me. I can't see him." She ran to the door, but it gave upon the hall. With a little cry of misery, she retreated to the table and pressed her hands together with a force that made the knuckles snow white in the lamplight. Her eyes turned to the man's amused face.

"Be calm," he said. "He does not know I explained you by saying you were my illegitimate daughter Illegitimate daughters can be as pure as—what is it—snow" The light flashed from his sardonic monacle. The situation amused him. "Lord," he thought' "how mistaken Fielding was when he said, 'Every woman is at heart a rake!' Piff! Every woman is at heart respectable."

"Efalé" cried Bruce, bursting open the door "Dear—dear, I have just heard. I came at once." His eyes caught Courtright's and he paused. "Mr Courtright," he said, more calmly, "my mother's sudden attack prevented me speaking to you as I wished, but I will do so now May I marry your daughter at once?"

The older man advanced.

"Not in ignorance, Mr Macclesfield. I presume your mother has told you what I told her?"

"Yes," said the boy, quietly "But I desire to know or to hear nothing but your answer Do you consent to my marrying your daughter?" The lamplight showed the grave manliness of his earnest, young face. By the mantel the girl watched with wide, stunned eyes. In the shadows of the hall the yellow mask of the valet's face peered from the darkness.

"My daughter must answer your question for herself," replied Courtright.

"She has answered," cried the boy, bending across the table, his pleading eyes fixed upon her "She has. She told me she loved me. Efalé!"

Courtright smiled in the kindly sympathy of age with hot youth.

"My daughter, did you tell him you loved him?"

"Yes," said the girl, slowly "I told him." She went over to the table. The boy caught her in his arms, looking down upon her upturned face with tender love and pity

"Bruce!" she whispered, and hid her face against his coat, her arms closing about his neck.

"I feel quite like a father, after all," thought Clyde Courtright.

CHAPTER V

Efalé took a last puff at the cigarette, then pressed the lighted end against the marble of the mantelpiece. Waiting until the stub had ceased to smoke, she hid it in one of the huge porcelain jars that stood on either side of the hearth. Then she raised the window to allow the sharp, spring air to blow away the smell of tobacco. Beneath her the long avenue was in incessant motion of vehicles and pedestrians. The bright colors of women's gowns and glinting reflections from the mountings of harnesses and motor cars had a peculiar suggestion of springtime. At the corner of Thirty-third street boys held trays of deep purple violets toward the passing crowd. The flat, gay tops of enormous feminine hats bobbed by Efale yawned and glanced at the clock. She wondered if she could venture another cigarette before her husband's return. It would be amusing to dress and lunch downstairs, but then Bruce objected to her lunching alone, because there were so many questionable people in the hotel. She smiled. Questionable people! That meant women about whom there could be no question. How dull

it was alone in these rooms, and how hideously ugly they were with their surcharged tints and crudely gilded furniture. Her life in the studios had at least taught her the value of tones. Her life in the studios! How long ago that seemed! She wondered that her husband never suspected. But why should he? There were none to enlighten him. His family had cast him off. And Clyde? Where could Clyde be? She had not seen him since the day of her marriage—three months ago. Yes, she would venture that cigarette.

Going to a desk, she unlocked a drawer and, taking out one, lit it. Three months! That had been a dirty trick to play on the boy Well, her whole life had been a series of tricks. A girl had to resort to them. What man had ever shown her any consideration? Clyde? No, he least of all. She had always been afraid of him. She would always be. Where was he? Why did he not write to her? It was horrible, this feeling that he was about her, watching, waiting his time to be paid for his part in the low game they had put upon Bruce. Of course, he would want to be paid, but, after all, he was a man of intelligence, he would know too much to demand the impossible. But why didn't he show his hand?

At the sound of a step approaching she threw the cigarette out of the open window and was sitting at her desk, writing, when the maid entered.

"For madam," said the woman, and placed on the table a huge, ribbon-bound box, from the end of which protruded the stems of roses. The servant withdrew

Efalé arose and took out the flowers, with her husband's card attached. At the line on it saying he would be unable to return to luncheon, her eyes grew kind with a sort of a whimsical pity She touched the huge scarlet roses with gentle hands, then, taking them in her arms, went to the window. Beneath her numerous flags, indicating the presence of some foreign potentate in the hotel, whipped in the breeze. Still below the gay crush of the avenue moved.

How thoughtful he was! Did he suspect? Was it possible that he could be blind? Yet, after all, he was simply a boy How alive the avenue looked! She yawned. She had only had a puff of that last cigarette. There was time for another She went to the desk, putting down the roses. As she dropped them her husband's boyish scrawl fastened to the stems attracted her glance. Slowly she closed the desk and locked it. Picking up the flowers, she crossed to the window and put them in a vase.

Later in the afternoon the weariness of doing nothing in the gilded atrocity of her rooms forced her to dress and descend to the library In a secluded corner of the huge, scarlet apartment she took her seat. Her quiet dress and the open book on her lap served as a shield from the drifting crowd of well-dressed provincials. Brilliantly attired ladies, singly or in groups, were scattered about on the chairs and divans, seemingly for no purpose than to satisfy bucolic curiosity She found a certain relief in observation of the specimens of humanity presented to her gaze. Finally an eruption of gorgeously attired females swept in from a nearby room, in which a musical afternoon given by a once fashionable tenor had just concluded. Beneath the foam of flowers and plumes, here and there, faces which she had seen in periodicals devoted to fashion told Efale that the tenor still retained some of his smart patrons. The details of the toilettes sweeping by absorbed and interested her Having come from a world that judges only by externals, she naturally concluded that these gorgeously appareled creatures represented the society with which she had dreamed of mingling. The absolute isolation which followed her marriage had shown the girl that matrimony was not the sponge upon life's slate that she had thought it. It had not been hard to deceive her young husband. She was a good actress and some trait in her obscure progenitors tended toward domesticity, but not the domesticity of idleness. Had she duties to fill her days, the longing for the abandoned gaiety would not have been so incessant. Her husband was being initiated into the huge business left by his

grandfather, from which his parents' displeasure at his marriage could not legally oust him. But the wife had nothing to occupy her empty time in the vast impersonal caravansary where they made their abode. It was from a very dangerous procession of unoccupied hours that she watched and envied the women who, to her thinking, had such an active social life. One in particular, a handsome, stately woman in long sables and pale gold velvets, noticed the intentness of her gaze and made a half pause, as though she partially recognized the girl, then, with a start of absolute recognition, hurried on. The woman was Blanche Gerry.

Outside under the iron marquise and for a block down Thirty-fourth street the vehicles of the patrons of the music were in a desperate tangle. All the exits of the long awning were packed with gaily dressed femininity A clamor of shrill, nasal female voices of the kind only to be heard at the functions of this hotel mingled with the shouts of the footmen and chauffeurs. Mrs. Gerry drew back in dismay and irresolution. She was combatting a sudden impulse to return and speak to the girl, whom she had recognized as the one Clyde Courtright had so cynically referred to as being almost the same age as her dead daughter Her motor car was hopelessly laboring to reach the curb through a tangle of equipages.

"The Thirty-third street door, Brown," she said to her footman and, turning, reentered the hotel.

The girl was so young and looked so lonely! And what chance could she have had with such a father! Twenty years! What could not have happened during that time? What she must have seen and heard! Was it too late? Twenty years —just the age of her own daughter

She entered the library The girl still sat in her lonely corner Very quietly Blanche Gerry crossed to her and held out her hand.

"Mrs. Macclesfield," she said, with a little smile. Efale's blue eyes rose to hers. The heart of the older woman began a little quickened beat, yet not a shade of any emotion but of pleasant friendliness showed on her face. For a moment young Mrs. Macclesfield hesitated, then, with a deep blush, she recognized her The older woman's trained social instincts told her that this was the moment to attack the girl's prejudices and suggested the manner in which it must be done. Seating herself by Efalé's side, she began very earnestly and gently

"My dear, I saw in the papers that you had married a boy of whom I am very fond. He and I came to be great friends at the seaside last winter Won't you let me be a friend to you, too?"

This remark would have covered Bruce with astonishment. His acquaintance with Mrs. Gaylord-Gerry had been confined to seeing her at a distance in his mother's drawing room, but it served its purpose with Efalé, or, possibly, the sweetness of this stately woman's manner spoke to her loneliness. A soft, little smile grew in the blue eyes of Mrs. Macclefield as she said·

"I want all Bruce's friends to like me, but they never come around now that he's married me."

"Which shows that her social training should be taken in hand at once," thought the older woman. But aloud she said, "You must come to tea with me now"

Efalé rose with quick delight at the prospect of someone to talk to. Her life had trained her not to regard with too much humiliation such memories as that of their last meeting at the seaside.

"Let's go into the Turkish room. It is so swagger Lots of swell people take tea there."

Blanche shuddered. The child ought to be removed from the vulgar influence of this hotel at once. What could her husband be thinking of to bring her here? And her father, who had apparently not given a thought to her training. Probably she had been left always to the care of cheap servants, poor, little, unwelcome accident that she was! How pretty she was, too, and not common, despite her ignorance. Twenty years of *him*— poor child!

"Here's the room," said Efalé with al-

most the pride of a hostess. The older woman gave an involuntary recoil from the garish horror of the place. Several hard-faced, brightly colored women regarded her intently They recognized her and knew of her social prominence. A stout person in scarlet satin, whose fat, idle hands had obviously once washed dishes in some provincial outer darkness, bent forward to examine the way the gold velvet was constructed. Blanche turned to the girl.

"My dear," she said, "I want to take you to my house. We can chat quietly there."

Efalé was disappointed. To play hostess in public to this undoubted personage would have been pleasant. The thought of being in her house, with haughty butlers criticizing the way she ate, frightened her Yet, as she did not know how to refuse, she went. The experience was a pleasant surprise. Everything in the great house to which she was taken spoke of harmony and peace. To sit beside a warm hearth in the dusky, spacious luxury of a great room where the very stillness signified a life new to her, the quiet and security of a home, and be treated as a friend by a woman of breeding was an absolute surprise to the girl. Nothing in all her hard young life had even suggested this. And as she was, despite her experience, very young and the woman beside her skilled in all the arts that win admiration, it was not surprising that the girl felt her heart go out to her in a great wave of youthful adoration.

"Oh, if I could only be like her!" thought Efalé.

The deft unconsciousness with which the woman manipulated the tea tray, the ease of the smooth machinery of service that brought and removed it, even the way in which the servants lit the lamps and drew the curtains, all impressed the girl, sitting in a shy reserve that masked her curiosity

"You must take pity on me and let me see you again," said Blanche at parting. "I am an old woman, and a very lonely one."

The girl took the hand held out to her. Suddenly she made a clutch at her resolution.

"Mrs. Gerry," she said, timidly, "I—I don't know how to say it. But I love Bruce, and I want to be a wife he can—what I mean to say is, I don't know—the little things. Would you show me how to—to be like you are?" Her eyes were unconsciously pleading for her

Blanche Gerry took her very gently in her arms.

"I will, my dear, as I would my own daughter if I had one," she said.

"Thank you!" said Efalé, tremulously

When the girl had gone the older woman sat looking into the heart of the red logs.

"I don't care," she thought. "I know he will stop her coming when he finds it gives me pleasure. I don't care. I will fight him."

Young Mrs. Macclesfield returned to her hotel. A sense of weariness was upon her Mrs. Gerry had been kind, but, after all, she wished she had not gone with her How hopeless it all was! A lie—a cheap trick she was playing upon her husband and this new-found woman, who had been so sweet. The chains of her old life closed about her again. He—Courtright—where was he?

"A person to see madam," said the maid, opening the door of her suite.

With a sudden catch of the heart, Efalé entered the drawing room. Courtright's valet stood there. On the table was an open box of orchids and violets.

"Oh, Orylet!" she said. Her tone had a note of friendliness for this haggard, yellow-faced man who brought sharply back memories of London. Clyde had been in her dressing room one night at the music hall where she was posing in pictures designed after a noted artist's work and he had listened while the poor wretch had stammered out the fact that he had just lost his job as doorkeeper With one of his offhand, momentary impulses of kindness, he had given him a sum of money Finding Efalé had known him for some years as the keeper of a boarding house where she had lodged and that he had been kind to her, he gave him from time to time other sums. Upon

the final smash of his fortune, when Clyde was lingering in shabby London lodgings, the fellow had come to be a sort of valet and when, in the sudden burst of prosperity which came every quarter day, Clyde took Efalé to America, he had taken the man also.

"What is it?" questioned the girl. "Where is he?"

Orylet gave her a letter.

"This is farewell," she read. "I have secured a commission from an Asphalt Company to go to Hondouras and attend to some little political affairs for them. It means living there or in Paris for some years. Adieu, my little daughter My regards to my son-in-law

"Your ever-loving Father"

Still carrying the note, she went to the window The lights of the avenue were beginning to shine, yet high above the opposite buildings the sky was a warm, tender blue. A wind blown from brown hillsides all abud with spring seemed wafted to her. How pretty the world was—how full of promise! She had done him wrong—he had his code, too. He was no blackmailer A scoundrel, yes, but a gentleman also.

A movement from the man at the table recalled her.

"There is no answer," she said. She did not notice the sombre eyes fixed on her. She could think of nothing but that she was free.

"Won't you say good-bye?" said the man.

"Good-bye, Orlyet! And good luck!" she smiled in kindly farewell.

He looked at her, hesitated a moment, as if about to speak.

"What is it?" she said.

"Nothing—good-bye, and good luck!" and he departed.

She tore the note into bits and dropped the fragments into the vase where she had hidden the cigarette stubs. The maid, passing through, lighted the dressing room for the evening toilette.

"Antoinette!" said young Mrs. Macclesfield.

The woman appeared in the illuminated doorway. "Yes, madam!"

"You may have those flowers on the table. Their scent is too oppressive—take them away."

The woman departed with the box. Going to a vase that held a mass of scarlet roses, Efalé buried her face in them.

CHAPTER VI.

The changes of time are subtle things to those who experience them. Had anyone been privileged to ask young Mrs. Macclesfield what difference the four years of her married life had made in her she could scarcely have told them. That there was a vast difference from the girl of former time was evident as she waited in her drawing room for the announcement that her carriage was at the door. Someone, it was evident, must have taken immense pains with the social education of young Mrs. Macclesfield. There was an air of perfect finish that could have come only with infinite polishing; but, after all, a poor surface cannot take a high gloss, and the fact that Efalé had the polish showed that the texture had been fine enough to produce it. Also, the gentle air of sweetness, which formerly had been simply a veil assume to please the masculine demand, was now unmistakably natural. The door had just closed on the cause of the change in Efalé—three-year-old Bruce Macclesfield, Jr.—and his voice could be heard conversing with his nurse as he departed for a promenade in the park. The light called up by his presence still lingered in Efalé's eyes. Her early prettiness had crystalized into beauty of a subtle, spiritual quality that made people call young Mrs. Macclesfield a woman of infinite charm. She was spoken of as "that beautiful English girl that young Macclesfield married," and was commonly supposed to be of a good, provincial, British family The powerful social influence of Mrs. Gaylord Gerry had introduced her to society, and, as under the older woman's deft hand, her shyness changed to reserve and as she was unmistakably beautiful and very rich, she came to make for herself a niche in the great temple of Mirth. The birth of the grandchild had reconciled Bruce's mother, so it was from a very easy place

in the security of wealth that young Mrs. Macclesfield regarded the world. Of Courtright she heard nothing. He was as absolutely gone from her life as though he never existed. He had been tired of her, and glad to be rid of her, and had departed. There were times when her hard girlhood seemed simply a dream to the young mother Every year the dream grew fainter. She came to feel secure. There were often days when she was bored by respectability, but she still was happy in the love of her handsome husband, and when the baby came and with it the wonder of maternity her life was so full that all desire for the things she had once enjoyed passed away. The child became a passion with her. An almost fierce desire to justify and retrieve her life for its sake possessed her Gradually the power of habit grew upon her until, with the passing of the years, that mighty power that once had impelled her along the road of recklessness, now guarded her equally in her respectability Today, as she buttoned her gloves and waited for her carriage to take her to the Plaza, where a musicale, patronized by Mrs. Gerry, was to be held, she had the absolute peace of oblivion.

Driving down the avenue, in the clear, cold sunlight of early March, the way was often impeded by blocks of traffic, due to the heavy snow now piled in mounds that narrow the width of the street. The sidewalks had been cleared, however, and were jammed with people promenading after the enforced seclusion of the recent storm. In the park the trees, as she passed them, seemed made of glittering ice. The sky was a sheet of cold, intense blue. Efalé nestled into her furs warmly and allowed her thoughts to busy themselves with pleasant scraps of memory—little details of the apartment, of the taste displayed, of which she was so proud—how the boy had last looked —her husband—all the little things of her life. As her brougham swept around into the Plaza a laden snow cart crossed its path and the sharp drawing in of her horses shook her Glancing out of the window to ascertain the cause, she saw the cart, which had stopped, and the laborers beside it, lifting in the last shovelfuls of dirty snow. One, a boy almost, was thinly, raggedly clad in obviously summer garments, his hands broken and bleeding from the cold. The winter wind seemed to rush straight through the thin clothes and cut at the trembling body beneath. Old memories stabbed through Efalé's pleasant dreams. She, too, had known hunger, cold, all the cruel edge of the sword of life. The shivering boy was beside the window, and, lowering it, she thrust into his hands her little, gold purse.

"Take it," she said. "I mean the purse also," in answer to his look of numb surprise. "There are only three or four dollars in it. Take it all."

A crosswalk was blocked by her carriage and staring, sleek, well-nourished faces stared at her with curiosity. The carriage went on. Some of the crowd still stood, commenting and gazing. Efalé drew her sumptuous furs about her She was cold, and in a strange way afraid. She was abruptly conscious that misery and suffering still went on in the world beyond the warm walls which shut in her life. What nonsense that she should be afraid! Who would want to harm her? Only, she had not thought enough of charity. She must pay the high gods for their exceeding goodness to her Yes, she must speak to Bruce. They should do something to help the suffering. How selfish happiness made one!

The carriage drew up at the entrance to the hotel, and soon interest in the progress of the musicale drove all other thoughts from her mind. The program was long and the short winter's day was over when she emerged. It was night. The white stone hugeness of the building towered into the darkness, splashed by circles of light from its iron lanterns. The waiting equipages were simply inky silhouettes marked by their round, glowing lamps. Here and there a ray of light touched the brass of a motor hood, the silver initial of a saddle cloth or fell upon the fur of a robe in the arms of a footman. Over the park the night was pierced with the clear pin points of the cold stars. On the Plaza white and

yellow electric lights shone clear cut in the dry, icy darkness.

She had just left before the crowd and so stood almost alone under the awning, while her footman summoned her carriage from the waiting lines. All in black, from her wide, flat hat to the tip of her velvet skirt, showing under her long furs, she was a figure to arrest wandering eyes in search of female beauty. Under the shadow of huge, soft plumes and against the rich furs her face shone in enchanting relief of delicate, white skin and pretty color. Her deep-blue eyes were still soft with the emotion that the music had called to them.

To the men, one of the newly arrived guests of the hotel, who had seen her cross the lobby and had followed her out under the awning, she seemed absolutely dazzling in her fresh, supple loveliness. He watched her intently as she entered her carriage. Long after the vehicle had left he still stood pondering; then he entered the hotel. Adjusting his monacle, he scanned the ladies who were now leaving the lifts in bright swarms.

"They none of them can hold a candle to her," he thought. "Who would have believed that she would develop such beauty? I wonder if I have missed a trick?" Sauntering into the Palm Room, Clyde Courtright ordered tea and brandy. Sending for the telephone book, he examined it carefully and finally wrote an address on his cuff.

CHAPTER VII.

Clyde glanced about the small drawing room with a curious lift of the brows. Was this Efalé's taste? Or could she love her husband sufficiently to live in an apartment with so little of the garish glitter that the class from which she came considered luxury. The faint rose color of the satin walls only showed when a circle of light from one of the subdued lamps touched them into a pink sheen. Delicate tones of rose blushed a shade deeper in the carpet. Fine, slender festoons of bronze fell from the frieze, a garland of the same metal, the full colored mahogany furniture struck deep tones of polish brown; masses of carnations in tall, slender bronze vases stood on the hearth and contrasted with the pink cipolino marble of the graceful mantelpiece. A single Boucher, old, rich and dim, showed in the chimney breast.

"Whoever did this has taste," thought the man. "But Efalé must have wept bitter tears over it. Not one bit of gilt. I will wager she thinks she has married a poor man whenever she comes here."

Clyde had called that evening, announcing himself merely as Mrs. Macclesfield's father, and had decided to await her return from the dinner to which he was informed she had gone. He was amused and annoyed. To wait for anything or anyone was to him a bore; still he had nothing else to do, so he waited. The years that had passed showed plainly, even under the tempered light. The face had hardened—long, fine lines were beginning to come in it. His eyes, too, had the cold, bright look that comes to men who gaze much upon pleasure. But still he retained, to a remarkable extent, the look of youth which had made him for years the envy and discussion of the clubs. Certain little details showed that financially at least time had dealt well with him. The jewels of his rings, though buried deep in carved gold, were of enormous value. A simple, black silk fob held a watch that glittered and scintillated with alexandrines and rubies. Besides all these material indications, there was an absence of the care that always lurks behind the eyes of the harassed man of luxury.

The butler entered.

"Pardon, sir," said the servitor. "I have made a mistake. The maid did not change the hall card until just now. I find that madam does not return from the dinner."

Clyde rose. After a hard struggle with the proprieties of his butlership, the stately Groves, for the first and only time in the course of his high dignity, valunteered a statement that was not in answer to a question. This circumstance showed the great popularity of young Mrs. Macclesfield with her servants. "Pardon again, sir," he said. "Mrs. Macclesfield

is at the Stuyvesant Theatre." With this remark Groves felt that his dignity was shattered; but, as he reflected, one should make some sacrifices to unite a father and daughter.

Clyde arrived at the theatre during the second act, but, scanning the boxes, failed to find Efale. He was intensely annoyed and about to go, when the sight of a double row of empty chairs near the front of the crowded house told him some party was late. Seating himself upon a cushioned bench in the foyer, he proceeded to watch the entrance door. The house was in almost total darkness. Over the glass screens behind him came the voices of the players, strained in some theatrical emotions.

"Why had he come here, following a woman he had discarded?" he pondered. Outside all the gay city night was waiting for him. In his check book lay the key to all it could offer. Yes, it had been a fortunate thing, that asphalt venture. Where was she? And how in the name of the high gods had she been able to hold up the bluff? Who would have thought she could turn out to be such a beauty? Was it a sign that he was getting to be an old fool that he followed her here? No, he would have followed the woman he had seen this afternoon at any time of his life.

The door to the foyer opened, a bright square of light in the dark; through it came the late theatre party. He saw the delicate tones of sumptuous cloaks, a glitter from jewels; then the door closed and the group went by him, rustling and whispering through the darkness. He could not distinguish her. Could he be mistaken after all, he wondered.

The party seated themselves and the act passed to its climax. As the curtain descended and the lights rose, the foyer filled with chattering groups. Clyde stood up and began to scan the audience, but was unable to distinguish her. With an impatient movement, he turned to go.

"Why, Mr. Courtright, this is fine!" cried a voice. Bruce Macclesfield seized his hand, with hearty ejaculations of delight.

Bruce had admired the man of the world with an enthusiasm that was boyish in the extreme. The realization of the wrong done to Efale's mother had clouded that first admiration, but as the years went by and he found how absolutely the father had dropped out of the daughter's life, he began to sense in this renunciation a wish to atone to her and sever himself and his associations from her present. Thus the old distrust melted away and he began to find excuses for the man who had so charmed him. He never spoke of her past to his wife, yet he often wondered. The fact that the father had cared for the girl pleaded for him. Bruce was man of the world enough to know how lightly men regard ties of blood that are out of the law. Now all else was forgotten in the joy of meeting.

"I've often wondered if you had cut us altogether," he said. Suddenly memory returned. This man was his wife's father, but the sight of him brought other thoughts which scarcely ever came now A little coldness appeared in liis manner

"My boy," said Clyde, a touch of feeling in his voice, "I knew she was happy I wanted to withdraw myself from her life to give her a chance. But I was so lonely that I felt I must see her." He paused to give the unspoken pathos time to reach the impressionable nature before him.

Bruce hesitated. To be shut away from Efale! To be lonely for her The man had been a scoundrel to her mother, but who knew the truth? All his first impulses of liking returned.

"Mr. Courtright," he said, very low and quietly, "I do not judge. Will you come with me now and meet her?"

Clyde held out his hand. "No; not here. Tell her I will come to-morrow at four." He took the other's hand and pressed it warmly. "Bruce, you have been good to her. My boy, thank you!"

Their hands clasped. Bruce looked at the other's face and noticed the deep lines that had come in it. "He is getting old and he is her father," he thought, and all distrust was swept away. The fact that this man was her father, and lonely——

"Be sure and come. I'll tell Efalé now," he said, warmly.

"I will come," answered Courtright.

CHAPTER VIII.

Efalé looked at the clock. It was five minutes to four. Then she glanced into the mirror Her pallor startled her Of what was she afraid? she asked herself. She should have expected this. Did she think she could escape paying the price for happiness and peace? His coming now could only mean one thing—money. He had held off as long as he could, but probably under the pinch of necessity he had come to lower his pride. Well, she must pay the price. She began to pace the floor nervously Her fingers busied themselves with a dozen futile, useless things—touching the flowers, poking the fire, rearranging the ornaments on the table. How long he was in coming! Would he need a great sum? Her sapphires! She could duplicate them in paste, and the pearls, too, if absolutely necessary. They said false pearls defied detection. It must be the pearls then. Glancing into the mirror, she thought her unaccustomed pallor ghastly and touched her cheeks with rouge.

The sudden realization that Fate's debt cannot be outlawed had swept away all the bright security of yesterday The old life that she had become to think of as a dream revealed itself as a remorseless reality as soon as his name fell from her husband's lips. One by one the slow, black hours of the night had turned old memories into iron fetters, and these fetters, now heavy upon her, chained her down to the grim fact that Mrs. Bruce Macclesfield was really Efalé, the girl of the studios. The man who held her in the hollow of his hand was coming at four o'clock to make terms for the peace she had thought was hers without treaty.

The old Efalé could have confronted him much better than the young Mrs. Macclesfield, because the girl had had nothing to lose, but the very thought of what hostage Fate held the sword over to-day made the young woman tremble with a fear that was physical in its effect of sick horror. It was not that she was afraid she could not pay him; but after the security of years the fact that at last she was forced to do so drove the poison of terror through her nerves. She knew enough of her husband to know that he would be pitiless with her because of their son. He had trusted her and married her, thinking her the victim of others, but if he found that she was herself guilty—she closed her mind to the thought in panic. After all, she reassured herself, Clyde was a man of sense. He would never kill the goose that laid the golden egg. Thank God, she had the golden eggs to offer him!

"Mr Courtright is in the drawing room, madam," said the butler, entering.

She dismissed the man and consulted the mirror There was no need of the rouge now, her ordinary high color had returned. She wiped the paint from her face, went down the long hall and entered the drawing room.

"Ah, Clyde!" she said. The control of her voice and the steadiness of her outstretched hand surprised them both.

"I did not intrude on you at the theatre last night, for I thought you would rather see me here," he said, when they were finally seated.

He had not been mistaken. She was beautiful. The slender, supple figure was absolutely Greek in its plastic folds of gray satin. Experienced connoisseur in women that he was, he frankly confessed to himself that he had never thought her mere girlish prettiness would develop into the refined loveliness that now delighted his educated animalism. He was very glad that he had come, even if under the control of her manner he divined her fear and dislike. Rather that fear and dislike pleased him, too. He had never cared for the pursuit of tame quarry As they conversed he wondered who could have put on the polish. Of course, she had always had a quiet manner and a certain daintiness that might pass for refinement, but he was too experienced a social judge not to see that a master hand had been at work here. How ridiculous it was! One of the most delicious human jests he had ever heard of—this transformation of

Efalé! Efalé! Why, the very name sounded like a cheap theatrical program, and lo! it belonged to the charming Mrs. Bruce Macclesfield! Delicious!

The conversation progressed and Efalé became more and more puzzled. At last she exclaimed, "You said that your Hondurian experiment was a success?"

"Absolutely! We all made money. They realized that it was my handling of the president that gave us the concession and, strange to say, they showed their appreciation."

What could it mean? A great wave of relief came to her. He had not come to blackmail her, but only to relieve her of the embarrassment his chance meeting with her husband would have caused had he absolutely avoided them. Gratitude shone in her eyes.

"She is much relieved at the thought of my success," thought Clyde. "Of course, she imagined I had come here for money."

"You are happy here, of course," he said, indicating the room.

"Absolutely, Clyde. It was my chance and I have made him happy, too."

"Ah, he is a fortunate fellow! Not all of us have a successful outcome of our impulses."

"It was no impulse—he loved me!" Suddenly as she said the words it came to her that to even mention their love to this man was a sacrilege and an outrage upon the husband who had saved her With a quick, feminine transmission, her fear of Courtright turned to hate. There was no place in her life for him. Why did he not go?

The butler entered with the tea tray. Clyde, lounging in his deep chair, watched her slender, white fingers busy among the fire-reflecting silver with a calm sense of soothed well-being. He was perfectly satisfied with the progress of the interview. The butler left the room, closing the door softly. For a few minutes there was silence. The driftwood fire crackled merrily, eating at its phosphorescent salts. At last she turned and looked at him.

"When are you going?" she asked.

He smoothed his neat spat gently. "What do you mean?" he asked. The fire run merrily through his jeweled rings.

"You must realize what I mean—how impossible it is that you should come here. I thank you for your silence; but be kind, go! My husband will return shortly. I don't want him to find you here."

"But, my dear, I am your father. What could be more proper than father and daughter domestically seated beside a fire? The picture would adorn any home."

"I ask you to go in kindness——"

"My dear, I am reminded of King Lear 'How sharper than a serpent's tooth'—that's the way of the quotation, is it not?"

"Clyde—please. You have been good to me, but can't you see? Can't you realize what the very sight of you brings back? Clyde, I am done with all that horrible, miserable time. Please—please be kind and go. It surely is not much to ask. Why won't you do as I wish?"

"Because, for one thing, *belle petite,* I am comfortable. I dislike to move when I am comfortable. Please give me tea."

Silence again, broken only by the rattle of the cups under the trembling fingers. At last, "You always loved to torment people. You have the ability, but what can you gain here?"

Dusk had fallen and the fire now touched them with crimson ouline against the darkness. His monacle took the light like a great, glittering eye of red.

"It amuses me to see you as a hostess," he replied. "Now, for years you have been sheltered, rich and happy, all through me. During that time I have been poor, pinched, debt hounded, in peril of my life. Now I have some money and I come back, but I still find the doors closed in my face. I crave what is my right—gentle surroundings, the association with gentle folks; in short, my dear, there comes a time in the life of a man when he would give a thousand gay dinners for one cup of tea beside a lady's fireside. You see, Efale, my compliment to you. Here is the fireside. Believe me, the social outer darkness is very cold to

those who have known the world otherwise."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, my dear, that your hospitality, though not freely proffered is nevertheless delightful."

"You can't expect me to have you here in my husband's house—you can't expect it!"

"Your husband likes me."

"Don't you understand? Can't you comprehend? I love him, I tell you. You can't stay here. You'll go, and go now!" She rose in the emotional anger of her early days.

The door opened. The butler entered and proceeded to light the lamps. As the man took up the tea things Clyde said·

"What a charming room, my daughter! Is it your taste?"

The door shut behind the servant. The woman reseated herself. Her control returned, but her quivering hands and tapping foot told of the struggle with anger.

"You might just as well understand," drawled the man, "that I see no reason why I should consider you. You have simply carried through a superb bluff; but do not go under the impression that you can bluff me. I have no illusions about women of your type. You have simply found an easy livelihood, that by a trick happens to be respectable. But you have gained not one whit in my eyes by your trick. I know you as I know all the women of your particular class. You look very sweet and innocent, my dear, but looks, like beauty, are very thin—only the depth of the skin, in fact."

She made a movement of shuddering anger. His cold voice continued its languid flow.

"I don't mean or wish to be unkind, but I do not choose that the girl I picked up in a cheap studio shall criticise my character as if she were my own daughter. My dear, you were my mistress. Before that you were——"

"Stop!" she cried, in an outburst of anger. "I won't hear it—you shall not!" She sprang up. Before the cruel coolness of his smile her anger faded. She began to tremble.

"Clyde," she pleaded, holding out her hands, "Clyde, you know how it was. I admit I tricked him. It was a cheat. I even admit all you say, though I could tell you that I was only sixteen; but even if I was, I've changed. I have—I have, truly. Please don't be hard on me. If I have offended you, if I've made you angry, I'm sorry. I'll do what you say—anything you say to make up to you for what you've done for me. I've got beautiful pearls, Clyde, and sapphires——"

He stopped her with a shrug.

"You also have a case of coming hysterics. Control yourself. Now that you're up, please hand me that matchbox on the table."

With a struggle, she controlled herself. Slowly she went over and picked up the box. He heard one faint, little, choking sob, then she came back and handed the matches to him with a curious weariness as of one who returns to a heavy, hopeless burden. Clyde Courtright had had much experience in the control of women, but never such a success as this in breaking them. It was the Efalé of the studios who stood by the mantel.

"My child," he said kindly, "you force me to be cruel, but I will be so no more."

"You don't want money—what do you want?" she said, wearily She knew what he wanted. What did all of the men of the horrible, old days want with such as she? Efalé of the studios! And now she knew that from the first this was what she had always feared—this was the price of peace.

He stood up. Her slender figure in the gleaming satin, the firm swell of her shoulders, the blue-black waves of her hair, each subtle color and delicate tone of her lovely young womanhood called to him. The youth of her drew him with all its mighty force.

"Efalé," he whispered, "I want nothing other than that you do not shut me wholly out of your life." He came to her. His eyes played over her, intoxicated with the enchantment of her flowerlike loveliness. As she saw him draw near she was dumb, cowed with the awful weight of the old times. She was nothing but the little thing of the town's pleasure.

bound tight in the ropes of her old sins, there for his taking. His hand slid up her arm. A step sounded in the outer hall. Suddenly the woman sprang back, alive, quivering with loathing. Her blue eyes expanded with hate.

"Let go of me!" Her whisper was manlike in its fierceness. "You—if you touch me, I'll kill you! That is my husband now."

The door opened. Glowing and vigorous from the cold, Bruce entered. She ran to him and quickly grasped both his hands.

"Who do you think is here, dear?" she cried, in a high, gay tone. "My father!"

The young man came forward with a bright heartiness.

"Mr. Courtright, I am so glad to see you in our home," he said.

CHAPTER IX.

"You look tired, Efalé."

"I am not, Bruce. May I see the Times?" And young Mrs. Macclesfield hid herself in that newspaper from the questioning eyes of her husband. She was not tired. A wan lucidity bathed every corner of her mind. Outside the high windows of their breakfast room the bright, clear morning sun showered diamondlike upon the icehung boughs of the park. Beneath the bare trees the white slopes were drawn over with direct sharp shadows of clean blue. Over the snowy roofs of the city the Hudson shone like a band of turquoise.

"What is to be done?" she asked herself feverishly, and the monotonous answer came back, "Nothing." The man held her absolutely in the hollow of his hand. What mercy could she expect from him? She knew to her sorrow how typical he was of the kind of men she had known before her marriage. His attitude was theirs—one which held women like herself as cheap as dirt. They were merciless in their cynical disregard and disbelief that any woman of her class, created by a wise Nature for their amusement, could hold values of life other than mercenary.

"Efalé" said her husband.

"Yes, Bruce."

"Dear, I don't think you were very kind to your father last night."

"Nonsense, Bruce!"

"Yes. Please put down that paper. That's better. I cannot talk to headlines. Efalé, dear, don't you think that his life must be very lonely? Think of our happiness and, besides, he is getting old."

"My dear Bruce, please don't discuss him." Her voice had a hard coldness that was new to him. He glanced at her in surprise. "I mean," she said, quickly, in answer to his look, "I think I am too tired to discuss anything."

"I know you are." He rose and came round to her, bending his tall shoulders above her and looking down tenderly. She was so pretty, so delicately frail in her loveliness, this wife of whom he was so proud!

"Dear," he said, gently. His arms slipped about her. She grasped them. Her hot, feverish hands clutched his coat, as though he were slipping away from her. She lowered her head and pressed her lips upon his strong hands.

"What is it? Tell me, Efalé, dear," he soothed. Slowly she put his hands away and then rose to her feet.

"It is nothing, Bruce; I am tired. I have been going about too much. I—I wish we could go away Couldn't we go away?"

"Where?"

"Anywhere out of this hateful city"

"You mean you are run down and want a breath of Saranac. So do I. I'll arrange matters at the office and we will start next week. I'll wire for them to open the camp. The Adirondacks will take all thoughts of nerves out of you."

She turned to him, her eyes bright, the color in her face again. A door was opened by a capped nurse.

"Pardon, madam," she said. "but Master Bruce wants to go out and snowball. Can I take him?"

"I'll take him," said his father 'Bring him here."

Ten minutes later Efalé heard them going down the hall. Her dress was still disarranged from the clutching of small hands. The rugs showed deep

folds where uproarious little feet had kicked them. Her hair had escaped its bands and now floated in soft tendrils about her face, while her eyes glowed with the light of the romp. She listened. The father was evidently having enormous trouble with the door handle. A childish chuckle of delirious mirth reached her, then the door banged.

Efalé went to the mirror and smoothed her hair The blood seemed to tingle with the immensity of the relief. Why had she not thought of it before? Saranac! That could mean two months, and in two months anything might happen—anything! She could easily lie in the meantime to him: put him off till they had left the city She would leave no address. She began to hum as she moved about the room. The great windows full of glittering sun attracted her She decided to go for a ride. Singing, she passed into her bedroom. When she emerged, furred and veiled, she found a basket of violets, with his card, saying he would call that afternoon. Clyde Courtright was too old a huntsman to give his quarry breathing time when he had it cornered.

As he motored up the avenue that afternoon Courtright had a feeling of pleased well-being. He was so absolutely sure of himself, and of her To do him justice, he was not actually aware that his part in the affair was particularly reprehensible. In fact, he regarded himself as the girl's benefactor in that he had placed her in the position in society in which she was. As for the price—well, all things, even virtue, must be paid for in this world, sooner or later The thought pleased him. After all, why should she care? He would not harm her position, and what was she—but Efalé? He flattered himself he had handled the matter very well—let her see that the robe of Mrs. Macclesfield was the merest gauze, revealing to him the figure of the girl of the studios. Yes, that had been quite well done. After all, he had been very good to that girl, and she should realize it. Other men would have robbed her shamefully Well, that was not his way. He was a gentleman. His motor entered the courtyard of the towering apartment hotel. Upon inquiring for Mrs. Macclesfield, he was informed that she was not at home.

"No, she had not said when she would return," said her butler.

Courtright got into his taxicab, gave a direction to the chauffeur, and was driven downtown.

An hour later young Mrs. Macclesfield stood at the window, as was her custom, watching the darkness settle and the gradual lighting of the spreading panorama of the city. White arc lights began to mark the perspective of the streets. Tiny yellow windows were suddenly outlined in tall office buildings. The fronts of hotels and theatres began to glitter Yellow and white motor cab lights darted like fireflies. Above hidden Broadway the darkness glistened with the million lamps of the White Way.

She was wondering if she had been wise not to see him. Still it was a day gained. She would send him a note explaining that there had been a mistake of the servants. A day—a whole day in the game had been won.

The telephone bell rang. She went to the receiver "Is Mrs. Macclesfield there?" said Courtright's voice. She did not answer He repeated the question, sharply.

"Yes, Clyde, it is I?" she said. "The wire was crossed. I did not hear you at first. And, oh, Clyde," she hurried on, "such a stupid mistake of the butler's! I was really in when you called, but the man neglected to inform me. You see, I had said I was not at home, so we could be absolutely alone, and he stupidly included you in my order." The beating of her heart frightened her. She thought it must be audible to him.

"Never mind," said his voice, kindly. "I was sure it was a mistake; but you looked so badly last night that I was anxious, so I called on Bruce. I am in his office now. I am very glad he is going to take you to Saranac, but what I wanted to ask is, if you felt well enough to see me to-night. I promised Bruce to look you up. He will be delayed down-

town at his alumni dinner. May I see you?"

"Yes."

"Thank you! Eight thirty. Bruce, your wife is on the wire. Do you want to speak to her?"

CHAPTER X.

"All that I desire is that you will occasionally dine with me in my apartment. An hour or two of your life now and then—that is all."

"All!" she repeated the word, a faint satirical smile trembling over her frightened pallor.

The man threw his cigarette into the fire. His calm strength of mastery, the feeling of iron power which he had made her feel ever since the first moment of the interview, enabled him to disregard these feeble flutterings of her broken wings. The quarry was in the trap, and they both realized it.

"And if I do not come to-morrow night my husband will receive a letter from you in the morning's mail?" she asked, very calmly

His gesture was an assent.

"Suppose he comes and kills you?" she continued, her hands busy with the photographs on a small table, by which she stood.

"Why suppose what will not happen?"

"Why not?"

"Because you will come."

"You are so sure, then?"

"My dear, what is the use of this discussion? Listen to me, Efale. Again I tell you, all I ask you is a few hours of your life. As far as your life with him is concerned, that can go on the same as ever. My dear child, how ridiculous to have this long scene over nothing!" He bent over the lamp, lighting another cigarette above its chimney. After a draw or two he continued, "Now, my girl, look at this from a sensible viewpoint. I surely deserve some consideration, since I have been such a fool as to fall in love with you again."

"Stop!" she said, sharply.

"Well?" he inquired, eyebrows raised in question. She seated herself and rested her head wearily against the back of her chair.

"When shall I come?" she asked.

"At seven. Tell your husband that you dine with me. You can be back here by one."

"I didn't ask you what time I should be back."

"But, you see, I will arrange all that. You may trust me."

"It will be unnecessary. I am not coming back here."

He looked at her sharply. "What do you mean?" he demanded.

"I mean that this is over When I leave here to-morrow it is forever!"

"My dear child, don't be a fool!" he soothed, kindly.

"That's what I won't be!" she cried, twisting her body so that her eyes poured all their hate into his. "I have been a fool. Now it's over. I'm done!"

"This is nerves," he smiled.

"Nerves!" she cried, and her voice, though low, had the ring of passionate contempt and scorn. "No, it is not that. I have been a fool to think that a woman such as I, fresh from the hands of a man such as you, could play this farce of marriage and motherhood. No, I am miscast. I belong out there with the other women like me, in the theatres and the streets, wherever we can buy a living from you and your kind. Mother, wife—pretty names, but they don't fit me. You, as long as you live, will see that they don't fit me! Do you think I'll come back from you to him? No! When you get through with me you can keep me or throw me into the street, but I'm done with lies and cheats. God forgive me for thinking that I ever could win out any way but the way I began—the only way that men like you make it possible for us to begin. Oh, I don't blame you! I'm only the studio girl to you, but to him—to him!" her voice broke in a wail. Her face buried in her hands, she sobbed, but quietly, as if she fought with each sob to strangle it.

He glanced down at her, some slight softening in his face. Good Lord, how impossible women were! After all, what was he asking of her that many women

in the set to which she had come did not barter away as lightly as if it were simply part of the routine of life's pleasures. Still her life had been hard, no doubt of it, and—well—the gates of the Geisha gardens of pleasure stood open. In flocks and droves the soiled doves that were made for nothing in the world but men's amusement waited his coming.

"Well, my dear girl," he said, in a friendly tone. How beautifully the light touched the silken wonder of her hair, and the young live curves showed firm and true through her soft gauzes. The white, slender fingers were tipped with nails colored like the heart of a pink rose. His jaw set. "You come at seven," he continued. "You will be more sensible to-morrow. Now I will say good night."

He left her. For a while her shoulders continued to shake, then she got up and left the room. Passing down a long corridor, she came to a door Gently she turned the handle. Inside a shaded night lamp showed white walls and rugs. On the deep frieze, Puss-in-Boots yelled for help, Red Riding Hood argued with the wolf, all the merry company of the fairy tales frolicked in the dim shadows near the ceiling. The woman stood listening. Gradually the sound of gentle breathing came to her. Entering the room, she closed the door

Clyde Courtright walked briskly across the Park. His feet crunched the packed snow of the walk with a sharp sound. The icy boughs cracked in the iron cold. High above, the stars shone like bright points of tiny knives. He had recovered from his momentary compunction. Women were always the same, and love, like driftwood, burns all the brighter for the salt from a tear. Of course, she would not leave her husband. He rather liked the young fellow. He was quite willing to share her with him.

"Really, I am quite a charitable person," he thought, and his eyes half shut, seeing in memory the soft richness of her hair in the lamplight.

As he left the park at the Plaza a wretched bundle of shivering rags came beside him and whined. With an exclamation of disgust, Courtright hurried on, but, overmastered by the impulse of hunger, the beggar laid his hand on Courtright's sleeve. The fingers were broken and bleeding with frostbite. With an exclamation of annoyance, Clyde shook him off. Suddenly behind him came a raving of curses—a broken torrent that absolutely astonished him by its passion. He paused and turned, but maddened by his sufferings and the cool smile of the fur-coated gentleman, the wretch cursed on, his thin voice quavering into breaks and gasps of silence. Clyde's face showed an amused wonder. Thrusting his hand into his pocket, he threw a bill on the snow. The bare, blood-caked hands snatched up the money, and the outcast shuffled off into the night. The tears still ran down his cheeks, and in a sort of coma the man mechanically continued to curse his benefactor, the bill clutched in his hand.

Clyde Cortright stood in his bedroom, tying the cords of his dressing gown. The valet was placing a brandy and soda tray on the table beside the reading chair. The dim light made the servant's face look like parchment, yellow, seamed and cracked. Deep brown shadows were under the sunken eyes.

"I wonder how long he can possibly last at the drug," thought Cortright. "Curious study, still I must get me a decent man as soon as I have time. I suppose I only keep him from habit. Strange how strong old habits are with me. God! How beautiful her hair was in the lamplight!"

CHAPTER XI

Efalé leaned back against the cushions. Through the windows of the brougham the great white arch stood in delicate relief against the sea mist that was creeping gradually over the further side of Washington Square. It had come from the wide stretches of cold ocean and now ravenous and stealthy it stole over the city, bringing with it gradual lowering of lights that told of end of the day. Night crept behind that mist, the night that meant she must go to him—pay the price for her happiness,

the price that Fate had always meant she should pay. A jingle of harness, the stamp of an impatient hoof showed that her horses resented standing in the cold. On the high white marble steps of the red brick house her footman waited the opening of Mrs. Gaylord-Gerry's door. The houses across the square were merged into a blur of shadow One high tower rose like the tower of a dream, holding a faint cross against an ashen sky. How like a dream it had been, she thought. The days of happiness—the hopes of peace and security—now she could see how mistlike they were, without substance, shadows, visions, such as came to all women of her class, only to show them what could not be. Of what use her coming here now? What could anyone do for her? She had thought to steal past the high gods with her happiness, but their eyes were too keen. Their hands were remorselessly pointing back to the path her feet had once trod. The footman was saluting at the door of the brougham.

"Mrs. Gerry is at Garrisons for the week end, madam."

Her heart gave one frightened throb. The cold loneliness of the mist-laden darkness entered and wrapped her about in its folds. Night was coming. Its hands were close upon the city, pressing down upon it the weight of the darkness, and she was alone in it to pay the price. The carriage had turned uptown and the sidewalk of the avenue was flitting by the window. The sound of the eager, stable-bound hoofs made a rhythm through her thoughts.

Why should she not tell one more lie? He was right, and she would be a fool not to. What did one more matter when her whole life was a lie? Her hands clenched in her muff. That thought proved how far she had gone back in the hours since he had reentered her life. All the principles that the happy years had clothed her with were stripped from her as if a hand had snatched a cloak away. Why had not someone killed him? Why had he not died down there in the tropics? The thoughts were like arms shooting up from the black morass of her past. clutching at her stumbling feet.

The lamp-lit, flower-scented stillness of her home enfolded her as she entered the hall. Through half-drawn curtains she saw the warm embers of the library hearth; the fire touched the leather of a huge chair with a little lozenge of red. A man's chair it was, that held worn, hospitable arms toward the logs. For a moment she hesitated, a hand on the curtains, then very slowly passed on, entered her bedroom, locking the door She changed her dress for a simpler one. Drawing off her rings, she hung them upon the little branches of a vanity rest, then, switching out the lights, she seated herself at the window and sat dumb, motionless, while the clock struck and the passing footsteps told of the smooth machinery of service revolving its hidden course through her perfectly ordered home.

The mist—grey, dense—slid slowly over the city, blotting down the lights into faint blurs, wet, yellow, nebulous. Here and there some gigantic cliff of stone rose above it, shining with bright windows, but even these began to waver, to become faint and at last to vanish under the ghastly smother of the fog. From the river long sirens moaned faintly, as if something gigantic was in dreary pain under the grey pall. Finally a moving blot in the darkness, she groped for her cloak, wrapped herself in it, drew its hood over her face and moved to the door. Her hand was almost on the knob when the sound of small feet drew nearer, coming from the corridor. The dim black figure of the woman did not move. The little feet stopped. The door handle was turned, then turned again, a small something pressed the locked panels. From the far end of the hall the nurse's voice called. The little feet pattered away. She slipped into the corridor and swiftly down it to the hall. Without a backward glance, she opened the door of her home and stepped into the outer entrance. As she closed the

door, a gleeful, childish chuckle sounded from a far room.

CHAPTER XII

Clyde Cortright carefully adjusted the candle shades, then bent over the ice-packed bottles of a wine stand, feeling their temperature with the tip of a jewelled finger. The valet entered and placed a chafing dish upon the table, gave a last touch to the dishes upon a serving stand, readjusted the fall of the cloth, then turned to his master.

"You are quite through—nothing forgotten?" inquired Clyde.

"Nothing, sir"

"Then you may go, and be sure you are not back here for four hours, you understand? Tell the office that the lady I am expecting is to come up unannounced. What are you waiting for?" —this sharply, as the man still regarded him. The discolored flesh under the eyes and the sunken hollows at the brows made the grim suggestion of a mask more noticeable. The valet went between the curtains. In a few moments the outer door shut.

Clyde drew a gardenia from the center piece and fixed it in his coat. Glancing into the mirror, he adjusted his collar, smoothed a finger tip over each eyebrow, touched the flower again, then poured a few drops of absinthe into his hollowed palm and snuffed it delicately with a sensuous arch of the brows. The fire was a little high. He placed the glass screen before the flames, consulted the tiny thermometer beside the clock, then raised the window an inch, drawing its curtains. The window was in an air-shaft of the hotel upon which the windows of all the dining rooms gave. Passing into his bedroom, he turned on the wall lights and examined his face carefully in the mirror, then began massaging the wrinkles on either side of his mouth. After a minute he paused, turning his head from side to side to see if a different angle made them less prominent. He frowned, shrugged, dabbed a few drops of perfume on his lips and returned to the dining room. A cold bird in aspic received his attention; apparently some question in regard to it troubled his critical mind. Picking up the long steel carving knife, he pressed the point against the breastbone. The bell rang. Laying down the knife, he hurried to the door and opened it. She entered. Neither spoke. Her manner, as she threw off her cloak, was the indifferent one of a woman to whom situations such as this were old. The calm of her manner and the quietness of her dress disappointed him. He had hoped to greet the brilliant young Mrs. Macclesfield, but this apathetic woman in quiet gown was Efalé of the studios. Had she come to him gay, jewelled, her loveliness enhanced by the costly fabrics that pleased his fastidious taste, he would have flattered her by deference, treated her as a woman of his own class, but the girl fell back too easily into her old ways. He was sorry now he had not kept the valet to serve the supper His attempts to shield her reputation met with very little consideration apparently.

"Is it cold out?" he asked as he busied himself with the cocktails.

"There is a heavy mist," she replied.

He held the glass towards her. She walked over and took it. He opened the cigarette box and put one into his mouth, then offered them to her. She shook her head and, turning her back to him, stood motionless, the glass forgotten in her hand. He glanced a cold question at her, then, lighting the alcohol flame of the chafing dish, busied himself with the preparation of the *vol au vent,* which he did so well. His trained instinct for woman told him that the best course now was silence, indifference and wine. The candle light smothered his wrinkles, softened the hardness of his face. He looked very handsome with a subtle air of gay elegance most becoming. From time to time he glanced at her, but did not speak until the dish was finished. Then he turned to her

"Ready," he said. She came slowly up to the lighted table and stood beside it. The candles cast quaint lights upon

the dead paleness of her face, the great sombre eyes looked down at him. The soft masses of hair faded into the shadows of the shadowy room. The power of her beauty came over him. His eyes lit with a gleam not from the candles. He half rose, but she seated herself quietly.

"This is like old times," he smiled. "And the old wine, you see." He poured the yellow, bubbling gold into her glass. "Do you know, my dear, I never knew how lonely I had been until now. Drink, Efale."

She obeyed. He smiled. The difficulties of the situation were only an added touch to his perfect content. What a delicate texture her white skin had! And the hair was nothing short of wonderful.

"Do you remember that little cafe by the river woods, the one on the Seine—the *Creche Mericaulere,* they called it—and that supper we had there by the river bank with Saint Cloud in the distance, touched by the sunset?"

"I remember," she said.

"You said the river looked like this wine—like gold," he continued. "And do you remember our sitting there and seeing the boats drifting down through the twilight to Paris? And that song that fat fellow who sang to you—what was the song, can you recall? The Parisian journalist—what paper was he connected with—was it 'La Pressé? Oh, I know what he sang."

He began to hum *Ma Belle Lonquin* as he carved the fowl, while her sombre eyes watched his jewelled hands. How slender and fine they were, not like a man's hands at all. Into her thoughts came the picture of other hands—strong, muscular, young—upon which she had yesterday pressed her lips.

"My dear, drink another glass of wine," said Courtright. The white hands pouring the champagne were horrible. The jewels glittered on them like little lustful eyes. The shine of the long, pale nails were like those of a dead man. Her eyes followed them as they picked up the carving tools. The light took the silver handle of the knife.

"And do you remember the drunken waiter who burst in upon us and proposed to marry you?" How pale his nails were. Did the dead have nails like that?

"Clyde," she said, "let me go, please. Please let me go!"

He put down the knife and, leaning across the tiny little table, laid his white hands upon hers.

"Let you go? No; I am sorry I ever let you go, Efalé." Her eyes—great, violet, beautiful—looked into his. He saw the motion of her smooth shoulders and her hair was like a mist before his eyes—a perfumed mist that grew about him, saturating his senses.

"No, I'll never let you go again, Efalé." She looked at the hands—the pale nails were like those of a dead man.

"Let me go, please!" she whispered. With a swift movement he rose and came around to her She stood up, but did not retreat. The tips of her fingers rested lightly upon something on the table. His hands reached out to her, the pale nails taking little dead glints from the candles. Nearer they came, and slowly, lightly rested upon her arms. They looked cold, those hands—like those of a thing that is dead. His perfumed lips drew to her and he kissed her. Through the open window, on the air shaft, came the gleeful chuckle of a child. Mist, a dead white mist, all about her, with something choking in it—something that gasped with long, dry catches. Something dripped in the mist, too.

She was holding a knife, a long, red stain on it, and there on the floor something lay—something with white hands and pale nails,a dead thing in spite of that horrible, living dripping.

"I knew I'd do it," she said. Then again, as if in answer to a question, she said, "I knew I'd do it."

Her cloak and gloves lay on a chair. She must go, but there was the knife. She could not go until she had hidden that. With the uncertain sureness of one who walks in a dream, she went to a high cabinet and dropped the knife

behind it. Then, at its rattling fall, she screamed. Catching up her gloves, she tried to force one on her shaking hand, but it would not go. Everything tied her here. Her feet refused to leave this thing that she had done. With a little moan, she sank to the floor, and, unable to rise from her knees, still struggled with the glove. A key turned in the outer door and steps were in the hall. The woman's hoarse breathing was like the sound of torn silk.

The door opened and the valet stood there. Slowly his eyes turned to the empty table, then fell to the floor. With a quick, cat-like motion, he came to the body and knelt beside it, his hand inside the shirt. Then his eyes turned and he saw her, crouched in the corner, still trying to force on her glove.

"I knew I'd do it," she said. He looked at her

"It was you he waited for this evening?" he said.

"I knew I'd do it," she repeated.

"And I set the table for you—you?" He sprang up and came across to her

"I set it for you!" he said again. "God! God! God!"

He whispered the word, repeating it as if it had some hidden meaning of horror known only to himself. She suffered him to raise her to her feet, dumbly standing while he wrapped her cloak about her and drew its hood over her face. Then slowly and gently he led her away. The outer door closed behind them. The soft candle light bathed the thing that lay on the floor and glittered in the silver of the tiny, flower-decked table. Through the window came the happy laugh of a child.

CHAPTER XIII.

Dead night. The mist lay deep on the city. The empty streets held nothing but its gray shroud-colored vapor, saw no movement but its ashen drifting. Through the pallid darkness the sirens of the river moaned, but faintly and at long intervals, as though for something that was dying or was dead. Darkness, too, in the luxurious apartments of the towering hotel; in the Macclesfield rooms, beside the silent hearth where the logs lay black and charred, covered with ashes, like dead things in a mist. Only the striking clocks were alive—horribly, remorselessly alive, mercilessly striking away the hours, pitilessly telling that dawn was coming, the dawn that would reveal the black logs, dead under their gray ashes and all things that lay dead hidden by the mist. Gradually the windows formed out of the darkness and slowly hour by hour grew pale outlined in cold, dim light. From somewhere over the world dawn was coming toward the city to take from the night its secrets. Suddenly, in the dead pallor of the first morning, the telephone bell rang. High, metallic, shrill, ceaseless, not to be denied by shut doors or sleep, the call of the world from the outer night that had given up its dead, rang. Finally a far door opened. Slippered feet slowly came down the hall. In the murk a form groped, sleep-deadened hands fumbled for the switch. Quickly the light rose in the shaded lamps. Young Macclesfield, in pajamas, his hair tousled, took down the receiver.

"What in the devil do you want?" Then his words died away His eyes grew bright with shock. The color died from his face. At intervals some exclamation of horror or protest burst from his lips, only to be silenced by some persistent voice that sounded through the room curiously loud and comic, like the metallic chant of an imp. At last he hung up the receiver and, passing through the dark rooms, came to a door, a door that had stood ajar ever since the first ring of the telephone, but now softly locked at the sound of his approach. The door gave upon her boudoir, and, as the young husband entered its faintly-perfumed darkness, he paused, hesitated, then advanced and, with sudden resolution, tapped.

"Efale!" he called. "Efale!"

No answer.

"Efale"—louder—"open the door!" He struck the panel gently to arouse her.

He knew how lightly she always slept.

No answer.

He called again. The sudden shock had disturbed his ordinary poise. But now it suddenly came to him that he would let her sleep, shield her for an hour or two's peace, then he must tell her But in the meantime she should sleep. He turned and softly retreated. The door of her room was unlocked and opened. He could see the white-draped figure faintly in the weird, wan light that was almost like phosphorous from the pale dawn, for the night at last lay dead in the mist.

"Well?" said her voice.

He came to her and took her in his arms. Hungrily her arms closed about him.

"What was that—that telephone ring —what was it? Why don't you tell me? What was it?"

"It is your father," he said. How could he tell her?

"He—he is not dead then?' Her voice was a mere dry whisper, low but harsh. Not until long afterward did the strangeness of her words come to him. But here, with her white face in the wan light, it seemed that, in some subtle, feminine way, she had read his thoughts, divined the horror that crept all about them, clutching at them like a cold hand out of the fog.

"He is dead," he said, "he has been murdered."

Her arms grew tight about him, and she hid the ghastly face of terror against his breast. The telephone bell rang again. Its sound drove the sudden sense of fear from Bruce's mind. He was himself again. Alert, masterful, tender, he placed her in a chair and forced her to drink some whiskey, then summoned the servants. The first sense of shock was gone, but a deeper thing remained, a dull, determined anger, for he had admired the dead man as only is given to the young and clean to admire such a man as Clyde had been. The stricken coma of his wife's grief added to this. All the time he tended and soothed her, not daring to leave her, for the moment she thought him gone, her wild, fierce whisper for him would break out. Groves told him that the reporters had been admitted and, anxious as Bruce was for details, he dared not go from his wife's bedside. Apparently the social strain under which his wife had labored, combined with this sudden shock and his unthinking announcement of the tragedy, had almost affected her mind. There was nothing hysterical or loud about her grief, only a far more terrifying quietness that made her trembling and shaking terror the more pitiful. It was not until a doctor had been summoned and had administered narcotics that she slept, dropping off with a suddenness that told of exhaustion, complete and absolute.

Bruce listened to her regular breathing, then slowly, gently drew away his hand from her loosened grasp. The sight of her haggard frailness stabbed at him, feeding the cold anger that burned for the dead man—the man he had last seen so handsome, charming and sympathetic, the man who had given him Efalé. The house was, though disorganized, beginning to return to its regular channels of calm service. In his dressing room he found his valet preparing the shaving service. Through the adjoining door came the sound of the water falling into the sunken marble of his bath. The sudden realization that the world was going on almost oblivious of the fact of the tragedy stung him out of all proportion. Suddenly a desire to hear the details of the tragedy overmastered him. Something must be done. The dead man lay there with none to help him. He could see every moment, clearly and more clearly, how his eyes had looked when he smiled, his wife's father Well, he would get justice, as though it had been his own father

"Are the reporters still below?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Tell Groves to send them up and call the garage. Never mind the bath and shave. Give me my clothes. Tell that doctor I wish to see him. Hurry."

"Doctor," he said to the physician who entered, "I want you to stay with Mrs. Macclesfield, not to leave her a moment while I am gone. Of course, you understand that it is necessary for me to go. I will telephone from time to time during the morning.

The physician withdrew. Bruce continued to dress with furious haste, in keeping with the pace of his thoughts. They had killed him, there in his apartments by the supper table, at which he had entertained his daughter. How long had Efalé been gone before the murderer had come?. The hall man found the door open at four o'clock and discovered him dead, so the police had said. The police—damn, stupid, heavy moving. Of what use were they here? But the reporters—yes, that was a good thought. They were the hounds for the scent—splendid body of trained detectives that they were. Well, no son of the dead man could work harder than he would. He tied his cravat with a vicious jerk and went into his wide, private hall.

The dainty shaded lamps glowed curiously in the gray light. About the blackened, ash-covered logs on the hearth, a party of newspaper men whispered.

"Gentlemen," said Bruce, "I have sent for you because I have something important to say to you as individuals."

They drew about him and he continued:

"I have the highest respect for you as detectives, and personally I offer five thousand dollars to the first newspaper man who gets my father-in-law's murderer."

An exclamation broke from the group.

"Yes, gentlemen," continued Bruce, "this reward is for newspaper men. Spread it all through your ranks that I will pay five thousand dollars to the man who runs down that murderer."

Ten minutes afterward, the reporters poured from the apartment hotel and stood chatting in the courtyard. A hum of excitement showed how keen these trained news hunters were on the novelty of the recent offer Frank O'Brien walked away from the group. Unshaven, fat, in dirty clothes and with the unmistakable traces of a "hang-over," he looked the least promising of all. But Frank O'Brien was not sent on this story by "The Morning Miracle" for nothing, and as he plodded on through the raw dawn, he was thinking. A blue motor brougham hummed by, a lady's brougham that always bore Mrs. Bruce Macclesfield on her social routine, but now it bore her grim-faced husband on another matter. O'Brien noticed that on the front seat a valet sat beside the chauffeur.

"How these swells do have to be waited on," he thought. "I suppose he's taking him to do the errands. I wonder if that other swell had a valet? Of course, he did. I guess I'll look him up. Maybe he can give me some points."

CHAPTER XIV

The valet was gone, and through all the city they were searching for him. In all the police stations of the country his photograph and description were posted. The papers were full of his likeness and of comment on the crime. The mystery was a mystery no longer The valet's absence had been the answer as to who killed Clyde Courtright. It was known that young Mrs. Macclesfield had dined with her father that evening for the first time after his long absence abroad and had left him early, at about half-past eight, she said. The crime, said the police, had probably been committed about an hour after her departure, as a boy remembered taking the valet up in the elevator at nine thirty None of the elevator boys had taken him down. They were positive of that fact. That a quarrel had taken place between master and servant was most probable, said the police. That Courtright had been suddenly and unpremeditatedly stabbed was suggested by the fact that the weapon used had been a carving knife, part of the table service with which father and daughter had dined. Then sudden terror had driven the man

away, because neither money or jewelry had been taken.

Bruce Macclesfield threw himself into the pursuit with all the grim determination that was in his blood. At all hours and times he was closeted with detectives and newspaper men, ceaselessly urging them on the search for the valet. His wife's shattered nerves and weakness made him more insistent than ever in the determination to avenge her father. His office was at all times open to any one who had a clue or even an idea. His father protested and also suggested that he leave the matter in the hands of the police, but Bruce refused, he had no belief in the police.

"I stand in the place of the dead man's son, father," he said at the finish of one of these long discussions, "and I am determined to find that murderer if I have to give the rest of my life to doing it. You'd know how I feel if you could see my wife. My God, father, this has nearly killed her I had no idea she loved him so." The discussion dropped, but not the young man's ceaseless energy. Swarms of private detectives were called in. The news reward that had been confined to the reporters was made public and caused wide comment. Every young newspaper man in town was interested in the chase. The men of the press regarded it as a special compliment to their ability by young Macclesfield and exerted themselves accordingly The police, huffed and humiliated under the storm of comment caused by the affair, declared war upon the reporters. The commissioner tried to exclude them from headquarters. Everywhere the peculiar action of young Macclesfield caused discussion, and one of these discussions was now in progress in the office of the "Morning Miracle" during the pause after going to press.

"Punk, stinko, Bill." The shirt-sleeved city editor tossed to the ink-daubed, green-shaded art manager the picture, a combination of David Warfield and a valet from the Gibson book, that a mighty brain had just evolved as a likeness of the murderer

"Still," he continued, "we got to run it. My God! why ain't there a photograph to be had of him?"

"Because he probably never had one, Sam," grinned the art manager "That's what makes him so hard to trace—nothing but dope about what he looks like."

"What I can't understand," said the sporting editor, "is how did he make his getaway without being seen? There's twenty bell hops and hallmen in that hall."

"You know that crowd: all sitting on benches or flirting with the maids. Anyone could walk down the stairs of any big hotel and hundred to one to his being seen. Once he got down into the crowd in the lobby, good-bye, toot-toot, taka de steamboat, sala away," and the art manager banged the sporting editor's bald head with the sketch and hurried to another section of the big pillared room where lines of artists could be seen at work under droplights.

"Where's Frank O'Brien?" asked the city editor. "Damn him, he's been no good all week—one straight souse. I'm going to put the can on him," he added mentally

Frank O'Brien, very seedy and smelling of liquor, was at that moment urging another drink on a bell boy out of livery in a little saloon upon the west side.

"I told everything I knew to the police," said the youth in response to a final remark of O'Brien's, "except this, and it ain't nothin' to help 'em, and, if I told it, the management would can me." He drank his whiskey.

O'Brien pounded on the bar He did not seem particularly interested. It was not until the round had been brought that he said

"Well, what was that?'

"Well, I don't know that it's anything to help in findin' him, and it would lose me me job if I told. You see, the management would get sore—it would give the house a bad name—but that valet of Courtright's hit the pipe."

"How do you know?"

"His room was next to our dormitory

up in the servants' quarters, and I had the night shift, so I came by his room, and—well, you know the sweet, queer-like smell of the dope?"

"Yes."

"Well, night after night, when I'd be passin' his door, I'd get just a whiff of it, awful faint, but the dope, you know, no matter how much wet sheets and sponges you hang about, some of it will creep out. He was a dope, and, take it from me, a dope always makes for a dope joint when he runs to cover. I know, I used to work in the Mossmore once."

Two hours later O'Brien and the bell boy entered a "honka-tonk" on Fourteenth street, kept by a well-known ex-pugilist. The long bar was lined with the peculiar representatives of the night life that has its being below Fourteenth street. Seedy persons, whose prosperity had departed with the closing of the race tracks; gentlemen, very brown and beady of eye, whose diamonds had a true glitter and whose photographs were collected by an attentive police; sailors talked to the proprietor whose ears had been "cauliflowered" on shipboard in his youth; boy soldiers, in long, yellow service coats; actors from the ten-cent shows—all shouted or whispered and drank the stuff served to them by laboring bartenders. From the back partition came the strains of a tiny band and the high-pitched chatter of the street women. O'Brien made his way to a group that stood in a corner and touched one on the arm. The gentleman, a youth in diamonds and a fur overcoat, whirled with professional swiftness.

"Hello! It's you, is it?" he grinned, in relief.

"Yes, Tommy, it's me. Can I speak to you a minute?"

Mr Tommy Finger, well known to the Bowery "night man," as he described himself, listened attentively to O'Brien, then nodded.

"All right, I'll do it for you, Frank," he said, "but I don't know. I haven't heard of any new one yet, and you know the news would travel along to me pretty soon—that is, if he had any money." His glancing, shinny black eyes spied O'Brien's companion. "He don't look as if a brother of his would have much coin," he added.

"Well, he's a friend of mine, Tommy," said O'Brien, "and I want to find his brother for him if I can."

"All right. If he's in a dope hole, we'll get him. You know I know every one that's anywhere down here."

CHAPTER XV

"My dear child, now I must speak to you and speak plainly. This has got to stop." Blanche Gerry gazed with determination at the slender figure standing quietly against the long curtains of the window.

"What do you mean?" said Efalé wearily.

The grey-haired woman came to her and gently took her hands.

"Efalé," she said, her grey eyes looking directly into the miserable blue ones, "what is it? You can't be grieving for him—no, don't turn away—what is it?"

"Please, please let go my hands."

"What is it, Efalé, daughter dear? Tell me."

"I can't. You—you have no right to question me. It's nothing, I'm upset by the shock, that's all." And the slender figure pressed back against the curtains as though to draw as far as possible away from the woman who held her so firmly. Her head turned to escape the searching of the kind, grey eyes.

"Dear," said the other gently, "you can't deceive me, something happened when he came back into your life. I left you pretty happy, just for a few days, and I come back to find you this way. His death could not have done it. You always hated him, Efalé."

The girl shuddered and shook her head.

"My dear, you can't deceive me; you hated him. I know; I hated him, too—once."

Efalé drew away her hands and, turning, hid her face in the curtains from

the face of the woman who had been the only mother she had ever known.

"I say," continued Blanche Gerry, "you could not be in this state for him. Why, my love, he was no father to you. Look at the way he treated you—how he let you live. Only God in His mercy saved you from—from—" She hesitated.

"It was not God; it was Bruce," whispered the girl into the curtains. "Bruce."

"And baby," said the other

With a cry of misery, Efalé whirled about. "What do you mean by coming here?" she cried with a fierce note in her level voice. "You—what do you know of trouble? He broke your heart. yes, but what do you know of him or men like him? Why, women like you never see them as they really are, but we—what do we see? The women like me, we see men—just men as they are," she laughed.

The other, hurt and bewildered by her sudden attack, yet instinctively pitiful, watched her anxiously.

"Yes," the level voice continued, "that's what we see—men. He broke your heart, yes, he left you, yes, but what then? Why, you had everything about you to keep you from harm, everyone pitied you and thought of how bad it was for you—yes, and you went on living, getting sweeter and sweeter, until now you stand there and your face is like a saint's. But you didn't earn that look; it was given to you, guarded into you. You've no right to it, you haven't earned it. I wonder what you'd look like now if he'd had you as he had—as he had some women I know. Oh, I hate you! I hate all you sweet, good women who think you're decent because you want to be, when it's because you've had people to look after you. How many of you would look gentle and sweet and pure if you hadn't? How many of you would be decent if you had to fight for it? You think God meant you to be good? God's had nothing to do with it; it's having people who loved you, that's what. We get love, too—oh, yes, but it's the kind that men bring out in the streets to us; and it don't make sweet, pure faces when we get old. Go! You and I can't help each other." The hard, miserable blue eyes gazed at the hurt grey ones that were full of pathetic yearning.

"Efalé," said the grey-haired woman, "you—you hurt me. I've felt as if you were my own child. What he did to you or what he brought back into your life, I don't ask, but please—please don't shut me out of it. Let me help you if it's only by loving you." She took the girl's hands. All the maternity that death had walled in her heart poured out to the girl. What the past had held she never had asked, but that it had held much she always had been sure. Efalé tried to draw away, but the other held her hands with gentle firmness. Gradually the girl's bosom began to heave, and then, with a little quiver of a moan, she sank to her knees, pressing her body against the wall. A whimper of animal-like torture came through her set teeth. Down beside her knelt Blanche Gerry, and with tender, soothing words, as if to a child, she quieted her until at last the whimper ceased. No word came from Efale, but her small, strong hands clutched the other with a grip that was almost agonizing. But the grey-haired woman smiled, finding the answer to her years of care in that clutch, and the pain of it was sweet to her yearning heart.

It was five o'clock before Bruce returned and was met by the announcement that his wife and Mrs. Gerry had been for a motor ride lasting hours. He changed and then sat down in his accustomed chair by the library fire to await her return. The day had been long and disappointing. Several promising clues had failed utterly. The valet seemed to have vanished into thin air. Bruce frowned at his thoughts. Dusk had come and the lights from the flames touched his broad forehead, the slender line of the nose, and marked with a red hand the clean, firm line of the set jaw. He was thinking of a little expression of the

dead man, some little trick of the brows when he smiled that helped make the recollection of the handsome, florid face very vivid, and with that thought came another, the memory of the face as it had looked up at him through a sheet of glass, very waxen, tired and old, with the lines of its age drawn deep into it. Well, what a pitiful life that had been—married to wealth, a brilliant social and diplomatic career, then everything lost: penury, debt—but a gay spirit for it all. Then, just as all was recovered, his daughter well married, his money returned, life opening before his feet, the tragedy, that little square of glass—and a single mourner. How bitter it was! Well, he would be a son to the dead.

A bustle outside told him his wife had returned, and he hurried to meet her The long hours of rushing through the tingling cold had given back her accustomed high color, and, as he kissed her, his own eyes kindled at the light in her own. The answer of over-driven youth to continuous horror had been a sudden revulsion of feeling; and to-night, as she sat at dinner opposite her husband and saw the calm, considered service of her home revolving in its accustomed ease, a peace came to her—an unthinking sense of protection and joy in all the simple natural trifles which made up her life.

Bruce was delighted by the change, and showed it in every clumsy, tender act. After dinner they sat in his huge chair, which could easily hold them both, and watched the fire. From her to him came a gentle, pleading sense of dependence and trust. His arms about her seemed like walls protecting her from all the horror that had pursued her, shutting her into a little city of refuge beside his heart. The fire crackled and settled into a red waste of embers. The tempered lights and flower scents, the quiet, ordered stillness of all the house laid its hand upon her with its message of peace.

"What is that?" said Bruce rising, looking toward the window. "Why, it's snow."

The fire sank into one red bed. Against the window the wet snow drove with heavy thuds. Gradually a faint sound made itself heard above the spit of the embers.

"What is that?" said Efalé, suddenly rising to listen.

"What?" he asked. Her hand clutched his arm. A faint, dull moaning made itself heard. She began to tremble suddenly.

"Oh, that is only the sirens from the river," he said. "My, look how that snow is driving by the windows. I bet out on the river it's as thick as a mist."

"Bruce!" she cried. "Hold me, Bruce! Oh, Bruce! Bruce! Listen, I want to tell you something—oh, I must, I must!"

"What is it, dear?" he soothed, drawing her to him. She put his arms away. Her eyes had grown wide with sudden terror, her lips parted.

A nurse quietly entered the room and glanced about for a moment, then went to a little cabinet and picked from behind it a small, white toy bear.

"Master Bruce said he left it here. He won't sleep without it, you know," she explained, smiling, as she bore it away.

"What is it, Efalé?" asked her husband.

She smoothed his arm and smiled at him tremulously "When are we going to Saranac?" she asked.

"Next week I'll send you up there," he answered, "I will follow in a few days."

"But why don't you come too?"

"Because I have business that must be attended to."

"What business?"

"Never mind, sweet, what. It's nothing that you have anything to do with." He drew her to him.

Outside the snow drove like a white mist: the moaning of the river sirens was louder, more continuous.

* * * * *

Through the sickly, sweet dark the yellow disk from the lantern of the policeman stole over the floor, disclosing

huddled bundles which had some faint likeness to human figures. Sometimes the light would bathe the naked, tattoed torso of a sailor or the white arm of a woman would show in it; then the eye slits of some Chinaman would gleam unblinking, finally it showed a huddled figure whose face was pressed close to the blotched and sodden wall. The uniformed arm of an officer thrust into the light and turned the man's face to the yellow ray.

"Is that him?" asked O'Brien's voice.

The head of the bellboy thrust itself into the lantern's beam and examined the seamed yellow mask.

"That's him," he said at last, "that's Courtright's valet."

CHAPTER XVI

The late afternoon sun filtered through the fine, white mist of the whirling snow and filled the room with haggard light. On chairs, tables and floor lay the successive editions that hourly had come from the press. Their flaming headlines, proclaiming that the murderer of Clyde Courtright had been captured the night before, stared up at the pale woman, who paced the room with the soft stride and quick turns of a trapped animal. There was no sound in the dainty library, but the soft purr of her draperies over the carpet and the driving of the snow against the windows.

He had been in custody now for a score of hours. Had he told yet? she wondered. And where was Bruce? There now with them, all hearing her accused—hearing the whole horrible thing without her by him, to as much as defend herself with a word. He would not believe. He would come to her angry, horrified, loathing her, knowing her as the mistress of the dead man. If she could only go somewhere—get away. Well, it was too late for that—too late for anything but to wait for him and see the hate and disgust in the eyes of the man she loved. How had the whole fearful thing come about? Little by little, link by link, until now she, who had always been so gentle, so weakly pitiful of suffering, was a—

With a soft, mechanical motion, she pressed the palms of her hands together again and again as she paced.

Well, this was the end of the lie—the lie that had killed the man that planned it and would kill her for her part in it. And Bruce? Why didn't he come? Would not he even give her the chance to tell him that—that— What could she tell him?

The butler entered with a number of damp newspapers. "The last edition, madam," he said.

With a fearful effort she controlled herself until the doors closed behind the servant, then hungrily, ravenously, in shrinking fear, she scanned paper after paper He had not told yet—probably he was waiting for his lawyer Could she get to him first? Her hand was on the knob. What could she give away to pay for his life? That was impossible, too. Why didn't Bruce come? She wondered if he would kill her Why did she not kill herself? She owed it to him—yes, it was the only thing she could do for him now Her hand rested on the knob again. How pale her nails were. Where had she seen nails like those? They looked like a dead man's.

A latch key turned in the hall door.

Slowly, inch by inch, she retreated until her back rested against the far wall. The lace of her breast rose and fell with long, heavy breaths. Her hunted eyes gazed at the door towards which came the step she knew so well.

"Hello, little one," he cried, banging open the door "There was not much to do at the office, so I came home early. Why—why, what's the matter?" Her arms tight about his neck and her trembling little body pressed against him told him that something had happened to frighten her. His eyes caught sight of the papers strewn about the room and he realized at once that she had heard of the arrest.

"I see you know. They got him last night."

She drew away. Her voice was very

quiet as she said: "Has he spoken yet?"

"No," replied Bruce, briskly stripping off his gloves. "He was found in an opium den. He was too stupified to speak, but the police tell me that he will be able to talk shortly. In fact, they should have a statement from him by now."

"Now?"

"Yes. I expect to have a telephone from them at any moment. Now, dear, I want you to leave for Saranac Monday I am going, and we'll take the boy Four weeks in the winter woods without anything to worry about will do us all good. Do you think you can stand me for a month, Efalé?" His voice was playful, but his eyes anxious. The chase had so absorbed him that it suddenly occurred to him how white and frail she had grown.

"Stand you," she repeated, a little, whimsical smile on her lips, "for a month? Bruce!"

"Yes."

She came to the table and stood there; a calmness—almost resignation—had come to her—a sense of thankfulness for this last hour of his love.

"What is it, Efalé?"

"Bruce, dear, I want you to—to answer me not as you think I would like you to do, but really as you feel. Have you never regretted marrying me? Have I made you truly happy? Tell me, dear, you are so thoughtful and tender that sometimes I have wondered what you feel. You are so gentle and thoughtful that it is hard for a woman to read you. Have I been a good—I mean have I made you happy?"

He took her hands and looked down at her, saying as one man would say to another·

"You have made me happy Never for a moment since I married you have I regretted it; and damn few married men can say that."

The telephone rang in the hall. She did not hear it. All she knew was that his arms were about her and that the kiss that might be their last was on her lips. They separated as the doors to the hall slowly opened.

"The office says that policemen and reporters are below and desire to see you at once, Mr. Macclesfield," said the servant impassively.

"Show them up, Groves."

"No, Bruce—no, Groves; tell them to wait until Mr Macclesfield calls. Just a moment, Bruce, please."

The doors shut on the butler

"Efalé!" said her husband. "These men have probably got the confession of your father's murderer Go to your room, I will come and tell you what they say later." He put his hand on the doors, but she sprang to them and locked them.

"Why, Efalé," he said astonished. "what's the matter?"

"Those men—don't touch the key, let me have just a minute—those men have come for me."

"Are you out of your mind?"

"I tell you it's true. I killed him! I did! I did! I knew I'd do it!"

"Efalé, you've gone crazy. What are you saying?"

"I did it! I killed him!"

"Efale, what can be the matter with you? You're broken down. Pull yourself together"

"I killed him, I tell you—I—I! He was not my father but my lover! Now, do you believe me?"

A curious cry of rage and disbelief escaped him. He put his back against the door "Go on; you can't stop now."

"Yes, he was my lover! It was all a lie—a trick on you." Her voice was hoarse, emotionless, as if mechanically repeating a lesson, learned by heart in the blackness of sleepless nights.

"I met him when I was sixteen. He came into a studio where I was posing. I had been on the stand hours and was ready to drop. The man I worked for was drunk. He was cursing me because I couldn't stand still. I don't know what made me mind it that day I knew it was nothing, only the way men talked when they were angry, but for some reason I cried. He got angry and put his fist through his canvas and put me out,

telling me he was done with me, and I was frightened because it was steady work, and steady work was hard to get. It was a horrible day, all wet and foggy and I was hungry. I'd hoped to get some new shoes with my wages—mine were all broken and the wet and mud was oozing through them as Courtright stood there talking to me. Oh, he'd followed me out. I stood there listening to him and looking down at my broken shoes. A girl in our house had been telling me I was a fool. She had shown me some pretty bronze slippers just that morning, and her instep was not arched like mine, and—and it came to me all at once that I had been a fool, and—and I went with him."

A broken sudden intake of breath through set teeth from the man.

"He was the first," she cried. "Really, really. He knew it, too. It amused him to pretend not to believe it, but he was and he knew it. I was too much afraid of men to go with them, but he seemed kind. I wasn't afraid of him, so I went. I stayed with him though he lost his money. I came to America with him. I did everything to hold him, but I didn't know how to, he was so clever. I could see he was getting tired; every day I thought would be the last. And I had no money—nothing. He used to tell me that I was missing my chances with him, but he only said it because he was tired of me and wanted me to go. Every day I thought he'd send me away And then you came, and he introduced me as his daughter."

She paused, put her hand to her throat and pressed it softly

"Well, we tricked you. I knew I would be alone—without a cent—in a strange country I had to have someone and I took you. I would have been your mistress, but you asked me to marry you. I had to have some one, and you asked me to marry you."

Her voice broke, but after a moment she resumed.

"I didn't love you—not at first—and living alone, quiet, with nothing to do, was terrible. Later, when I began to see how kind you were, and gentle, I got sorry for the trick we'd put on you. I hated myself, but there had to be some one—there had to be. I never thought it would last. I never thought about anything. Decency? What was decency to me? My mother was an American dancer Orlyet, the valet, I lived with as a child. He had a photograph he used to curse when he got drunk—that's how I learned she was my mother"

She paused a moment, staggered by the hard directness of his eyes, then, with a struggle, continued:

"Things were just names to me—bad as well as good. I didn't think about them, they were just names where I came from. After I'd been married to you awhile, I got to asking myself if you could be playing a part, too, you were so white, decent and gentle. I began to think how bad it would be when you found out and I didn't have you any more. I didn't love you; I just thought you were kind and gentle and—and decent, and that I wanted you to think I was, too, just as long as I could keep up the bluff. I made up my mind to tell you and leave you. You were too decent for the trick I was playing. Then I found the baby was coming and I couldn't go, Bruce, dear, I couldn't go."

She paused. He made no sound—just watched her She covered her face with her hands, then let her arms fall with a gesture of complete hopelessness and continued in the same weary voice:

"He was born, and then I found that I loved you, that I couldn't leave you. I loved you. You'd taught me to care for decency and home and all the dear, quiet things—the real things of life—and there was the boy—your flesh and mine—like a chain fast about us, tying me to you—and I couldn't go. Bruce, dear, forgive me, but I couldn't go."

Her hands unconsciously reached towards him.

"And I found, too, that things weren't names, that decency and truth were real and I wanted them. I wanted to be what you thought me. My God! how I

wanted to be what you thought me! Then I began to wonder if I couldn't make the bluff real—be what you thought me. I wondered if God wouldn't forget the lie and let me be decent, and just as I thought he was going to, Courtright came back."

She paused at a cry from the man.

"He wanted me from the moment he saw me. Bruce, I did everything—everything to escape him, but he was too clever. He knew women, and he knew every trick a woman plays when she's cornered. And he called every one I played one after the other. Do you remember that day he telephoned to me from your office? Well, I'd been hiding from him, so he went to your office and called me—my father He told me, Bruce, that if I didn't go to him he'd send you, to your office, every day, one of my letters and one of the photographs they'd made of me when I posed for them in their studios. Every day a letter and a photograph. Bruce, he had me and I went to him. The last thing I heard that night when I shut the door of our home behind me was the boy's laugh."

Her voice became hurried, full of repressed nerves.

"That laugh was in my ears as I sat at his table. I heard it while he talked of the horrible old days; I heard it while I begged him to let me go home, I heard it as his lips came to mine, I heard it when he kissed me, I heard it while I stabbed him, and stabbed him, and stabbed him!" Her voice rose to a scream.

He came to her slowly and grasped her wrists with fingers that crushed her flesh.

"Did you mean to kill him when you left here?" His voice had a curious note of high exultation.

"I knew I'd do it," she said.

A silence. The telephone rang again. "Bruce," she said slowly, mournfully, "it's over; they've come for me. He—that man they arrested—found me there—"

"He found you?"—sharp anxiety in his voice.

"Yes. I could not get strength to go. It seemed as if I were tied there with—with it, and he found me and brought me home."

"He brought you home?"

"Yes." Suddenly her eyes widened with hunted terror "Bruce, Bruce, they've come."

He put his hand over her lips, while suddenly the fact of her danger poured into all his senses.

"Hush!" he whispered. His arms were about her. "They won't get you," he whispered fiercely. "You had the right to kill him."

He crushed her exhausted, sobbing, frail form against his breast, as if to shield her by the mere lock of his arms from the hunt that was now upon her. His eyes travelled the room.

"Why in hell don't I keep a pistol?" he said. "Why in hell?"

The telephone bell rang again. The sound cut through the mist of his horror. In a moment he was alert, fierce, cool, the man's instinct to protect the thing he loved hot upon him. Kissing her then gently, as one does a terrified child, he said:

"Listen, love, I must see them. You have gone out to Mrs. Gerry's. Understand me. Now, here, I'll put you in your room. There shall no one get through into your room. There shall no one get through to you. Don't be afraid, dear; I won't let any one hurt you. Come." He drew her gently into the far room, and, kissing her, left her, closing all the intervening doors.

She stood motionless. Still she knew he had kissed her, that his forgiveness had spoken from the crush of his lips. Then, with a flash of lonely terror, the thought of the boy stabbed her. They would take her away She could never see him except in such surroundings as would poison his mind forever against her. She must see him—once more. With hot, furious hands she tore open the door. Her husband's voice, mingled with others, came to her from the hall. Her hand was on the knob of the door

to the room of the fairy tales and white rugs, when Bruce's voice, high, yet with an hysterical break in it, called to her. He came running down the passage.

"Efalei" he gasped and seized her as if she were something that sank in fathomless water.

"Bruce," she cried, "is it good-bye?"

"No"—his voice had a high note of joy, but his face was wet with tears—"Orlvet, the prisoner, is dead!"

"Dead?"

"Yes. He had concealed morphine enough to do it. But, dear, he wrote a line upon the wall of his cell saying that he was the murderer of Courtright."

She drew back. The full effect of the words slowly crept through her numb surprise. At last the fact that he had saved her came, and with it the feeling of her husband's forgiving arms.

"I never knew he cared enough for me to do that," she said.

He kissed her, and together they went through the door A child laughed happily and the door shut.

* * * * *

O'Brien leaned against the bar A dirty piece of paper in his hand was causing him some perplexity. It had been given to him that morning at the end of a short conversation he had had in the Tombs by a prisoner now dead. As he smoothed the paper his brow knotted. He had promsied to carry it to Mrs. Macclesfield, but as it was only an unsealed scrap of dirty paper, he read it and he now read it again:

"I never did anything for you in your life, but it's up to me to give you the chance, and I will. My life's done anyway. They once said I'd make a big thing of it, so that just shows how people can lie. You may wonder why I do it, so I'll tell you. I am your father"

"Hell," he thought, "it's worth coin to me, but what's done is done. If he was her father, he wouldn't want her to know it now, not if he'd had time to think, he wouldn't. Every once in a while it's too late to suddenly be a father. Damn it, the girl's got a right to her chance—clean."

He tore the note to pieces. "Benny," he said briskly, "gimme another drink. I'm worth five thousand dollars. Gee, is that the sun? Thank God, we're through with that rotten mist."

MY CASTLE OF CONTENT

By Newton A. Fuessle

I HAD never felt so utterly lonely in all my life. I had been but a fortnight in the city; and my misery was heightened by the fact that behind me lay a lane of loveliest memories—of delightful days at college, of bosom companionships, of home.

These were a thousand miles away, seemingly a million. I had taken my degree in the law and had come here resolved to carve out my fame. By day, as I sat in my offices with my books and my ambitions, life had been more bearable. But evenings had brought always that engulfing wave of memories, those longings for the events of the past. Had I not come away with a liberal check from my father, some measure of my pain might have been swept aside by the sheer fear of what might become of me in my immediate clientless future.

I had called as often as propriety would permit upon those to whom I had letters of introduction. I had gone to the theatre until plays fairly sickened me. I had remained evenings in my rooms until I hated their sight. The city's clubs I had shunned, for their strange faces would only have made

me more thoroughly miserable. At home I had been a society favorite, I confess; and my plight was now the more wretched for it. Had I only been in love with some sweet creature of my former world, I mused, I might have found consolation in pouring out my soul's sorrows to her in long, sad letters.

One night, as I roamed the streets of my adopted city, something directed my steps to the railway station. The station, with its strange types of men and women, its odd little by-plays, its never-ending activity, its clang of bells that told the tale of other places—these, I mused, might prove an anodyne for me tonight. I entered, little dreaming of the singular adventure which would befall me.

In sauntering idly up the station's lobby, I chanced to observe a beautiful young woman. She was fashionably attired. Her unusual grace and style bore the stamp of race and of family. An admirer always of beautiful women, I was guilty for a moment of staring at her. Then I turned quickly on my heel, lest she should turn and find herself the cynosure of my rude gaze.

Afterwards, by possibly five minutes, I was suddenly startled by being addressed, there in that strange station, by a woman's voice. I turned quickly My heart gave a bound. It was she!

"Why, Mr Lovett," she exclaimed, "I'm so glad to see you again!"

I had turned the instant she spoke to me, to behold her face, radiant with surprise and delight, and to see her gloved hand extended.

What could I do? Tell her I was not the Mr. Lovett she had, by some singular accident, mistaken me for, but plain Mr Smith? Could I fill her with embarrassment by apprising her of her unusual blunder and let her excuse herself, there in sight of a hundred eyes, to beat a retreat with furious blushes of confusion on her face? It would have been nothing short of cruel. So swiftly had these thoughts flashed through my mind that, hardly was her last word spoken, than I extended my hand, clasping hers with all the warmth of intimate friendship.

"An unexpected delight, I am sure," I responded with genuine honesty and a hammering heart.

"It must be all of three months since that house-party at the Millard's," she said. Her voice had the sweetness of a bell.

"Quite that long, I believe," I murmured, astonishing myself at my assurance. Heavens, I mused, how long could I hope to traverse this thin ice in safety? Had I not better undeceive her at once? This was criminal of me—taking advantage of her unusual but not at all unprecedented error. Yet, as I gazed into her superb blue eyes I could not find the strength to turn away from this dazzling creature, nor from the pleasure of my surreptitious acquaintance, and I resolved to face the curious situation a little longer.

"I had hoped so much that I might meet you again, some time," she spoke on, "although Miss Millard told me that you had gone away on a hunting trip she thought. I've been reading so much of your magazine verse. It's beautiful."

I suppressed a gasp. Gracious, I mused, taken quite aback, a poet! Was it possible that the other took me for Clark Lovett, the popular writer of verse? And then, as though by miracle, her next remark answered my mental query.

"One hears everywhere the most flattering comments on Clark Lovett's verse," she added. "That last book of yours was a dear I am told that you keep wandering around the country, a sort of a vagabond, and that you are seldom to be found even twice in the same year as a guest in the same house. I remember that you were whisked away from the Millards' when you had been there but a few hours. And I did hope to meet you again somewhere."

Already I was furiously envious of Clark Lovett. I realized dully that I hadn't a right to let her go on, and

determined forthwith to tell her that the shrine to which she was bowing was a false one. But—weakling that I was—I had not the strength. By fortunate chance, I knew the work of Clark Lovett very well. In idle moments I had even been guilty of memorizing passages from his charming verse. And now—heaven forgive me—a bold thought took possession of me. From her remarks I had met my fair companion but once—at the Millards' As yet not a glimmer of suspicion as to my not being Lovett seemed to have crossed her mind, and therefore why not follow this mystic lane a little longer, to see whither it would lead me?

"You flatter me," I answered with a bow. "But it's sweet flattery, I confess. But really," I spoke on, exhibiting a confusion I had no need of feigning, "I must make an embarrassing admission. My miserable memory for names is proverbial among my friends. I have been trying hard to remember yours, and, while I recall your face, and even your voice, as though I had met you but yesterday, your name—"

She interrupted with a laugh. "They told me at the Millards," she said, "of that memory of yours. Miss Summerville," she added.

"Ah, I remember. And I might even have hazarded a correct guess," I added, "I might have known it was that—or at least something very similar—something similarly lovely."

My companion blushed. Ah, that blush! I could have seized her in my arms then and there. And the Millards, I mused fondly, the dear, dear Millards! Whoever they were, how ever could I repay them!

"Are you leaving the city—tonight?" she inquired.

"No," I hastened to assure her. (Would I not have postponed indefinitely the most important journey rather than to subtract even the fraction of a minute from the delight I was finding in talking to her?)

"And you?" I found strength to respond, oppressed sorely by the fear that the hateful cry of the train-announcer would wrest her away from me.

And then, to my astonishment, she raised the saddest pair of eyes to mine, saying "I'm in a most terrible fix. Papa was to have met me here. He had wired that he was coming on the eight-thirty train from the West. I have no idea what can have happened."

I uttered an exclamation of sympathy, inwardly rejoicing. The wings of my most fervent hopes could not have borne an unexpressed wish to my very feet.

"He wired me *en route* from Denver," she said. "And I don't know now where to reach him."

"Then we must have dinner together," I replied, endeavoring to hide my jubilation, "and over it we shall try to devise some solution of the mystery of the missing parent. Unless you have already dined. As for me, I am beastly hungry."

"Oh, how kind of you!" she exclaimed. "I *am* hungry, I had been waiting for dinner with papa. I wonder what can have happened."

I felt like a man tripping down a fairy grove beside its queen as I escorted her to the street. Then I called a cab, and handed her in. Seated there beside her, my heart smote my ribs furiously. I feared that I was dreaming. I expected momentarily to awake in the loneliness of my rooms. Yet I must have sighed with the sweetness of the situation as I sank back into the soft cushions. Just then she spoke, luckily too, for I would not have let her hear that sigh for worlds.

"How strange it all is!" she murmured. "How strange to have met some one I knew! But, oh, I'm imposing on you, I'm afraid," she added quickly. "Perhaps *you* were at the station to meet some one?"

"Yes," I answered. "I *was* there to meet some one. It was *you*."

She looked at me in astonishment.

"Something—I don't know what," I explained, "directed me to the station tonight. I had been wandering about

aimlessly. Could it have been—perhaps—that you—had been thinking—perhaps—of some of my things?"

(I could have kicked myself for that remark! What brazen audacity, what incomprehensible whim could have prompted me to make that cad's remark? I must have turned crimson.)

"I beg a thousand pardons," I added quickly. "I did not mean that."

"And yet," she responded softly, "that was true."

"It was?" I murmured in amaze. "But please forgive me for even suggesting it."

"*You* must forgive *me*," she answered, "for directing your steps in that subtle mental fashion."

"There is nothing to forgive," I responded, "if only I could find words rather to thank you."

Our fairy chariot swept over the rough pavements as though over streets of gold. And my Castle of Content, invoked into being by the wand of that creature at my side, already extended so far I could not see its farthest halls. But I would wander forward in it bravely, leading her with me. And might heaven forgive me for what I was doing! And might there be no false floors, no trap-doors, to dash me down to destruction!

I was gathering courage momentarily. Seized by a sudden whim, I began to recite a stanza of fanciful verse from the book of Clark Lovett's she had mentioned. Hardly had I begun, however, than I heartily rued it, so near was I to laughter at the ludicrous situation.

"A lovely thing," spoke my companion softly Then she added "I was going to ask you to repeat that very thing. But the Millards told me that you never recite any of your own things. I am glad—bashful, sir,—that you have mended your ways."

"Ah," ' returned, "it is different—tonight."

"Thank you," she breathed.

We were soon alighting before the vestibuled entrance of a brilliantly lighted café. Neither to right nor left dared I look as we entered, so fearfully did I shrink from the possibility of some old acquaintance seizing me and calling me by that name of Smith—that horrid, bourgeois name! We were ushered—thank Heaven!—to a remote corner, and there I counted myself safe from the cynosure of unwelcome, recognizing eyes.

And now, as I sat gazing full into the face and eyes of my chance companion, I became fairly intoxicated with the charm and wondrous beauty she radiated. Her attire—but stay, for what can a man say of the mystic lines and wondrous fabric of feminine garb? Only I could see that its tailoring was irreproachable and its quality the most costly

And her face—ah, how shall I describe it? Her hair seemed to glow like a cloud of dark mist, there underneath her hat. Her face was finely cut, and her complexion perfect. Her bent eyebrows shone with the lustre of black stone. Her wondrous lips I shall not attempt to describe, but, as I gazed upon her, they became a feature in themselves. Never have I forgotten the picture she made that night—sitting opposite me there at our table.

Her pronounciation of the names of French entrées was perfect, as she suggested what we should eat when I bade her do so. And I—as I sat and marvelled—had more and more of the feeling of a despicable thief every second. More than once did I resolve that I would not let the deception go on a second longer. Yet always did I lack the strength to break the spell.

Daintiest dishes of this and of that were brought; candelabra added their magic, there was music and its spell, and the minutes crept away into an hour. We spoke a great deal of the Millards. They lived somewhere in an outlying country-place, I gathered. I discoursed with extreme caution as we spoke of the sweetness and gentleness of Miss Dorothy—of the qualifications for the law possessed by young Master Harold, only fourteen, but his career already selected

by his fond parent—on the consummate hostess that Mrs. Millard was on the occasion of a house-party. I had to remember always that I had been present at the affair but a few hours. I was surrounded by a thousand pit-falls, and I talked on with the wariest care. But as the minutes flitted by and as my comments ran a successful gauntlet of all dangers, my confidence grew apace, and I hoped that our dinner might last forever

And then, when gossip had run its course, milady directed our conversation once more back into the lane of poetry Gifted with an excellent memory, and my interest in the law having marched arm in arm for years with a passionate love for poetry, I can say that I was not ill at ease at the return to that topic, save that my conscience was still buzzing insistently that my brazen lie to this fair companion should go on. The Elizabethan and Victorian poets we discussed. I was immeasurably charmed and delighted at the store of knowledge she possessed. Though she told me that she was a graduate of Vassar, I was astonished at what she knew of the old dramatists—of Webster and Ford and Shirley and Marlowe. She was conversant also, to an unusual degree, with the oldest novels—with works like Beckford's "Caliph Vathek" and Walpole's "The Castle of Otranto." I was amazed.

She then insisted on having some more of "my poems." So I recited for her, the whim of my strange adventures growing upon me as I continued. And once, when I came across a passage which I could not quite remember, she went on with it, reciting in soft, low tones. As she continued, I thought I detected a wistfulness in her tones; and finally I observed that her eyes had grown dim with tears. That was more than I could bear

"Miss Summerville," I said, when she had finished speaking "I have been guilty of a gross deception—of a horrible lie."

She looked at me in surprise. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"I cannot let it go any farther," I spoke on rapidly. "I am not Clark Lovett, the man you mistook me for in the station. Something—I hardly know what—selfishness, I suppose—made me let you think I was he. All evening I have sat here and lied to you. I want you—to forgive me—if you can."

To my utter astonishment, my announcement did not have the effect upon my companion that I expected. She did not scream. No look of horror came into her face. She did not even turn pale. If anything, she flushed. But she was very sober when she answered me.

"It is *I*," she said at last, "rather than you, who should ask forgiveness. When I spoke to you, I ***did*** think you were Mr. Lovett. But the moment you spoke I knew you were not."

"You did!" I gasped. (Great heavens! I mused. And I had flattered myself that my deception had been perfect! I felt like a toad. Then I could feel my ass's ears growing longer every instant, as she sat there smiling at me.) "Well, how ridiculous!" I added faintly "And your father?" I hazarded.

"It was true," she replied soberly, "that my father, by an unusual arrangement, was to have met me here. When he failed to come, I did not know what to do. I was strange in the city. I hadn't but a few cents in my purse. That is why I was so overjoyed, so demonstrative when I saw a man who I thought was Mr. Lovett. When I saw my mistake, I could have died of confusion. The moment I saw that, whoever you were, you were going to spare me the embarrassment, there before everybody, of being told that you were not Mr Lovett, I felt more grateful than offended. In fact, I became possessed with a funny, an unaccountable whim. I was curious to see just what would come of the odd situation. I was thoroughly astonished at your self-possession. I'm going to be perfectly frank."

"Do," I urged, so confounded at her words that I hardly knew what I was saying. My senses literally swam.

"I thought I should die," she went

on, "when you began quoting from Mr Lovett's verse in the carriage, and my interest was mounting rapidly."

"I confess," I answered, "that I thought I should explode when I began to quote his poetry."

"Frankly," she replied, "I didn't see how you could help doing something like that. The novelty of it all was fascinating. And, besides, I had compromised myself too far to retrace my steps."

"And the Millards," I hazarded faintly, engulfed suddenly with a flood of dim recollection of what I had said about them. "How I must have lied about them!" I said weakly

"I never heard of the Millards in all my life," she said, to my overwhelming surprise. "I invented their name, and the idea of that house-party, on the spur of the instant, to see if it would not furnish an exit from what I was rapidly getting into. I wanted to scream when you said you remembered all about the party"

"And *your* name?" I asked, so bewildered, I fancied I must be asleep.

"I can't tell you my real name—ever," she replied. "Just remember me, please, by the name of Summerville."

"Then you mean that I am never to see you again?" I asked protestingly Her remark was like a dash of cold water, waking me instantly

"I'm afraid not," she answered. "It will be quite impossible, I'm afraid."

"Who are you?" I murmured, gazing at this girl of mystery, knowing now that I was hopelessly in love with her

She shook her head almost sadly, I fancied. "I cannot tell you," she answered. "You must remember me only as Miss Summerville. You must promise me to make no effort, at any time, or in any way, to discover my identity. Do you promise me that?"

My heart sank. My eyes must have smoldered with the repressed fires of my yearnings, must have burned with a mute protest.

"You must promise," she said again; and I bowed resignedly

"Shall you think harshly of me for my conduct tonight?" she asked, in the lowest tones.

"I shall remember it," I declared, my own face as sober as hers, "as the loveliest evening of all my life."

"And I," she replied hesitantly, "shall also think of it often—and of you."

"But," I pleaded, "can't there be even a letter occasionally, even though signed by nothing more than Miss Summerville?"

Again she shook her head. "Even that is impossible," she spoke. "I must not even know *your* real name. I must remember you as only the Other Mr Lovett. Neither you nor I must ever speak of tonight's experiences."

I bowed in obedience, but in utter sadness. "But I cannot understand," I added, unable to repress a word of protest.

"If I told you my name,' she responded, "and my father's name, you would understand. But that is impossible. I will tell you what little I can. My life long I have been encompassed with conventions—with the most hateful and exacting conventions. Oh, I have thought sometimes that I could not bear it any longer, that I should have to flee from everything—to the woods, joining some band of gypsies—anything—only to gain freedom. And so tonight, when this singular opportunity offered, I did this unbelievable thing—explored these regions—took greedy advantage of my chance freedom, the thing I had never, never known before. But, oh, ask me nothing more! Please do not. I must go now."

I was bewildered by her words, but resigned to her will.

"You must at least let me lend you some money," I said.

"Just a few dollars, if you please—for tonight," she said. "Tomorrow I shall wire to New York for some money I shall leave for home tomorrow."

At the entrance to the elevator in her hotel I bade her good-night—and good-bye. But before I released her hand, I

bowed and kissed it—she let me—and then she was whirled away

Not until she had been whirled away and out of my life did I realize fully how insanely I loved her. As the days dragged on my passion waxed instead of waned. I became the most miserable man in the world. I wanted to scour the country, to search all the world for her Had she not commanded me to make no effort to establish her identity I would have left nothing undone to find her again, would have donned the coat of knighthood to search on land and over seas for this Holy Grail of my heart.

To sit inactive in my offices nearly maddened me. My thoughts, my dreams, every fancy that possessed me, carried me back to that Castle of Content—to those mystic halls through which I had roamed with her on that magic evening, to that palace which had vanished so quickly into dreams and embittered memories. I could see her always, herself a vision of sadness, of wistfulness, as she looked when she told me at the end of that singular meeting of the impassable barriers which encompassed her, the chains that bound her from the freedom she craved.

That autumn I sailed for Europe. I had strived vainly to forget her, and deemed it necessary to seek new sights, new places. I proceeded to southern Italy; there I would spend the winter months. And there I met her—*her,* whom I had left America to forget!

My first impulse was to flee, obedient to her command. But I could not. So I sought an interview "The Other Mr Lovett" were the words I inscribed upon the card I sent to her I was ushered into her apartments. She smiled graciously, extending her hand. I bowed and kissed it with a holy reverence.

And then she threw off her mask—although I had learned her identity. She was the only daughter of one of America's wealthiest multi-millionaires whose name I had known from childhood!

I could not recount what occurred in that half hour's visit if I tried—only I realized in a frenzy of happiness that she was not offended by my presense. I remember, too, that she told me she was to wed an Italian count. I had known the story for a year The newspapers had been full of the impending momentous alliance. Only I had not known that it was *she.*

"You must let me offer my congratulations," I murmured when I was about to leave. (I should have done so sooner.)

She inclined her head, smiling wanly, wistfully

I started. "You are going to marry him, are you not?" I blurted, hardly knowing what I was saying.

"I don't know," she answered.

When I left her, my heart was leaping wildly The next day she and her party had gone away. But that day there came to my hotel by the post a parcel containing her picture. It bore the inscription: "Miss Sommerville."

And now another year has passed. The newspapers have been printing interesting tales about her. From Italy has come the shocking story that a certain member of the nobility has gone mad. And my Castle of Content has been reared once more. And she—she has made her father very furious by leaping across her barriers, by casting aside her chains, and now she is free. And she and I are roaming through the halls of our gilded palace again—together

FLORA MARIE

By Louis Pendleton

ALTHOUGH he lived on the remote Lac des Quinze, away up in the northwestern corner of the Province of Quebec, James Macdonald had no sooner quarrelled with and shot an Indian suspected of theft than the Law reached forth its long arm into the wilderness and took him. He was carried many miles southward, tried convicted and hanged—the event furnishing fresh testimony that in some parts of Canada it is as hazardous to kill an Indian as a white man, perhaps more so, for the Dominion government takes pride in protecting the otherwise helpless Indian.

Macdonald's wife, already in frail health, sank under the blow and died within a few months. Thus was her sixteen-year-old daughter, Flora Marie, left without means of support and in the doubtful care of Kenneth McLaren, a youth of nineteen, whose parentage was unknown and whose future was regarded as uncertain. Kenneth had served faithfully with James Macdonald for three years, but he was a great, gawky fellow, not much given to speech, and critical Flora Marie had elected to treat him with increasing disdain.

At this time there was not a farm on the lonely shores of the Lac des Quinze —the Lake of Fifteen, so-called from a river flowing out of it which breaks into fifteen impassable rapids on its way to Lake Temiscamingue. Two lumber camps were its only signs of human life, and the axes of the tree cutters rang out in the vicinity of only one of these, the other having been abandoned. The Macdonalds lived apart in a hemlock log cabin of three rooms, adjoining which was a small and still ruder shack occupied by Kenneth McLaren. The man and the youth served as choppers, skidders or sawyers, according to the season or the need, and the woman and the girl not only cooked and sewed at home, but fished almost daily in the Quinze, a sheet of water some thirty miles in length, with many wide-reaching bays surrounded by rocky hills and wild, unbroken forests.

Macdonald was the only tree cutter who had brought a family into the wilderness, but on the portage trail leading to the Temiscamingue there was an eating-house for journeying lumbermen kept by Mme. Martin and her three daughters. These, as well as the fifty-odd choppers, skidders and sawyers of the Quinze, were keenly interested in the future of Flora Marie. The Martin women promptly decided that she should come to live with them, and though many of the lumbermen doubted the propriety of this, they appeared to think there was nothing else to be done. Nobody seemed to give a thought to the claims of Kenneth McLaren, supposing he should presume to put forward any

After the funeral—which was consummated without the aid of the mission priest, then too far away to be called—two lumbermen, Jim Snead and Abe Baldwin, walked home with Flora Marie and Kenneth in the late afternoon. The girl promptly retired into the cabin, the two men lingering outside in conversation with the youth.

"Well, lad," said Jim Snead, "it's all fixed up for Flora Marie to go and live at the half-way house."

"*Who* fixed it up" asked Kenneth, combatatively.

"Well, the Martins want her, and the boys has talked it over"

"And," added Abe Baldwin, "Nettie Martin says it ain't proper for a gal nearly grown to go on livin' here alone with you."

Kenneth's cheeks flamed red and he answered quickly: "She'd a long sight

better live here with me than with them Martin women, and you know it!"

"What business is it of your'n?" demanded Baldwin, with equal heat. "You ain't no kin to her"

"I've lived with her folks like a son for three years," protested Kenneth.

"She'll have to go and stay with the women," declared Snead judicially "Nothin' else'll do."

"If they was the right sort, I wouldn't say a word," responded Kenneth, "but many's the time I've heard her mother say them Martin women weren't good women, and you men know it's so."

"Well," said Snead, "maybe one of the boys'll marry her soon and then it'll be all right."

"Ther' ain't one of you fiteen to marry her," was Kenneth's fierce retort.

"Look here, boy," said Snead, "you're fixin' to git yourself into trouble."

"I'd cut a green stick and frail him this minute," said Baldwin, "if it weren't right after the funeral."

"You try it!" threatened Kenneth, and, as the older man observed the youth's muscular figure, full six feet in height, he admitted a doubt in his own mind as to whether he would ever venture to "try it."

"Nettie Martin's comin' to talk it over with Flora Marie tomorrow," announced Snead, and the two men walked away

Kenneth was still looking furiously in the direction they had gone when Flora Marie appeared in the low doorway of the cabin. Dreading to have her daughter to grow up in such surroundings, Mrs. Macdonald had to the last kept her in short skirts with her hair in a braid down her back, but today Flora Marie had "done up" her dark, luxuriant tresses and dressed herself in one of her mother's best gowns. The transformation was astonishing. It was no longer a pretty little girl, but a woman, and one who pleased even the critical eye, who now called out to Kenneth:

"What you mad about?"

Kenneth wheeled round and moved toward her. "They've got it fixed up to take you over to the half-way house," he said.

"It won't be fixed up till I say so."

"I hope you won't never say so."

Flora Marie did not pursue the conversation. She seated herself in the doorway and leaned her head on her hands, thinking of her lost parents. She was not demonstrative in her grief, but her heart was heavy Yearning to express sympathy, but at a loss for words, Kenneth quietly withdrew, and a few minutes later was heard cutting wood in preparation for their evening meal.

Mme. Martin's solicitude for the welfare of Flora Marie, left "alone" with Kenneth McLaren, could not be described as urgent. She did not appear in the Macdonald clearing until Sunday nearly a week later She and her eldest daughter, Colinette, walked the intervening eight miles of portage trail and arrived about mid-afternoon. They smelt of musk, there was a suggestion of paint on their faces, and they were arrayed in all the tawdry finery they possessed. They were also extremely affable in manner and laughed a great deal. Flora Marie invited them in with grave courtesy, and as she listened to their proposition and their discreet account of the gay life at the half-way house, her frank and curious eye absorbed every detail of their toilet and took note of all their mannerisms.

Kenneth McLaren, who had been on the lookout all day, promptly took his seat in the doorway, determined to hear all that was said; but, to his great disgust, the Martin women gabbled in their native tongue during the entire visit, and he could understand scarcely a word. Flora Marie, on the other hand, spoke the provincial French of the region as well as English, her mother having been an *habitant*.

"What did they say?" asked Kenneth gloomily, after the Martins had departed, and, looking after them as they went, he had recalled what he had once heard a preacher down at Baie des Pères read out of the Bible after the daughters of Babylon.

"I couldn't begin to tell you all they said," answered Flora Marie, "but I've agreed to go and live with them. They'll board me and pay me some wages. I've got to work for a living."

"*I'll* make a living for you," the youth proposed eagerly

"I can't take your money, Kenneth."

"But your mother wouldn't like it. Them Martin women ain't good women."

"Do you mean they ain't got religion? Ma and pa wasn't so awful religious themselves.

"I can't tell you what I mean," said Kenneth helplessly.

"Then quit backbitin' *I* think Mme. Martin is very nice and kind. She says she'll make me a new dress, and she says they dance and have great fun at the half-way house nearly every night."

Kenneth groaned. "I wish there was a woman here to talk to you," he said desperately.

"I'm goin' in the mornin'," announced Flora Marie, who had listened abstractedly. "Jim Snead and Abe Baldwin are comin' to pack my things over"

Kenneth turned away in despair, but Flora Marie hummed a cheerful tune and presently sang softly a childhood's ditty, telling of the grey hen that "lays in the church," of the black hen that "lays in the cupboard," of the white hen that "lays in the boughs" of the impossible green hen that deposits her eggs in secret places, and of that most wonderful

" * poulette brune*
Qui pond dans la lune!"

Kenneth slept little that night. By half-past three o'clock, more than an hour before the summer dawn, he was out of bed and dressed. He had formed a plan and now hurriedly set about carrying it into execution. Having built a fire and put on water to boil for tea, he took a couple of blankets, some fishing tackle, his Winchester repeating rifle, a frying pan and a small supply of provisions down to the lake shore and stored them in his light bark canoe. Later he rapped on Flora Marie's door, and when she stepped out, yawning, just as the dawn-glow began to show in the east, she found her breakfast awaiting her.

"What put it in your head to git up so early and do my work?" she asked.

"I couldn't sleep," he said, and when they had eaten he proposed that she go out in his canoe with him and catch a fish. "Them men from the half-way house won't be here for a hour," he said.

Flora Marie readily consented. Fishing was her favorite sport, although she was an excellent shot and often went out with a gun. If she had reflected over the matter, she would have concluded that for her there was more "fun" in catching a fine fish than in attracting a handsome lover. The normal inclinations of womanhood were not yet quite awake in Flora Marie.

"What's all this?" she asked, seeing the stores in the canoe.

Without answer Kenneth helped her to a seat in the bow, quickly stepped in at the stern, dropped on his knees, pushed off from the landing, dipped his paddle deep, and they skimmed away. "I was thinkin' of takin' a trip today," he then replied; and, as Flora Marie quite undisturbed, picked up a trolling-line, he quickly added: "Wait till we git out in the big lake."

Kenneth paddled hard and the canoe glided forward at a great speed. This caused no comment from Flora Marie, who supposed that the object was to go far enough to catch a big fish and return to the clearing in time to meet the men from the half-way house on their arrival. She was soon undeceived. Little more than half a mile separated them from the landing when shouts were heard, and, turning, she saw two men on the shore with hands uplifted in an effort to attract their attention.

"That's Jim Snead and Abe Baldwin come for me," she announced. "We'll have to go right back."

Kenneth glanced over his shoulder toward the shouting men, but made no move to turn round. On the contrary, he kept his course and paddled harder than ever.

"Why don't you turn round?" asked Flora Marie in surprise.

But Kenneth only deflected his course at right angles, and the canoe shot into the narrows leading to the main body of the Quinze. The shouting and gesticulating men at the far landing were quickly lost to view behind a green forest wall.

"Turn round and go back!" ordered Flora Marie in her most imperious tones, but Kenneth held his peace and paddled hard. "Er' you crazy this mornin'?" asked the indignant girl, after her repeated commands had remained unheeded. "Where you goin'?"

"I'm makin' for the Lonely Rivers."

"Kenneth McLaren," cried Flora Marie, "er' you fool enough to think you can take me off in the bush and hide me, to keep me from goin' to the half-way house? *I'll* show you!"

Briefly, and with pauses—for it was necessary that one laboring so hard with a paddle should save his breath—Kenneth told her what he intended to do. Their destination, he said, was a post of the Hudson's Bay Company, a hundred and fifty miles to the north. The course led from the Quinze into Lakes Obikaba, Borrier and Opasatica, all connected by a stream called the Lonely River Then came the Mauteur des Terre, or divide, beyond that Lakes Matamagosig and Agatowekami, connected by many miles of river, and finally the great shallow "Muddy Water," or Abitibbi, where the old trading post had been located for nearly two hundred years, where there was a little mission church and where lived Pierre Laval, the trapper, a brother of Mrs. Macdonald.

"Your uncle can tell you what I can't," said Kenneth, "or the priest can tell you. If they say you can go to the half-way house, all right. I'll bring you right back, if they say so, but they won't say so."

"You er' so wise!" said Flora Marie, crushingly. "I wonder they don't send for you down south and make you the governor-general of Canada."

In her anger she declared that she would upset the canoe and swim ashore, but Kenneth merely smiled at this as an idle threat. To swim a mile in long skirts was a hazard which even an enraged and imperious girl would hardly undertake. She vowed that she would appeal to the first person they met, but Kenneth calmly replied that they were not likely to meet anybody but Indian fishermen. She also announced that as soon as they set foot on a portage she would run off into the "bush" and hide, but Kenneth answered that their way was clear by water for more than a day's journey, that therefore they would not land till night, and that she would not be likely to go very far away from their camp-fire in a country of bears, pumas and wolves.

"My uncle won't want to be bothered with me," said Flora Marie, after a long, sullen silence. "I never saw him but once, and I had clean forgot him."

"There's a way to keep from havin' to live with him," said Kenneth with a shy smile, but did not venture to explain his meaning.

His greatest immediate fear was that they would be pursued and that there might be a struggle for possession of the girl before they reached the post. Snead and Baldwin were determined men, and it was plain to him that they had cast a longing eye on Flora Marie. Many times that day he turned and scanned the far surfaces of the lake behind them. Twice he saw a canoe in the distance and suspected that it followed on his trail, but was not quite sure.

As he had foretold, they encountered only an occasional Indian bark canoe, mostly of unusually large size, and now and then containing a whole family, the squaw in the bow, the buck in the stern, both paddling. Even the boys and girls hung over the gunwales wielding little paddles, the comically solemn papoose alone remaining inactive, swathed in cloths and strapped in an upright mummy-like frame, which the squaw was wont to sling on her back when portaging.

Flora Marie did not appeal to the In-

dians. In fact, she did none of the things she had threatened to do. She even ceased reproaching Kenneth after a sudden squall overtook and threatened them about five o'clock in the afternoon. They were about two miles from the nearest shore when a gale of wind brought angry white caps racing past them and their little canoe, with gunwales only a few inches above the water line, was in constant danger All Kenneth's skill and strength were required to make slow headway shoreward while keeping the frail craft directed at such an angle as to prevent the swell from pouring over its side and filling it to the brim. Both recognized the danger fully and neither spoke. Flora Marie sat motionless, waiting and trusting in Kenneth's skill. She knew that there was no braver or better canoeist on the Quinze, and she discovered an unexpected satisfaction in leaving all to him—in leaning on him, as it were, in this hour of danger Kenneth spoke only once, breathlessly, for his labors were herculean.

"Git ready," he said suddenly "Loose your skirts."

Flora Marie obeyed, seeing that they were not likely to keep afloat a minute longer She had little fear of drowning, they could cling to the upturned canoe and drift ashore. Nevertheless it was desirable to provide for the freedom of her lower limbs in such a squall as this. As it turned out, the precaution was unnecessary With consummate skill Kenneth continued to steer the canoe through the roaring white caps, and they finally ran into a small sheltered bay with no worse damage than repeated sprinklings.

Kenneth now landed for the night and selected a camping site. Returning to the spot with firewood a little later, he found the girl cheerfully lending a hand. She cooked their supper without a word of reproach while he prepared for her a couch of spruce tips and sheltered it beneath a hastily constructed "brush tent." She even sang softly to herself as she worked—to Kenneth's great delight, although he regretted not to be quite sure of these words of her song·

"Chante, rossignol, chante;
Toi qui as le coeur gai,
Tu as le coeur a rire,
Moie, je l'ai a pleurer"

After supper the tired youth sat over the fire dozing, his Winchester across his knees. Flora Marie observed him with an interest that was new to her For the first time she thought he was good to look at, with his fair, curly hair, his honest face, his strong limbs. Even his grey flannel shirt, his red stockings drawn up to his knees over his trousers, and his heavy "shoepecks" she thought becoming. When she lay down on her screened and sweet-scented bed it was with a feeling of complete security Her fancy might run out through the dreaming woods and in the long, dark vistas beneath the sighing trees discover nameless shapes that moved on spectral wings or noiseless feet, and waited and watched for a favoring hour to spring on the human intruders upon their realm, but she did not fear. Was not big, strong, skilful Kenneth ready to leap bravely to her defense?

The fire burned low and almost flickered out. The weary youth, unable to keep watch as he had planned, finally lay back in deep slumber, one hand still clutching his rifle. The night noises of the forest were unheeded. Porcupines stole up within a few feet of the sleepers, their quills scratching harshly against leafy obstructions. Now and then a far-off wolf howled dismally, and once or twice a startled loon out of the lake shrieked a warning to its mate. The starlight filtered but dimly through the roof of hemlock and maple boughs, and the white trunks of the slender birches showed only and but faintly where they stood in groups at the water's rim. Night reigned supreme.

As the stars paled, and with a slight fluttering of the leaves faint light began to struggle against the forest gloom, two dark figures, stepping from a canoe, stole up the portage path toward the extinct camp fire. With a start Ken-

neth sat up and looked about him—too late to see these watchful figures draw back into the shadow He rose and hurried down the portage path to scan the lake in the light of dawn, the two dark figures guardedly following him.

The light was stronger when Flora Marie, dreaming of a deadly struggle between determined men, started up with a low cry and stepped from her leafy covert. Kenneth was gone, but, hearing nothing except the peaceful bird notes of the morning hour, she at once felt at ease. She dipped her handkerchief in a spring, bathed her eyes and smoothed her hair, then deliberately took her way down the portage path to the lake shore. As a bend of the trail brought the water's edge in view, she suddenly stopped short, dumbfounded.

Kenneth lay in the path bound hand and foot, and Snead and Baldwin stood over him in triumph. "They must 'a slipped up on him from behind," was her thought, "else they couldn't 'a done it."

"Now, Jim," Baldwin was saying, "you stay here with him while I go and wake her up. I want to talk to her a little before we start on the back track."

"Huh!" cried Snead. "Maybe I'd like to talk to her a little myself. *You* stay here and *I'll* go."

"Not on your life."

"Well," said Snead, his voice shaken with passion, "are you ready to toss up for it or fight, which?"

As the two men stood glaring at each other, a great fear fell upon Flora Marie. Why were they so determined to take her to the half-way house? Why were they ready to fight? Had Kenneth been wise after all, and she a stubborn fool? She put out her hand toward a hemlock tree on her right, as if for support, and a red squirrel scampered away with noisy protestations. Then all eyes were turned upon the girl and Kenneth shouted to her.

"Grab that gun! You'll need it."

Flora Marie saw the Winchester leaning against the tree within reach of her hand, but did not take it. She stood quite still, held in the benumbing grip of a terror which she felt to her finger tips yet did not quite comprehend.

The silence was broken by Abe Baldwin, who leaped forward with an oath and brutally kicked the prostrate and defenseless youth. Then Flora Marie found herself. Without a word of warning, she snatched the rifle, aimed carefully at the fleshy part of Baldwin's leg just below the knee, and fired. With a howl of pain, he dropped to the ground, clutching the wounded part, while Snead wheeled around to find the dangerous Winchester pointed at him.

"Now you git!"

"Why, Flora Marie!" expostulated Snead.

"Don't you say a word to me, Jim Snead," cried the girl furiously. "If you don't want to walk lame for six months—or ketch worse—put Abe Baldwin in your canoe and clear out from here."

"Now, Flora Marie—"

"Git, I tell you!"

There was but one thing to do. She was only a girl, but she commanded the situation. Moreover, such a blaze of anger as hers was dangerous, and few men were better shots.

Snead helped his groaning and cursing friend into their canoe and shoved off. But, after paddling out a little way, he stopped, again disposed to argue.

"Flora Marie—"

A bullet interrupted him, whistling over him and causing him to duck his head in lively concern. Then he paddled hastily out into the lake, halting only when he felt quite assured that the Winchester could not reach him.

Meanwhile Flora Marie cut Kenneth's bonds, and the enraged young man told how his enemies had leaped upon him from behind and borne him down. Then she stood on guard while he ran up and brought down their belongings, preparing for instant departure. Without a word, it was agreed between them that on this particular morning they would eat cold breakfast while *en route*.

Just before the fugitives disappeared around a bend of the shore twenty minutes later, they noted that Snead was

paddling back to the site of their camp, intending, no doubt, to dress Baldwin's flesh wound and then take counsel what to do. That they would continue the pursuit that day was not likely, for their manner betrayed hesitation and deep discouragement.

Near noon two days later Kenneth's canoe entered the Abitibbi from the south at a point whence the gleaming, whitewashed buildings of the old Hudson's Bay Post could be plainly seen some three miles away Scarcely half of that distance had been covered when they met a canoe paddled by two Indians in which was seated Père Lorette, the mission priest, who greeted them with a cheery

"Bon jour, mes enfants!"

Kenneth asked if Pierre Laval was at the post, and Flora Marie heard, with an appearance of dismay but with little real regret, that her uncle had joined in the rush to the Klondike the previous spring and no news of him had since been received. Kenneth explained that the girl was the absent trapper's orphan niece, and that he had wished to put her in his care to prevent her from going to the people of the half-way house.

"You know the half-way house on the Quinze portage, father?"

"Alas, yes; it is no place for her, *cette maison du diable!* You have done well to interfere, my son, and I will help you find a home for her But—but now I go to the bed of a dying man. It is sixty miles, and there is no time to lose."

Flora Marie begged that the priest would not delay a moment on her account. "I am all right now," she said, with an enigmatic smile.

"I will give you a letter to the factor's half-breed wife—a good Christian—who will care for you at the post till I return," said Père Lorette.

"But will she want me? She might not like me," objected Flora Marie. "Father," said the girl, smiling, and with a sudden flame of color in her cheeks, "I —I could tell you how to stop people from meddling and—and—put me in care of one who will be kinder to me than anybody in the world. Yes—I could."

"How, my daughter?"

"Kenneth"—she dropped her eyes—"he has not yet asked me, but I—I know he wants to—to—marry me."

And then, as Père Lorette smiled encouragingly, Kenneth, with all his heart in his eyes, cried out in wonder and delight:

"Oh, Flora Marie, will you—sure 'nough!"

LOVE IN THE LAZARET

By Peter Nansen.

THE chief physician didn't know what to make of that patient. It was recruit No. 13 of the Third Company, and he had been sent in for a weakness of the left leg. It could not bear his weight at all. It was as if the life had been sucked out at the joints—at least this was how he put it in his Copenhagen dialect. No. 13 was a journeyman joiner in his private life, and a very nice-looking fellow, too.

"I can't help it," said the chief, after a most searching examination of No. 13's leg; "this man is a cheat all right. There isn't the first thing the matter with him. But fortunately the military hospital has ways and means of managing such cases. He'll be cured quick enough."

Certainly No. 13's leg did not look as if there was anything the matter with it. It was about as well-shaped a leg as one would want to see, good enough to serve

for a sculptor's model. But, in spite of this, the chief was not quite correct in his confidence in the military methods of curing patients.

And yet these methods were used in fullest rigor, with no consideration for the sufferer It began with fever diet and Spanish flies. Then came the galvanic batteries first the little one, then the big one. It was quite interesting to watch when No. 13's leg was put under the electricity The volts shot through it and the splendid muscles reacted in all their beauty But No. 13 remained stubborn. He writhed under the electricity. Once he gave utterance to an involuntary moan of pain, but his leg remained weak. Before and after the treatment the chief himself would stand No. 13 up beside his bed, and the patient would at once sink over on his left side. His leg refused to hold him up.

After the electrical treatment came the water cure. No. 13 was given shower and needle baths morning and evening. The temperature of the water was put down to the very lowest limit; No. 13 declared that he froze like a dog, but that "it didn't matter if only it helped." But it didn't help. No. 13 wasn't popular with the attendants. They had to carry him back and forth on his litter twice a day to the bath room. And during the bath they had to hold him up, otherwise he would fall over on his left side. But apart from the suspicion that he was a cheat, and made extra trouble for the attendants, No. 13 was a model patient. He was always polite, and never uttered a word of complaint at the treatment to which he was subjected. On the contrary, he seemed most grateful for all the trouble the chief took with him. And, in spite of hints that were more than open, he did not seem to have the slightest notion of the fact that the doctor took him for a fraud. The chief began finally to admire the boy

After a week of the fever diet of white bread, weak tea and milk, which did not, however, seem to affect his blooming health in the least, the chief said to him, "You must try to get a little strength in that leg, and then we can give you something better to eat. You see, we can't give hearty food to a patient with such weak legs. Don't you long for a good beefsteak?"

No. 13 looked up at the chief with grateful eyes and answered, "Oh, no, sir, I don't want anything but what they give me. I am quite satisfied with the food."

"The devil take the fellow," growled the chief, as he went on to the next room. "He's the most stubborn cheat we've ever had here."

The following day they took No. 13's weight, and, a week later, when he had been enjoying eight days more of the fever diet, they weighed him again. He had gained three pounds.

From that moment on a feeling of sympathetic interest for No. 13 grew up in the Chief's heart. "There's some knave's trick in this," he would say, "but the fellow's wonderful. There's not the slightest doubt but that he'll end up in the House of Correction. But I'd give ten crowns to see him escape it."

"The scientific torture cure" (this was the chief's expression) was continued steadily, mainly for the principle of the thing. For the chief had given up all hope of changing No. 13's condition, and he was already beginning to hint at the possibility of a discharge from the regiment.

Then came a day when the chief was in an extra bad humor. He gave No. 13 a dose of electricity stronger than he had ever dared try before. Round about the bed stood the reserve surgeon, the orderlies, the attendants and the woman nurse, in charge of the room, Miss Svingstrup. This was the youngest of the women attendants in the hospital, "the beauty of the house," they called her, a tall, dark-eyed, full-bosomed maiden of between thirty and forty years. Suddenly No. 13 gave a loud scream of pain, and at the same moment Mistress Svingstrup broke out into convulsive sobs. She ran from the room and threw herself, still sobbing hysteric-

ally, on her bed in her little cabin next the sick ward.

The chief stood a moment in deep thought. "Go throw some water on her head," he said to the reserve surgeon. Then he gave No. 13 a few extra good shocks.

When he stood on the stairs a few moments later with the reserve surgeon, he said, "Did you ever notice any sentimentality in our fair Svingstrup before today?"

"No, not enough to interfere at all events."

"Nor did I. What does your up-to-date science think of such a case as this then?"

"Hm! Svingstrup is in the years most dangerous for a woman. It is perhaps what one might call an outbreak of—"

"Most respected colleague, permit me to tell you that you have very little knowledge of human-kind. What I believe is that this is the solution of the riddle."

"What riddle?"

"No. 13. Listen now, doctor, and do exactly as I tell you. This afternoon you will announce that, by my orders, Svingstrup's room is to be emptied and put in order again for the small-pox patients, for whom there is no room in the epidemic wards. The danger of infection from this ward will make it impossible for any attendant from here to have intercourse with any one else in the hospital. In other words, they will be as good as in arrest—for a time. Then you can distribute Svingstrup's patients wherever you think best. But put No. 13 in the other wing, where he will be under the charge of that shrew, Madame Mortensen. Do you follow me?"

"You really think—" the reserve surgean smiled meaningly

"I do. Go now and give the orders."

No. 13 had been under the care of Madame Mortensen for two days with the same uncomfortable electric and water treatment and the same fever diet. When, on the third day, the chief inquired how he felt, No. 13 answered, "I really think, sir, that my leg is a little better. The strength seems to be coming back to it."

"For which let us be thankful," said the Chief. "I really think that electric treatment ought to help. You'll see after a few days more of it we'll have you on your legs again like a fine, strong soldier.

And he finished the treatment for the day.

The Chief's hope was not disappointed. The week was scarcely up when No. 13 was in possession of his full strength again. The day he was to be discharged the Chief sent for him to come to his private office. He looked out at No. 13 from under his uniform cap. "I could send you to the House of Correction, No. 13. You know that?"

"Yes, sir"

"I may do it, I ought to do it, for it is my duty The devil, man, why don't you say something? Haven't you anything to say to excuse your actions?"

"I'm thinking, sir, that she is the finest woman I've ever seen?"

"How did you know her?"

"I saw her one day when I came to visit a sick comrade."

"And then?"

"Then we arranged I was to announce myself sick."

"You shan't escape the House of Correction!"

"No, sir, I suppose I can't. But—you see—we—"

"Well?"

"We—we want to get married—soon as possible—she wrote me this morning—"

"And then?"

"I thought we could arrange it, my time's most up. She's the finest woman I know, sir, and the best cook."

The Chief scratched his head under the uniform cap. Suddenly he tossed the cap into a corner and said. "All right, you shall escape. You'll surely marry her? And I'll be godfather—that's the least I can lay claim to. Oh, and, if it's a girl, call her Electrina. You can make it Trina for short. It is a promise?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

PLAYING MY HAND

By Joseph Kocheli

I WAS ready for business by the end of Spring, and I waited impatiently for the first good heat of the Summer days to drive people out of the city My list was a dandy —as choice a selection of promising residences as I ever planned to "work," carefully checked as to who was going and gone and who would be left in charge. There was also a careful calculation as to when the caretakers could be counted on to relax their vigilance, the habits of the police on the beat—in fact, a most elaborate little digest to aid me in my operations, which it had taken me months to get. A bit of information here and there, a trespass on the amiability of maids and nurses (the pretty ones) and sociably inclined footmen, now and then a chat with a member of the Private Watchman's Association proved of special value.

So it may be inferred that I was considerably taken aback when Hannigan, of the regular police force, advised me that Headquarters were getting busy to clean up the town in a way that knocked out my profession for the season, so that my labor of months of preparation was worthless. The shock of the news took my breath, but there was no mistaking the stress with which Hannigan put the information.

"You'll have to beat it, and beat it quick," was the way of his announcement; "tomorrow it'll be too late."

I was considerably astonished, and I showed it. Hannigan and I had been on terms for years—since I had done him a favor he couldn't overlook. That's why he was giving me this information.

"Why so ugly, old man? What's biting you?" I wanted to know.

Before he replied, Hannigan took a careful survey about us, which in itself spelled the seriousness of the business. We were standing on the corner of Eleventh street and Avenue A and it was early afternoon. Then he told me that a new crowd at Headquarters were up and ripping every precedent in two. A score of captains had walked the plank that morning, and every man on the force was facing orders that shook him in his boots. To clean up the town of the "gents" in my profession was the first and biggest on the list. It dazed me and I felt pretty bad—not against Hannigan; he had done a mighty friendly thing in giving me the tip; it was more than a lot of the other boys would get.

So I wandered over to the Bohemian district, where the cafés dotted the avenue. I entered Kunne's and dropped into a chair to think it over In a minute the coffee steamed pungently on the little round table before me, and after the third cup I began to recover my nerve. But when I tried to figure up my immediate prospects I realized more hopelessly than before that there weren't any I drew out of my inner pocket the elaborated list in which I had taken such a pride and groaned inwardly as I glanced it over Months of wearisome toil had been put into those pages, and now there would be nothing to show for it—absolutely nothing. I savagely ripped the sheets across several times and flung them into the street. One or two fragments fluttered near me on the floor and I regarded them moodily, then I hunched back into my chair, screened from the passerby by a double row of potted plants, and tried to think it out.

Hannigan's advice was good under this new police *regime* I know I stood a good chance of being picked up by any one of a score of "plain-clothes" cops who had been itching to get their hands on me for at least a couple of years, if for no other reason than to swell their records. That they had not

been able to fasten any specific "trick" on me during this time was due to various reasons. I am no squealer, so I'll have to let those reasons go at that. But this thing of being pushed to get away in a rush like this—a thousand miles or so before I'd find another field to suit me—it was a mighty cold-blooded proposition to be up against.

I counted up my money—fifty-five dollars and a handful of change—that wouldn't carry me far—and a twenty of this Hannigan himself had slipped me without even asking me if I needed it. It was decent of Hannigan, and I'd square it some of these days. I was trying to figure out where some of this money would land me via the midnight Western Express, when a couple entered the café whom I knew pretty well, though they didn't associate with my class. One was a prize-fighter, "Reddy the Pug," and the other his manager. I didn't care to be noticed right then, so I ducked into another chair in a corner behind some potted plants, which screened me from where they sat. "Reddy" started to talk in a moment.

"Well, then it's fixed," he was saying. "We spar in the first, I hit the floor twice in the second, take the count of nine in the third, and bust his jaw in the fourth with a left hook. Is that right?" His manager kept tally and nodded, and after a little more detail they got up and went away.

The thing disgusted me. Somewhere "Reddy" was going to fight, and it was being "fixed." He was to look like a loser so that his backers would get good odds for their money in the second round and third, and in the fourth round "Reddy" would up and knock the other man out—all cut and dried—for a price. Bah! a dirty game which gave the loser no chance at all and too much like robbing an infant to suit my taste.

But I had my own troubles to think about. So far as I could see, Hannigan's advice to "get" was good, but I hadn't fully settled this in my mind when a boy came in, passing around with the afternoon edition of the "News." I took a copy, and there, across the face of the front page, in block type, an account of an early morning burglary, around a cut of my own likeness, stared me in the face. The police on the job had found an imaginary trace of my own delicate handiwork in the business—and all this though I had not been within a mile of the place. Things were certainly getting hot for me, and it was no longer a simple case of getting away, but to keep clear of four thousand "cops" until I had a chance to do so.

I read the article over again, and it made me feel disgusted. The burglar had entered the place by the sash and jimmy method, a thing which I had never in a good many years dirtied my hands to do, simply because I found out that I didn't have to. I did my work exclusively in the "stone-front" district, the nifty residences along the exclusive West Side avenues; the kind who barred the basement windows like a safety vault and left the front door open. It was so easy—just a few days' observation as to who was coming out and going in, to catch them turning a handle instead of using a key, and then the goods were as good as mine, not once in ten times did I make a mistake, and when I did there were twenty ways of getting clear A decent-looking gentleman in evening clothes, with evidences of slight intoxication, has strayed into the wrong house too many a time these days to make my plan a difficult proposition, and I had studied well to act the part when necessary, it hadn't failed me.

So here I was, almost strapped, and hunted, and put to my wits to quit the city before another morning without a chance for another "strike." Without a chance? Was I, though? Instantly I figured out the risk. Why not? It was as safe as it ever was, and it tickled my fancy to think of getting away with a neat little haul in the face of the entire police force and the story printed there on the front of the "News."

A scrap of paper fluttered toward my feet—one of the bits of paper I had flung into the street when I destroyed my

memorandum book. The writing on one side turned up when it struck my shoe, and I read the address of one of the choice places I had on my list.

"By Jimminy! it's a sign!" said I, picking up the bit of paper and slipping it into my vest-pocket; I would make that place a call.

About nine in the evening I stepped into the vestibule of one of the most beautiful residences facing the drive along the river, and I experienced for a moment the usual palpitation of the heart I never could suppress at such a time. Then I caught the expression of my face in the French plate mirror at the side and steadied myself, grimly settling my dress-coat a little better upon my shoulders. I entered the dimly-lighted hallway, there was no one to oppose me. It was clearly another lucky strike for me. I moved swiftly into the reception room, through the music and the dining rooms, not a sound. When I stood still to listen, I heard, very far off it seemed, the murmur of domestics somewhere in the rear In the gloom I caught the dull sheen of beautiful heavy plate on the sideboard, I pulled out a drawer or two and inspected longingly the solid sterling. But I did not want to load up with that kind of stuff unless I had to, first, I would inspect the rooms above to see what else offered.

I had barely reached the top of the carpeted stairway when the opening of the front hall door below tingled through me from head to foot. A young fellow, two, three, half a dozen—a whole crowd of them came piling in amid a babel of conversation and laughter—all in evening dress. I caught it all in one glance before I sped silently up another stairway, bolted for the first open door at hand and shut it behind me. It closed with a spring catch, that much time gained anyhow before it would be opened. I was in a bed-room—a man's bed-room. I tried the connecting doors to other rooms and found them locked.

It felt most uncomfortably like a trap and the door into the hallway was the only way out. But when I had pulled back the catch, I let it slide to again, noiselessly The crowd of young fellows were coming up to that floor, and, I instantly divined, toward that very room. To make sure, I waited until I heard the turn of the handle and heard the chink of keys. Then I stepped into a roomy wardrobe close at hand and drew the door almost shut. A foot or so from the top there was the usual broad shelf and I drew myself up onto this carefully—not an easy task even for a man in my good physical condition. The shelf held nothing but a square card-board box at one end, and a folded rug at the other The latter I worked up under my shoulders and stretched out almost at full length, my shoes lightly resting on top of the cardboard box.

The crowd trooped into the room, laughing and joking, and one of them came over and leaned against the wardrobe door, pressing it shut. I "blessed" him under my breath when I began to stifle in the close air.

I gathered from their talk that the youngest son of the house, Dick Braxton, who I had figured on as being out of the city with the rest of the Braxton family, had got this crowd together for a little fling, but the nature of the "stag" I did not divine until I caught the name of "Reddy," after which I was so interested that I almost forgot to lay still. Then I learned that the fight—the very same fight which "Reddy" had "fixed" in Kunne's Café that afternoon—was to be pulled off in one of the rooms below, and that "Reddy's" opponent was the "Boston Bruiser," another dirty third-rate slugger, as I had reason to know While they were talking I heard the dull pounding from below, where they were laying down the canvas and setting up the "ring."

Then they were talking bets on the fight. I wondered where Braxton stood in the business, though I made up my mind instantly that he was not in the "fixing." He was a wild young fellow and all that, but with a reputation of being a dyed-in-the-wool, clean sport

After a little while someone with a high, thin voice offered him two to one on "Reddy," at which Braxton laughed and replied that he'd size the men up first, and the high, thin voice went on make a couple of bets with some of the other fellows. Up to this time they were all sitting in the dark. Some one asked about the gloves.

"I've got them right here," came Braxton's voice, and the wardrobe door swung open. I felt a hand fumble at the pasteboard box. Up went my feet, suspended in the air Another voice asked if he wanted a light.

"No," returned Braxton with a laugh, "I don't want a light to show in the house tonight; we're not at home," at which there was a general explosion of merriment. The pasteboard box was withdrawn, the door swung shut, and I began to breathe again.

My cramped position had become very painful, until at last parts of my circulation stopped and left me numb. I was rapidly drifting into lethargy, the voices in the room were becoming jumbled, and my brain refused to respond when I tried to follow the conversation. I was dully cognizant of the shuffling of many feet, and then a stillness brought me to with a shock—the crowd had left the room. I dropped clumsily down from the shelf and almost out on the floor It was some time before I could get to my feet.

The room was strewn with top-coats, hats and canes and gloves. My own hat was lying up there crushed on the shelf, so I tried them on until I found a fit. Just at this moment someone hurriedly entered again from the hall. I turned to face him in the gloom, but did not move for I knew that he could see me outlined against the flickering street lights that came in through a window. He stopped abruptly.

"Hello?" asked Braxton's voice. "I thought we were all down, I forgot the gloves—"

"I'm looking for my cigar case," I answered evenly; for it flashed over me in a moment that I was in evening dress (he would see enough to make that out), and he had taken me to be one of his party.

"Yes," he queried, "did you find it?" and he came nearer

"They are smashed," I observed, as before.

"Here, have some of mine," he quickly offered, and I felt rather than saw him hold them out in his hand as he came very close. I took them and thanked him off hand.

"Here's a light," he added in the same breath, and a match flared up an instant. I could not help but recognize that I was cleverly caught even at the moment when the light went out and I felt my wrist in a clutch which twisted it peculiarly behind my back. I knew enough about that twist to be aware that if I tried to struggle he would simply break my arm. I laughed dryly

"All right, Mr Braxton," I observed, "you win. You need not make any noise," for I thought he might call for help.

"Come out into the hall," he said, still holding me, and we moved out to the head of the stair where a hanging lamp shed a dull glow

"How did you get in? What's your name? Though I needn't ask that," he queried.

"Walked in," I answered simply, "and you know the rest." I felt instinctively that the only thing to do was to be perfectly frank.

"Coming, Braxton?" somebody called from below

"Just a minute!" he called down; then to me, "Will you stand?"

I nodded, and he released his hold and I leaned, facing him, with my back to the wall. He pondered for a little while.

"I don't know what the deuce to do with you," he observed at length. "I don't want any police around tonight—"

"Say, Mr. Braxton," I suddenly interposed, for I had been thinking diligently, "you've got a private fight between 'Reddy' and the 'Boston Bruiser' coming off below"—he never twitched an eyelid—"What if I tell you that you and

your friends are going to back the 'Bruiser,' and that you haven't a chance to win?" He looked me steadily in the eye.

"You mean?" asked he.

"It's fixed," said I. He did not reply, but held me for a moment with that long, steady look, puffing at a cigar. From below came impatient murmuring

"How do you know?" was his expected query

I asked him for a pencil and bit of paper, he proffered the back of an envelope. I wrote down the sequence of the fight-to-be exactly as I had heard it from "Reddy's" lips.

He glanced it over "My God!" I heard him whisper. "And in my own house, too!" and I knew I had scored.

"I say, Braxton, we're waiting, don't you know," floated up that high-pitched, thin voice from the bottom of the stair, and I instantly recognized the chap and that it was he who was doing the dirty work. I had seen him hanging around my district in company with "Reddy's" manager for many a day.

"He's the one," I mentioned to Braxton, quietly, though he had not asked me anything, and I knew by the glint in his eye that he understood.

"Coming, Avery!" he answered, shortly, and, turning to me, put his hand on my arm. I understood the suggestion and we went down together where the fellow, Avery, waited for us.

"Friend of mine I didn't expect—Mr Benton," mentioned Braxton, casually, introducing me.

"Ah, yes!" said Avery, touching my fingers. 'But, I say, Braxton," turning to him and appearing a little anxious, "don't you intend to go in on this tonight?" He waved a betting card.

"Plenty of time," observed Braxton, leading the way toward the rear of the house. Avery's anxiety visibly increased.

"I say," he protested, "be a sport, old man. I'm laying two to one against the "Bruiser"—I'll go you evens it don't go five rounds."

Braxton laughed quietly, but I noticed a peculiar ring in the laugh, and I felt very happy. If Braxton had doubted my story, the other man was certainly making it good.

He opened the door, and we stepped into a glare of white light, blinding us at first. I gradually made out through a smoke haze the canvas screens over the windows, even over the walls; the whole room looked like the interior of a canvas box. On the floor had been pitched a portable ten-foot "ring," with well-padded surface and posts; over in a far corner were grouped the "pugs," stripped for action; their handlers and Braxton's friends were crowded around. A sandy-haired, young fellow had been picked to act as referee.

A general growl of satisfaction greeted us at our entrance, and they scattered around the ropes. Braxton threw the gloves into the ring, nodded to one or two of the fellows near by, indicated me with a bob of his head and mentioned the name he had given me. The handlers of "Reddy" and the "Bruiser" took the gloves and attended to their men in their corners. In a few moments the preliminaries were done, the sandy-haired, young fellow from the centre of the ring looked tentatively at Braxton for the word.

"Just a moment, Tommy," Braxton said to him. He folded over the envelope on which I had written and reached it out to him while every one looked on.

"Just slip it in your pocket," added Braxton, "until I want it."

Then the "Bruiser" and "Reddy" were at it. At the end of the first round it was an even thing, to all appearances it was a round viciously fought. The betting about the room was general, Avery's offer of two to one being snapped up by half a dozen. A pink tinge was growing in his cheeks, and he was growing visibly excited at the success of his deal.

Round two opened up and "Reddy" went to the floor Up and spar, and clinch and shift; then down he went again until the intermission. The backers of the "Bruiser" were jubilant. Avery met their offers eagerly; his voice came taunting across the ring at

Braxton. At the close of the third round it was the same. I knew by the way that Braxton's hand trembled where he held me by the arm that he was hard pressed not to end the matter then and there.

"A thing like that—and in my own house, too!" he kept repeating, under his breath, when he wasn't pressing his very white lips together

Round four began with the men slugging incessantly away, which lasted for a full minute, then the "Bruiser" sent "Reddy" back against the ropes with a heavy swing to the head. It was a much heavier blow than he intended. "Reddy's" knees kinked under him, and but for the ropes he would have gone to the floor. The cold perspiration broke all over me, if the thing was to go wrong now, by a fluke or otherwise, I was done for I felt the sudden twitch of Braxton's hand and his fingers pinched me, and I knew the thought which actuated it. Then came the relief as "Reddy" braced up, lunged forward with the rebound from the ropes, whipped his fist against the "Bruiser's" face and dropped him. It was the end, I knew, before the sandy-haired Tommy began the count of ten.

"That will do, Tommy!" Braxton's voice cut the stillness as the seconds were being counted off, he let go of me and climbed into the ring, his face was drawn and pale, excepting where the anger burned on his cheeks.

"Gentlemen! The bets are off!" he exclaimed to the crowd. Every one was thunderstruck, and Avery blazed up furiously

"What the dev—what kind of a game do you call this, Braxton!" he almost screamed.

"A crooked game, Avery," said Braxton, very distinctly "You have got the proof in your pocket. Tommy—the paper," he went on, turning to the referee. He took the folded envelope and passed it to Avery "Read it out—if you like," he told him.

Avery stared at it for a moment, then he cursed and struck it with his open hand.

"This is rot!" he burst out, but his lips quivered, and he didn't care to meet Braxton's look. "It's some damned clever guess, I tell you. I want my winnings, and I'll get them!"

"Not for to-night's work," returned Braxton, as quietly as before, "you have been getting a good many thousands out of me and my friends for the last six months, Avery, and you're not going to get any more. Do you understand?" He understood.

Avery, furiously livid, started for the door He just had voice enough to sputter:

"I wouldn't stay in this house another minute!"

"That's good!" commented Braxton, dryly, after him.

During this time the scrappers had been standing together, realizing that the game was up. They were a sorry-looking pair

"Hustle these men into their clothes, and get them out of here!" directed Braxton, sharply Then he came over to me and, with his hand on my shoulder, took me out of the room. Just as I turned I heard and exclamation and recognized "Reddy's" voice.

"There's a man in there who knows me, Mr Braxton," I said, quickly, when the door closed behind us, "the police are after me for a thing I didn't do, and I was trying to raise enough to get out of town——"

He stopped me with a short wave of his hand.

"I don't want to know anything about it," he said, as he walked me down to the front door But I was aware that he had known it all the time when I reached the vestibule. He slipped me a folded bill, a yellowback of decent denomination.

"Good-bye, Mr ——!" he said, calling me by the name which headed the burglary story in the evening editions of the press. "I hope I won't see you again!"

I glanced at my watch. There was just time for me to catch the express.

THE DOOR OPENS

By Homer Croy

AT twenty-two, Newton Seabury was a watch repairer in the Goodmay bookstore, at thirty-two, Newton Seabury was a watch repairer in the Goodmay bookstore; at forty-two, he still sat in the front window of the Goodmay bookstore, with a magnifying glass screwed into his left eye. He had never been out of Springville in his life.

He was a little, old morsel, carefully pleasant, with the droop to his shoulders of the man who spend a year-in-year-out life over a dull desk. Life was so little and so circled that it was numbly pleasant to him. On soggy, trying days, when old Mr. Goodmay snarled and snapped at his best customers, Newton Seabury was studiously and taxingly pleasant. His geniality grated. Flooded crossings and missing sidewalks were tinder to his fire of wit. His humor fluctuated in ratio to the humidity.

The window in which Seabury sat was in the front part of the store, next the street, where the light was strongest. All day he would sit drooped over his stool; when he nodded to a friend on the street the glistening magnifying glass bobbed up and down, making him look like a unicorn out of place. Friends would pause and rap on the window, making some jovial sign or shouting out a merry word. It took much of his time in shaking back cheerful greetings. So Mr Goodmay moved his desk back a few feet, and faced it against the wall He had many friends.

Many times each day he had to get up from his leather stool in the window and wait on bookstore customers, sometimes selling picture frames, often airguns, and sometimes writing tablets. But on nearly every sale he had to ask Mr Goodmay the price. His heart was in his own work.

One day Mr. Goodmay missed some money from his little cash box. The clerk disappeared that night. Mr. Goodmay was furious, and was determined that the young man should suffer a heavy penalty. Seabury tried to pacify the merchant. "He may not be guilty," said he. "He really isn't until it is proved, you know Always give a man the benefit of the doubt."

Sure enough, a few days later a customer brought back the bills that had been given to him in overchange. The clerk had only eloped.

"Ah!" impressed Seabury, when the incident was over. "Men are not bad animals. Always give a man a chance."

It was when he was thirty-two years old that Newton Seabury had his first love affair "Affair" is such a hard and prosaic word to use to record the rare meeting of two mated souls. It was with Miss Mary Skidmore, daughter of the postmaster She was her father's assistant, and sat the day long at the little stamp window, her blooming face like a flower heart set in petals of wood. She was wholesome, and had the cultured daintiness that is found in at least one young woman in every town, no difference how small and how lost the place may be.

After church, on Sundays, he would go with her to the postoffice and lounge inside over the papers, while she waited the hour at the window Then the two would stroll to her home, where they would spend the afternoon in quiet happiness. They were "made" for each other, as the Springville people expressed it. One Christmas, on the church tree, there was a china doll swinging on a forward limb labeled only with the words, "For Newt and Mary." It created a merry laugh.

But Mary died. It was a great shock to the lover. For a week his laboratory in the window had the glass cover down over it, when he returned he was so

haggard that Mr Goodmay urged him to take a month off. But Newton Seabury found solace in his work and stayed at his desk. In a year he was, apparently, himself again.

Time began to leave its pitiful trail over his face. Pronounced irregular streaks of gray sifted through his hair. His left eye was ringed with a red, swollen line, and the ball itself bulged a little from constant wearing of the magnifying glass. His lips were set in soft lines and seemed incapable of hardening for biting words. Seabury boarded at Strawbridge's. It was the better class family boarding home of Springville. The superintendent of the public schools, the editor of the one daily, the leading photographer and his wife, with other dignitaries, were the regular boarders. Promptly at noon, Newton would pull out his eye-piece, lay off his office coat and set out for Strawbridge's. If the superintendent arrived early he would always wait for Seabury that they might talk over their cups; the editor, who had to hurry away early, always managed to get a word with him on the porch. It made the afternoon more cheery

For forty-two years Time had torn off the months from his calendar without rumpling the edge of one with an event out of the routine. The moving finger seemed to be legibly writing that his zodiacal groove led to a comfortable grave, unforked. Old age crept on him. But the only change it succeeded in making was the physical. It was a peaceful, placid withering.

The photographer and the editor often took advantage of the optician's good nature by playing tricks on him. Throckmorton was so full of life that he was always glad of something to turn his wits to when outside his dull little picture shop. Mrs. Throckmorton, always quiet, would have to check with glances and commands, when in their own room, her husband's fun loving proclivities.

"What makes you impose on him so?" she asked her husband one evening as they sat alone. "He doesn't deserve it."

"A person so simple and innocent ought to be wakened up once in a while," he laughed, turning to his paper.

Seabury had one violent prejudice. It did not seem quite in keeping that Seabury should have a will of his own strong enough to form a dislike for anything. But it was for nothing more human than a lump of sugar. The editor and the photographer would watch their chance and drop sugar into Seabury's coffee. It was in the boyish, merry spirit though of understanding friends.

"Ah, I caught you that time," Seabury would say, tapping the surreptitious hand as he passed the cup to the girl for another filling; or, "There, there, you did not fool me that time."

One night the editor and Throckmorton sat alone in the former's room. "Isn't Seabury a pitiful, innocent old duck?" said the editor "I sometimes wish I had some of his easy-going, childish nature. But he's happier than some of us who have lived life in the raw."

"Do you suppose we could stir him up? I don't think he ever had a more thrilling experience in his life than running to a livery stable fire."

"I know what," exclaimed the editor with inspiration. "Let's play a real joke on him. Let's write a letter to him telling him that his past is known, that it's all up."

"A past—old Seabury with a past!" exploded Throckmorton. "He has about as much of a past as a china doll just crated at the factory. A fellow can't have a past without a woman being in it, you know. Seabury can't take a cup of coffee from Hettie Strawbridge without reddening to his ears. But all right, I'm in for it, just to see what he will do."

It was planned that the photographer should typewrite a line on his machine at the office, without any clue as to the sender's identity, then mail the letter. Together they worded the note: "All is known. Your relations with Her have been discovered. What are you going to do about it?"

"Now we will sign it 'S' for sugar," said the photographer, with glistening eye. "It'll be such a good joke when

we explain to the rest of them at the table." The two laughed with suppressed breath until they had to lean weakly back in their chairs. Across the hall Seabury was humming a merry little tune in rhythm to his rocking chair.

The following day the editor and Throckmorton were back early to lunch; each ran over the mail on the mantle in the Strawbridge sitting room, and each glanced at the other with twinkling eye. Seabury came rocking up the front steps on his cramped legs, chucked little Hettie Strawbridge under the chin, came inside, and took out his own letters. With legs stretched out in the big rocking chair, he slit open the envelopes with his penknife. The two jokesters were sadly disappointed that there was not the slightest flicker of surprise on his face. But they did not put sugar in his coffee that noon. After lunch, as he had done a thousand times before, Seabury lighted his pipe, talked generally a few minutes, then trudged back to his work just as he had done the day before, and the day before that, and days before innumerable.

At the table that evening the editor and Throckmorton were going to throw out some hint about the mysterious letter They carefully planned just how it should be led up to. If sugar in his coffee would arouse him certainly a threat of this kind would. They felt sure that they could ruffle him a bit there before all the boarders. They would not let him get the best of the joke by never mentioning it. They anxiously waited for him.

But the optician did not come back to supper. He was never seen again.

* * * * * *

The photographer never did understand why his wife so violently quarreled with him a week later, and then sued for divorce. "She used to be so quiet and even-tempered," he complained wearily one day to the editor. "I miss her very much."

THE UNKNOWN POWER

By J Mac Richard

THE Paris-Brussels express was nearing Compiegne, the last stop before Paris. An English gentleman had boarded the train at Terguier He was on the seat with me. We were alone in the coach, the seat opposite was vacant.

When the train stopped at Campiegne the door was flung open and a valise was poised in the opening, letting in the icy air of one of the worst days known to France. In Russia such weather is expected; in Paris it is out of place and an insult to the local endurance. The Englishman scowled.

"Please close the door," said I, politely.

"Shut that door!" roared the Englishman.

The valise was shoved in, and a man six feet tall, muscular and aggressive, climbed into the coach and fell upon the cushions opposite the Englishman.

"Shut that door!" repeated the Englishman.

"Whom are you talking to?" retorted the newcomer.

The cavalry sabre, showing hilt and point between the folds of an army cloak, gave me the impression that he was a soldier

The Englishman rose, slammed the door to and, returning to his seat, fixed his glassy eyes on the soldier.

"Boor!" he growled

An oath answered him, and the valise was landed close to me on the seat. I paid no attention to the aggression.

The soldier drew out his watch, wound and set it, and said, in a high, somewhat nasal voice:

"I'll settle you presently!"

"All aboard!" cried the guard, and we started. I had no means of fathoming the Briton's mind, but his appearance indicated calm.

When we were flying past brown fields the young man said, with exaggerated courtesy:

"My impression is that I caught the word 'boor'

"Your impression is correct," answered the Briton. "I called you a boor."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the soldier raised his hand and slapped him on the cheek. I expected the Englishman to take the soldier by the throat; but he did nothing of the kind. He made an almost imperceptible motion with his foot, and I saw what I shall not forget.

The alert, quarrelsome fellow of the instant before sat before us like a paralytic, powerless, all but lifeless. It was evident that he was in agony verging on madness. His arms and legs twitched violently; his eyes bulged; his teeth chattered, and a strange, gasping noise escaped his lips. I sprang to my feet. My impulse was to help him, but the Briton stopped me.

"Do not touch him!" he said, peremptorily. "No one can release him but me. He deserves all he is getting, he has acted like a dog. Next time he will know how to conduct himself before a gentleman."

"Mercy! Mercy!" moaned the soldier. The words were hardly audible.

"So be it!" said the Englishman. "But take care! Next time you will not get off so easily." He moved his foot and a look of supreme relief passed over the face of his victim.

Freed from an appalling and mysterious power, the soldier fell back upon his cushions, covered his face with his hands and sat as if annihilated. After a long silence he spoke:

"Did I dream it, or was it real?"

"It was no dream," answered the Briton. "You will remember Sir John Mexton, I fancy"

"If *you* are Sir Mexton I shall," answered the incorrigible.

"Ha! What is that? Look out! Do not tempt me," said the Briton, and as I looked curiously at his feet he said, addressing me·

"You Americans are not the only inventors." He put one leg over the other and pointed to his toe. "You see those two metallic points?"

"Yes."

"My power lies there. Do not approach me. Those apparently insignificant bits of metal are the contacts of an awful force. The electric current is fed by batteries fixed in the heel of the shoe, and the shocks felt by our friend, the General, were discharges produced by two poles communicating through his body I regard this as the invention of the age. I am now on my way to Paris with two pairs of shoes—one made for presentation to the Emperor of Germany, the other ordered by an Italian politician, who is to offer them to his King. The Academy of Sciences of France is to inspect my invention before I deliver the shoes to their royal proprietors."

I am always skeptical. On that occasion I said to myself: "This Mexton is no English milord, he is a drummer for some manufacturer of electrical appliances; but he is no ordinary drummer—his demonstrations are convincing. Seized by longing to render myself invincible, I asked

"How do you sell your shoes?"

"They are two hundred francs a pair, but they would be cheap at any price."

The soldier had recovered himself.

"You are right," said he. "In this age of crime nothing is too dear if it guarantees a man against thugs. Why not sell a pair to me and send another pair to William?"

"And," said I, "why not sell me a pair and send another pair to the King of Italy?"

"I will on one condition," said Mexton. "Pledge your words as gentlemen not to wear the shoes publicly until after I notify you that I have shown my invention to the Academy of Sciences and presented the shoes ordered for the two sovereigns."

We agreed. We pledged our words

as gentlemen to keep the agreement, and Mexton sold us the electric shoes.

The remainder of the ride was delightful. The Colonel sang a marching song. Mexton brought out a bottle of old *Eau-de-Vie de Marc,* and he and I played a game of cards (I losing fifty francs to him).

So the Colonel and I landed in Paris fitted out for the defense *in extremis.* Mexton stopped at the newstand. The Colonel started for his club, where he was to dine before driving to Mont Valerien. (He was in command of the post.) I was on my way to the Continental, on foot, when a carriage passed me. In it were two men with heads together, laughing as if to split their throats. It was, "Ha, ha, ha!" and "Ha, ha, ha!!" The Colonel and John Mexton—no mistaking either of them!

I went to my room in the hotel, dressed, slipped my feet into my thug-distancers and sallied into the public dining room. I considered that a safer place for my experiment than in the open street. (I could hardly have hope to run up to a man, kick his shins and yet remain at large.)

I took my place at a table with two men. In the midst of the meal I moved first one foot, then the other The man on my right glared and drew his chair a foot away from me. The man on my left, leaning toward me until his long hair brushed my nose, whispered, fiercely:

"When you're done prodding my leg with your damned cowcatcher, come out into the back yard and I'll put a bullet through you!"

My blood curdled. Buffalo Bill's Wild West show was in Paris, and I had just happened to test my electricity on one of the cowboys. I caught the deadly gleam of an eye like a needle.

"Pardon me!" I gasped, convulsively. "I feel ill."

"You look it!" he sneered. "I advise you to go out and cool your head!"

I rose from the table and crept away.

Fifty dollars out of pocket, forty dollars for the shoes and ten dollars lost at cards to Mexton.

I had made a fool of myself, been the dupe of sharpers and passed for a hysterical coward. The shoes were no good in any way, shape or manner! I tried to wear them—I wanted to get *some* good for my money—the first rain turned them to pulp.

THE PICTURE THAT TOLD A LIE

By Robert Rudd

MRS. PHELPS was an impressionable, little, old lady, mentally sensitive to the slightest change in the weather When the sky was bright and sunny, she was bright and sunny, when the sky was overcast and gloomy, she was overcast and gloomy. Therefore, it was only natural that a wet, dismal Spring should have put Mrs. Phelps in a wet, dismal frame of mind. Subconsciously searching around for something tangible with which to justify this depression, she settled upon her son, William. This, too, was only natural.

When William, upon graduation from a little fresh-water college in the next town, had announced his intention of going into newspaper work in New York, Mrs. Phelps, in her mild, unconvincing way, had vaguely protested.

"Give the boy a chance, mother," her husband told her, bluffly. "What did we send him to college for? You wouldn't want him to hang around here all his life and live off his parents, like them Abbott boys, would you?"

"I suppose you're right, Daniel, but somehow—oh, I don't know, but——"

"Pshaw, mother! The boy's all right."

As usual, Mrs. Phelps gave in, and Daniel, manlike, thought that that ended the matter That had been almost two years before this damp, dismal Spring. In that time the boy had done well. There was no doubt of that. He no longer referred to newspaper work as journalism, and he was getting twenty-five dollars a week, with a promise that he would soon be put on space.

But it was not his material welfare that caused Mrs. Phelps worry She knew, as mothers always do, that her boy was bright and could succeed. But, oh, New York! Of course, it wasn't like the play she had seen that time with Daniel, but —oh, if her boy had only shown a natural bent for the hardware business, like his father However, all of this she kept to herself. Daniel would have laughed at her

Long, gray hours, while her husband was down at his store in the village, she would sit, moodily gazing at the portrait that hung over the bookcase between the parlor windows. It was a crude pen-and-ink sketch of William, made by the newspaper artist with whom he roomed. William had fitted it into an old frame and sent it on to her for Christmas. It made him rather more solemn looking than did the smiling photograph in the family album, but in a very few lines it brought out that vital something that a camera lens so often fails to see in a person.

Occasionally Miss Sprunt, who seemed to derive her only happiness in life by taking the happiness from other people's lives, would drop in for an afternoon cup of tea, and sympathetically expand upon the temptations and pitfalls of the wicked city

"I should think you'd be worried nigh unto death with your boy down there all alone—and a newspaper reporter, too! Now, there was Ed Updike——" Then when she saw the tears beginning to glisten in poor, little Mrs. Phelps' eyes she would break off with some such unconvincing sop as, "But, of course, with your William, dear, it may be different."

One evening at supper, when Mrs. Phelps was more than usually low-spirited—Miss Sprunt had been in to see her that afternoon—she half confided her fears to her husband.

"And Daniel," she concluded, "even if William couldn't find anything congenial to do around here, it isn't as if he really *had* to work for a living."

Daniel's rough assurances that the lad was able to take care of himself were anything but sympathetic, and served merely to make the mother keep her doubts to herself.

Supper over, Mr. Phelps buried himself in his weekly paper, and Mrs. Phelps took up her work and pretended to knit. From time to time she glanced furtively at the picture over the bookcase. After a while the monotonous pat-pat of the rain upon the roof got on her nerves and her knitting fell to her lap. If Daniel could only understand, she told herself. She hazily pictured New York as a great, roaring, relentless whirlpool of scarlet sin, centering about her struggling, but helpless, Will. Red demons of drunkenness and gambling; demons of women—such women!—clutched at him frantically to drag him down. Instinctively she glanced up at his portrait. She shuddered. The sinful scarlet of her mental picture seemed reflected in the portrait of her boy

She rubbed her eyes to clear the scarlet haze from them, and, half fearfully, looked again. She gasped. A sensual, red dancing girl had faintly but certainly insinuated herself into the picture and had hopelessly enmeshed the all-unconscious William in her toils. For a few moments Mrs. Phelps was dumb with horror

"Daniel."

There was something strangely calm in her voice that made it more alarming than if she had shrieked.

Daniel dropped his paper with a start.

"Well?" he demanded, sharply Her face was deathly white. He followed the direction of her gaze. As his eye fell on the portrait of William, he, too, started slightly.

"Humph!" He strode over to the bookcase and yanked the picture from the wall.

"Oh, Daniel!" Mrs. Phelps said, faintly. Daniel, do—do you see it, too?"

"See it?" repeated Daniel, roughly. He felt the wall with his open hand. It was damp. He ripped the backing off the picture. "See it? Of course, I see it!" He scooped the soggy padding out of the frame and triumphantly shook it open so that his wife could see. It was an old Sunday newspaper supplement, and it pictured a very startling dancing girl in very vivid red. "With this sort of a spring you can see most any old thing except good, honest sunshine." He went over to her and placed his hand tenderly on her shoulder "Pack up to-morrow, mother. We'll run down to New York for a couple of weeks and see if we can't get the dampness out of our minds."

BEST OF ALL

By W. Carey Wonderly

IT was Friday—"Glory Friday," the advertisements in the great dailies called it—and all the long morning an eager, bargain-hunting crowd had packed the store. Holton, King & Company's "Glory Fridays" were justly famous, after a fashion, and when, as on this memorable day, the firm gave free with each purchase double crimson coupons—one hundred coupons a jeweled comb for the hair, or five hundred coupons a silver shaving mug for "father" or "husband"—there was simply no holding back the people. They carried everything before them, thick as ants upon a sand-hill.

Elsie Conway, of the music department, was thoroughly tired. During the slight let-up around two o'clock, when the morning shoppers had returned home and the afternoon crowds had not arrived yet, she left her department and strolled over for a few moments' chat with a friend at the ribbon counter.

"I'm all played out, Mame," she said, in a listless voice, adjusting her elaborate pompadour. "Honest, I feel like a good, long sleep would do me good."

"We had one fierce push here this morning," returned her friend. "Black velvet ribbon at twelve and a half, mind you! It's all the go this year, too. I was just mobbed."

"It's awful!" said Elsie, with a shrug. "There I was, playing that 'Merry Widow' thing over and over again, until it makes me sick to see the cover of it. We're selling an elegant new coon song, too, for nine cents, 'I Likes a Little Bit of Everything.' It's got a real catchy tune." And she hummed a few bars.

"Has it?" replied Mame. "But, then, coon songs ain't classy any more; I like the kind about moonlight and arbors and such. By the way, is Mr Holmes going to take you to the social to-night?"

"I guess we'll go," nodded Elsie. "But the fact is, if I'm rushed again this afternoon, I'll have to cut out all the waltzes, and Mr. Holmes does waltz grand. Well, I guess I'll be going back. I see Sellman looking at us."

"Oh, that man!" Mame made a gesture of dissent. "The airs he gives himself, and him nothing but a poor floorwalker, like your Mr. Holmes. He's my idea of a perfect gentleman. Well, in a little while you'll be leaving us, anyway, I guess, so what's the difference if old Sellman does look black at you? And you'll be the third girl friend of mine at Holton, King's, Elsie, to get married this year."

Elsie Conway smiled prettily. "Perhaps you'll be next after me, dear," she said. "I hope you will."

"Can't tell," giggled Mame, coyly, as Elsie went back to her own department.

She was a charmingly pretty girl, this Elsie Conway, with dark hair and very blue eyes and a white and pink complexion. She dressed well, too, and in good

taste, for she studied the clothes of the better class of shoppers and copied them. In fact, her good looks had brought her the coveted position at the music counter, where the duties were light and prettiness to be courted.

As she entered her department she heard her assistant at the piano, playing a new waltz song from the comic opera success.

"I hope Sadie ain't selling that for nine cents," she thought, half fearfully "Mercy! I guess they would fight for it at that price. Sadie," she raised her voice, "'The Lovesick Crocodile' is twenty-one cents, remember."

"I know, Miss Elsie," called back the assistant, without turning from the piano.

Elsie stepped behind the counter and took up a handful of music, stopping to rearrange it before the afternoon rush began. Suddenly a gay, little laugh called her name and a vision in purple danced before her gaze.

"Elsie Conway, don't you know me?"

Elsie glanced up at the intruder Then·

"Belle!" she cried. "How are you? I was thinking of you this blesed minute!" She leaned forward, craned her neck and kissed her visitor upon the cheek. "And you do look grand, too!"

"Yes, it is pretty nice, isn't it?" nodded Belle, turning to view herself in a mirror. "But, oh, my dear, I've got just loads of nice clothes now. Actresses must look smart, you know."

"You always were clever, Belle," declared Elsie, mistaking the other's use of the word. "Why, when you worked here everybody said you were too smart for a saleslady, and you ought to be a typewriter or something like that."

"Oh, well, that's all done with now," shrugged Belle. "There's nothing like the profesh—I could never do anything else after being on the stage, my dear."

"You don't have 'Glory Fridays,' do you?" sighed Elsie, and then she laughed, a little ashamed of herself. "But I do hate to be mobbed—people just fighting for music that's been marked down."

"Oh, I know," sympathized Belle. "Why, didn't I work here four years—bang that very piano? We did used to have fun, though," and she laughed gaily at the memory. "Mercy me—yes!"

"I know I'm dead tired of it," said Elsie. She caught up a lot of music and stacked it angrily. "Honest, it's a dog's life."

Belle Davidson glanced at her from under her long, black lashes. Belle was a magnificent creature—tall, svelte and brunette. As a shopgirl at Holton, King's, she had been literally worshipped by the other saleswomen, and now as a showgirl with a big musical piece, she graced the front row and wore expensive gowns, as if to the manner born. She was clever in a way, good-hearted and generous, and since her debut in the theatrical world she had kept her eyes open and learned a thing or two. Belle Davidson was worldly wise.

"You're not happy, are you?" she asked, presently "You feel pretty sick of all this, eh?"

"Well, I'm tired of it—it's a dog's life," repeated Elsie, with a wry grimace.

"I know—I've been there myself," nodded Belle, shrewdly. She picked up a highly colored sheet of music and, opening it, pointed to the words of the chorus. "This is in our show. We—the other showgirls and myself—wear beautiful yellow and green costumes, all scaly with gold spangles. The ponies—the small girls, you know—are dressed to look like little crocodiles. It goes this way.

"'Try as she might through the starry night,
She never could beguile;
Oh, the wise, old moon refused to spoon
With the lovesick crocodile!'

We always get five or six encores—it goes big."

"It must be pretty," said Elsie, with a trace of envy in her voice. "Honest, Belle, you are mighty lucky, all of us girls are still slaving out our lives in a department store."

Miss Davidson shrugged her shoulders. "Well, if I hadn't tried I'd have been here yet, too. Why, you are pretty, Elsie," she cried; "pretty and can sing.

You'd make a swell pony. Now, don't think I'm advising, my dear, I'm only suggesting."

"Do you mean, Belle——" cried Elsie, clasping her hands. "But, of course, you don't. Nobody would engage me. An actress——"

"I don't know," said Belle, cautiously "Come down to the theatre to-night and see the boss. I'll tell him a thing or two, and maybe—I say, maybe——"

"Oh, Belle!" cried the girl, with a little catch in her voice. "I am so dead sick of this—Glory Fridays, bargain days, marked-down sales, crimson coupons—the stage is better."

"Better! Gracious me! Much better, dear," laughed Belle. "You come down to-night, about seven o'clock, say I'll get there early, and 'his Nibs' is always there early. Now don't forget. Stage entrance. *Au revoir!*"

Elsie watched the showgirl sail down the aisle with breathless interest. She saw how the salespeople at the various counters watched her and commented upon her appearance. And perhaps she, Elsie Conway, would sail down the aisle in just that same manner, and the shop-girls at Holton, King's would make notes of her gown and hat.

Elsie remembered, with flushing cheeks, the nine days' sensation at the "store" when Belle Davidson, of the music department, had calmly made known her intention of going on the stage. All the other girls were speechless with admiration and wonder and envy; all the other girls had declared that they, too, would leave the store for the theatre, but none of the others had ever done it. She, Elsie Conway, would be the first since Belle to leave behind the Glory Fridays and seek the laurel crown.

She decided not to tell Mame, over in the ribbon department. Mame was plain of features and could never hope to wear either the green, scaly costumes or the crocodile disguise in a big musicale comedy. Mame was impossible as a candidate for the stage.

A little later the afternoon rush began in earnest, and from three until six Elsie and her assistant had scarcely time to think. Men, women and children pulled and turned the music, demanded the price of this or that, fought for the bargains, and went off triumphantly with their double crimson coupons. But for once Elsie scarcely heeded them. Graciously, she played over on the piano every piece of music requested; a hundred times she answered that the 'Crocodile' song was twenty-one cents and the 'Widow' nine, she gave purchasers the double coupons without being asked. For, she kept repeating to herself, in a little while it would be all over with, and there would be a new girl in the music department at Holton, King & Company's. She pitied Mame, over in the ribbon department; she pitied her assistant, Sadie. Never would they enter the gates of Fairyland—a real actress, with lovely frocks and hats, a life filled with lights and music and applause!

"It's awful standing in a store all day," she declared, sympathetically, as she watched the salespeople. Already it seemed to her as she were out of the picture—merely an onlooker in fact. "No wonder Mame looks sour!"

When the great gong sounded at six o'clock and Sadie began to cover over all the music to an accompaniment of her own physical ailments and the gossip of a surprise party to which she was going that evening, Elsie nodded a curt good night and hurried away to the cloak room. She hadn't any time to spare, and she wanted to go home first and make a more becoming toilette before presenting herself at the theatre.

In the elevator, however, she met Mame and Fred Holmes. Holmes was a floorwalker. He earned a good salary, was a pleasant and agreeable young man, and he loved Elsie devotedly. They were to be married in the Spring. On Sunday afternoons the two would often amuse themselves by inspecting flats, furnishing them in imaginary splendor, planning, building.

Now Holmes looked at Elsie with a tender glance, all business gone from his mind with the striking of the closing gong.

"Tired?" he asked. "Been rushed, eh?"

Elsie sighed. "Indeed, I am. Bargain days are awful, Fred. I can hardly stand up."

"Oh, Elsie, ain't you going to the social then?" cried Mame, aghast.

"I really don't see how I can," began Elsie.

"If she's too tired, Miss Mamie, I guess she'd better not go," spoke up Holmes. "You mustn't get sick, you know, little girl," added Holmes, with a smile at Elsie.

"But the social!" cried Mame. "Oh, you mustn't miss it. I'm dead tired, too, Mr. Fred, but I'm never too tired to dance, I could die waltzing."

"How about it, Elsie?" asked Holmes.

"I don't think I'll go, Fred," Elsie decided. "You see, to-morrow's Saturday and with my nerves I can't run any risks. Rushed all day, dancing to-night, and then rushed again to-morrow. I don't think mama will like it if I go. Suppose you go and take Mame?"

"Oh, Elsie!" giggled Mame. "You're just awful!"

Holmes hesitated a moment, then did her bidding.

"Shall I call for you, Miss Mame?" he asked. "Of course, if you have another friend coming for you——"

"But I haven't," cried Mame.

"All right. Then expect me at eight," he told her.

Mame hurried off down the street, her heart beating like a sledge hammer, and Holmes conducted Elsie to the car.

"Good night!" he said, as he put her aboard. "Go to bed early, and I'll see you to-morrow"

Elsie waved him a good night and the car started. All the way home she thought over the conversation in the elevator. She was surprised that Holmes should so readily agree to taking Mame to the social in place of herself. But, then, Mame was not very pretty, and she was—there was some little consolation in that.

"Still, Fred and I am engaged, and even if I did propose such a thing, Mame ought to have said no," concluded Elsie, as she left the car. "Anyway, Mame walks all over your feet when she dances and I know Fred won't like that," she added, and with this she was satisfied.

Elsie lived with her mother and two sisters in the northwestern section of the city. The older sister was a stenographer; the younger one, the baby, was employed in another department store. only she worked in the office, which, she was wont to declare, was more genteel than being merely a saleslady Supper was ready and they were waiting for her when Elsie entered the house, so she sat down at table as she was, without removing her hat.

"Have you an engagement to-night, Elsie?" asked the mother, presently. "I hope not, you look tired."

"Yes, I'm going to a social at Weber's Hall—I told you," answered Elsie.

"You and Fred, I guess?" suggested her older sister. "He shows you a good time, all right."

"No, Fred can't go—he's got to work to-night. I'm going to meet some of the girls from the store at Anna Dailey's—we're going down together," nodded Elsie.

Of course, it was an untruth, Elsie reasoned to herself, as she dressed for her appointment with the manager, but, then, one's family asked such personal questions, and were always trying to find out things which didn't concern them in the least. She had almost made herself believe that she had done right to deceive them all as she left the house. At least, they had gotten just what they deserved; and as for Fred Holmes—well, he had been very ready to take Mame to the social. When Elsie got off the car, after a long, weary ride downtown again, she saw Belle Davidson waiting for her on the drug store corner, superbly lovely under the glare of an arc light.

"Hello, dearie!" was Belle's greeting. "My! you look good enough to eat. Now, don't be nervous nor backward. You can sing, prove it, you can dance, show him; don't be afraid and you'll be all right."

They went up an alley leading into the great, bare stage. It was very early and

the scenes had not been placed and only a few of the company had arrived. Belle found the stage manager and led him over to where Elsie stood alone and wondering among the strange surroundings. The place seemed cold and dreary to her, and the sight of the stage hands hurrying to and fro in their shirt sleeves proved a shock. At the "store" it was considered not very nice to appear before ladies in one's shirt sleeves. Elsie resented these men's appearance. And certainly there proved to be nothing very fairylike about the stage at close range. She drew nearer and examined a throne. It was made of cheap, gilded wood, and the velvet was not velvet at all, but something very common. And the paint seemed to have been put on the different pieces of scenery in great dabs and smears —such impossible trees and flowers!

"Dear me, yes! She can dance fine—can't you, Elsie?" cried Belle's voice, breaking in at the point.

Elsie nodded silently Her eyes were fastened on the stage manager, who was standing off at a little distance, sizing her up as if she had been an auctioned article. She flushed angrily under his glance. Dumbly she wondered what Fred Holmes would say if he knew another man looked at her in that manner

"Well?" asked Belle, presently

"Miss Elsie will show up all right, all right," nodded the man, briskly. "Now, if she can sing and dance—but then you know, Davidson, what it means to take on a new girl in the middle of the season. The company will kick like steers—extra rehearsals and all. But, oh, well—now, Miss Elsie, step down to the piano, please."

She followed Belle and the man down to the piano and stared, fascinated, while he opened the instrument and turned on an electric light above the keys.

He struck a note, sharply, decidedly

"Sing," commanded Belle.

Elsie turned to Miss Davidson in surprise. "What shall I sing, please? I have no music."

"Sing the notes he struck—the scale up and down skip every other note—that way," explained Belle. "There—C, G, C, A."

The manager tried again; but, somehow or another, her voice was not under control and when she tried to sing she broke down completely. She clasped her hands fearfully together and waited.

"Punk!" said the man, rising from the piano. "You ought to be fined for this, Davy"

"She's scared, poor thing!" cried Belle.

Elsie saw that she was dismissed, and a sudden courage seized her. She caught the man's coat and drew him back.

"Oh, don't go away yet!" she begged. "I can sing—Belle knows I can, only I—I feel a little frightened. Play the 'Crocodile Song'—I'll sing that. Do try me."

"Well, all right."

He turned back, somewhat reluctantly, found the song, and, seating himself, began to play the introduction. Elsie, driven to desperation, sang the number as she had never dreamed she could—in a sweet, clear, bell-like soprano. She forced her lips to smile; her eyes danced.

"Good!" cried Belle, when she had finished. She glanced triumphantly at the manager. "How's that, Mr. Rice?" she asked, with a note of pride. "Going some!"

Rice whistled softly "So—so," he nodded. Then he turned to Elsie. "You'd have to be a pony, of course, Miss Elsie," he said. "You're not tall enough for a showgirl, but I guess I can fix it and get you a showgirl's salary."

Elsie nodded silently

"It's twenty-two per—the ponies get eighteen," went on Rice. "Call around to-morrow and I'll fix you up—contract, score, you know. Everything regular, although we furnish hats and the white satin slippers for the last act. Other shoes and all stockings you provide, of course."

"Oh, I'll tell her about that part," put in Belle. "Elsie don't know much about the stage, but I'll put her onto a few tricks."

"Then, am I engaged?" asked Elsie, presently.

"Certainly," laughed Belle.

"Come around in the morning for the contract," the manager told her

"Thank you! I will," replied Elsie.

She followed Belle across the stage, listening with beating heart to her ceaseless chatter. At the big dressing room provided for the chorus Belle stopped and, opening the door, pushed Elsie gently in. A half dozen girls were there, dressing for the performance. They regarded Elsie with silent curiosity.

"Miss Elsie Conway—she joins the show to-morrow," explained Belle.

Elsie nodded, and the girl gave her a careless "Good evening!" and then went on with their dressing.

"I guess I'd better go," Elsie said, as Belle began preparations for putting on her elaborate costumes.

"Oh, what's your hurry?" cried Belle. "Don't go. I'll show you how to make up, dear Watch me."

Elsie accepted a chair and sat watching her friend as she applied, first, a coating of cold cream, then rouge, then a flesh-colored powder She made a dimple with practiced skill in one cheek and penciled her brows and lids until her eyes shone out like twin stars. But the process sickened Elsie a little. She felt that she would hate to go near any one with all that grease paint on their face.

"How do I look?" demanded Belle, when she stood ready to go on the stage.

"Your face is—awfully red," answered Elsie, shyly

"Oh, my dear, we use double calciums. We just have to put on plenty of color," cried Belle, angrily "I'd look like a ghost from the front if I took off even ever so little of the rouge. You'll learn after a while."

Elsie nodded silently Presently there sounded the click—click of high-heeled shoes, and the frou-frou of silken skirts, and a tall, blonde, superbly gowned, young woman swept into the room.

"Late again," laughed Belle, as she passed her dressing table.

"Yes, I know," shrugged the newcomer. "But, really, I could not help it. You see, the Delcomb boys got up such a jolly little party, and we motored out to the Suburban. And something happened to the machine on the way back and Jack Delcomb——"

"There's the overture," interrupted Belle.

"Oh, dear! I'll be late, won't I?" cried the blonde, carelessly. "I suppose his nibs with fine me a two-spot, but I don't care. I've got the dandiest tip on the third race to-morrow—a sure winner, Jack says. How do you like my new sparkler? I saw it in Bates' window and Jack just begged me to let him buy it for me. I hadn't the heart to refuse him, so I told him—won't you give me a hand with these hooks?"

This last remark was addressed to Elsie, who was sitting quietly beside Belle Davidson, watching her add the finishing touches to her face.

"I'll never be able to get into this 'Worth Creaton' unless somebody hooks me up the back," smiled the young woman. "Who's your little friend, Davy? Send her over. There's a good 'un!"

Belle Davidson turned slowly and laid a hand on Elsie's shoulder.

"Do you mind, my dear?" she asked. "Rosie can't hook her clothes, and I haven't got time to stop. Elsie joins the show to-morrow, Rosie," she went on. She waved her hand by way of an introduction. "Elsie Conway—Rosalie de Bourbon."

Miss de Bourbon nodded brightly. "That's one phony name for a play bill, thought," she told Elsie. "Why don't you get something pretty? I'll think one up for you."

"Thank you!" returned Elsie. She went over and stood timidly before the handsome showgirl, waiting for her to tell her what she should do. She felt her face flushing painfully. Neither at home nor at the store had she been placed in such a position. She did not think it "nice" for twenty girls to dress and undress together in one room. Miss de Bourbon, calmly indifferent, had discarded her waist and skirt and sat upon a chair affectionately stroking a long, limp, lavender silk stocking. Presently she turned her limpid, blue eyes to Elsie and a gleam of cunning shone in their depths.

"I've been thinking," she confided, "and I'm going to cut the first act. I'll be fined, anyway. And I'll save a lot of bother, too. You see, we wear sheath skirts in the first act, and fleshings are such a trouble to get on and off."

Belle Davidson and the other girls had left the room, and Rosalie and Elsie were alone. In moments of quiet they could hear the chorus singing, and presently a burst of applause from the audience as the prima donna appeared. Rosalie dropped the lavender stocking and, reaching for a cigarette, put it between her scarlet lips. She touched it with a match and leaned back, contendedly.

"Have one? Help yourself," she nodded. "Of course, smoking in the dressing rooms is against the rules, but I stand in with the management. Gee! this show business is great, all right."

"Why?" Elsie managed to ask.

"Oh—h—h! They work you like niggers and hand you out a couple of ten-spots once a week. My heart bleeds for some of the poor girls. If you ain't got a pull you might as well take to the tall grass. Know how to play fan-tan?"

Elsie shook her head. "Is it cards? Mother never liked us—no, I don't play."

"It's easy. I was thinking of asking you up to the flat," went on Rosalie. "The Delcomb boys will be there—autos and bushels of money—live ones, all right—and I know they'd be glad to meet you. Like to go?"

"I can't to-night," Elsie cried. "Are the Delcomb boys Miss Marcia Delcomb's brothers? Do you really know them?"

"Sure—sure—dead swells, and a lot of fun," returned Rosalie. "Their sister married some old, bargain counter duke or prince. Jack Delcomb says he's a—a—an awful bad sort. Come up and meet the boys. I've got a jolly flat on Howard street."

Elsie shook her head. "Thank you—not to-night," she said, slowly.

A callboy stuck his head in at the door and told Rosalie de Bourbon that "his nibs" wanted to see her, to which that lady made answer with a questionable jest. The boy whistled shrilly and pointed to Rosalie's cigarette, whereupon she caught up a shoe and threw it at him.

"It's awful!" she declared, when he had departed. "Now I'll be a week squaring myself with Rice. It's awful!"

She caught up a long cloak of some fanciful design and, slipping it around her bare shoulders, moved toward the door.

"I guess I'd better go see Rice now," she said. "Mind, think it over and come up to the flat—no end of a good time. Don't bother with Belle—Davy's got some old grass widower on a string, and don't want to be bothered with you. Better come with me. The Delcomb boys are live ones, all right."

Elsie made no reply, and Rosalie, with a shrug of her shoulders, closed the door behind her, as she slipped away down the corridor.

Elsie looked slowly around the long, empty room, which reeked of grease paints and stale tobacco. At her feet lay Rosalie's lavender stocking, and she shivered, as with the cold. Then she burned up—her temples throbbed; her throat was parched.

She reached for her hat and wandered, a little dazed, across the room toward the door.

"Oh, this aint' better—it ain't better than the store!" she cried, with a dry sob.

She reached the corridor and hurried along to the stage door. Once a bit of song reached her ears, the chorus of the "Crocodile" number.

"Try as she might, through the starry night,
She never could beguile,
Oh, the wise, old moon refused to spoon
With the lovesick Crocodile."

A flow of tears came to the girl's eyes. How strongly the song brought to her mind "Holton, King's," the music department, bargain days and crimson coupons. Sadie, Mame and Fred.

"Oh, it ain't better; it's worse, worse! Belle—Belle don't know!" she cried, brokenly.

She hurried, almost ran, along the

streets, until she suddenly remembered the distance to her home, and that she was in no fit condition to walk so far Then she hailed a car and sat quietly until the conductor called her street.

She never was so glad to turn the corner, pass the green grocer's shop, and see the stoop of her home before. Only now on the steps was a figure, and slowly as she drew nearer the figure took a definite shape, and she saw it was Holmes.

"Fred!" she cried.

"Why, what's wong, dear?" he asked, gently. He drew her in the little, humble parlor "Tell me, what's wrong?" he asked.

"It's all wrong—everything!" she managed to say, struggling to keep back the tears.

"Oh, no it isn't," he returned, lightly. "You're tired, I know. So was I, so Miss Mamie and I didn't go to the dance. I've been waiting for you, because I felt perhaps you wanted to tell me—something. Do you?"

"Yes—everything," she nodded.

He gathered her in his arms and her head rested contentedly against his shoulder. She hesitated and then nestled there, with a little sigh of happiness.

"And I've been looking everywhere, high and low, here and there, for something better," she whispered. "I've been so dissatisfied: always something better, Fred. But, oh, dear, surely here with you, confident of your love—surely this is best of all!"

SALVAGE

By Kenneth Brown

I

CHRISTOPHER ANDREWS was the kind of man people went to when matters came to such a pass that they could not manage them themselves. He was big, and resourceful, and calm, and it made you feel better just to talk over your troubles with him. Esther, his sister, was with him now. The edifice of her married happiness had been tumbled about her ears by a scrap of paper in the writing of her husband and signed with his initials.

She was speaking without tears—her misery was too deep for that. Christopher listened quietly. That was one reason why people went to him—he stayed quiet when other people lost their tempers or their heads. Yet, when Esther had finished he picked up the long ruler from his desk and unconsciously tested its weight, holding it by one end.

Esther noticed it and smiled wanly. "No, not that, Christopher. I came to you because—is there no way to save things? I do not want to spoil everything if—if—oh, I do not believe it is Tom's fault—not mostly"

Esther, in her way, was as unusual as her brother She had found a situation that has wrecked many a home, and yet she did not clamor for the swiftest ruin for all.

"Usually, I know, it is the man's fault in a case like this. I do not think it is this time." With the last words Esther's self-possession broke down, and she buried her face in her hands.

Christopher's square face was very pale. "Why did you not send her packing long ago?"

Esther raised her head and answered, drearily, "When she first came I thought she was such a superior girl. Her intelligence was so much above what one had a right to expect from a nursery governess. And little Sophie seemed to take to her so—to be quite devoted to her. She took the responsibility from my shoulders. I felt perfectly satisfied to leave Sophie in her charge. And I am fond of society, and I don't always like

responsibilities. Then I'm *not* suspicious. When I first became uneasy my feelings were so vague that I tried to reason myself out of them."

Christopher sat brooding over the scrap of paper she had brought him.

Presently Esther continued "I knew that Tom had been susceptible to women before our marriage, but since then he has been so perfect—and I always thought, if there were any danger, it would not be from a servant. When I did find out, many little things came to me and I didn't dare——"

"Didn't dare?" Christopher repeated.

She nodded, her lips trembling. "I haven't told you the worst yet. In some manner she had managed to turn my little girl against me. I am afraid of losing her, too. And, oh, Chris, it isn't any ordinary divorce I fear I think"—she threw out her hand in a terrified gesture —"I think that woman was planning to have me put in an insane asylum."

Christopher, for all his coolness, sprang to his feet and paced up and down his office. When he moved one could see that his calmness was deceptive. He was one of those big men who combine strength with speed. Esther watched him with sadly loving eyes. If revenge and punishment were all she were seeking, he would be well able to give them to her.

"But, Chris," she said, again, *"really*, I do not think it is Tom's fault—any more than I think it is Sophie's. You know, there are some women who have an uncanny power—like those false prophets who start up new sects."

As if he had not heard her, Christopher continued to walk up and down his office, his brows, usually so wide and calm, wrinkled with thought.

"And Tom did love me so!" Esther went on, piteously. "He does yet, I know, if he were himself. Oh, I know I ought to cast him off; but I—I love him, too! Can't you give him another chance?"

Christopher was fighting down his brotherly desire to break every bone in Tom's body, and to take his sister away from the man who had shown himself unworthy of her—he was trying to see what would be best for her—for her ultimate happiness. When it has not entered our own life we talk very lightly of divorce; but in reality it is no such light matter to separate those whom even the law of man has joined together.

The fact that Christopher had always had the highest regard for Tom—had considered him the one man he knew who was worthy of Esther—at first made his anger against him the hotter In the end, however, it helped him to take Esther's view, after he had managed to bring himself back to his usually reasonable frame of mind. He sat down at his desk at length and laid down the ruler he had been carrying. It would do to break things with—but there had been breakage enough already.

"Yes, we will give him another chance, for your sake," Christopher said, sternlipped. "Go home now, as if nothing had happened, and leave everything to me. To-morrow night, if Tom doesn't come home, don't be frightened; but go to bed, and stay in bed until I tell you you may get up."

"Stay in bed?" Esther's eyes opened wide in terror "Chris, what do you mean? There is nothing the matter with me."

"Of course, there isn't!"

Christopher appreciated the nervous strain his sister was under He patted her hand. "But I want to get two trained nurses into your house, and I can't unless there is a patient for them to attend to." He wrote a few words on a card and gave it to her "Here is Dr. Houghteling's phone number—two—seven—o—four Grammery. I want you to call him up if Tom doesn't come back tomorrow night, and tell him you are not feeling well and should like to see him. That's all you've got to do. I'll attend to the rest. Now run along, and we'll see if we can't straighten out the snarl Fate has got us into."

Christopher kissed his sister, and sent her away, no longer bearing the feeling of utter desolation with which she had

come to him. Consolation was the divine gift of the man.

II

After Esther left him, Christopher sat quietly a few minutes, arranging his plans. Then he called in Hendricks, a young member of his office staff, who was making desperate efforts to put into the study of law all the energy which had formerly made him the champion middle-weight boxer of the New York Athletic Club.

"Hendricks, will you please 'phone over to the North and South American Steamship Company, in Hoboken, and see if you can get Captain Dundee on the wire for me. If you can't, find out if he is to be in New York to-day, and can drop in here. If not, ask if I can see him for half an hour by going over to Hoboken, and at what time. Use one of the other phones, please. I want this one myself."

Hendricks turned to go.

"By the way," Christopher went on, "if I wish to send you on a confidential mission I suppose you wouldn't mind being away from New York for a few weeks?"

"No, indeed!" Hendricks answered, eagerly Besides the pleasure which all his subordinates found in following the bidding of Christopher, the prospect of *doing* something was marvelously attractive to Hendricks, after his months of indoor grinding over law books and papers.

His employer nodded "I'll see that you don't lose anything by it."

Christopher next called up Mallory's Detective Agency on his own phone.

"Is this Mallory's? Can I speak to Mr Mallory himself, please?—Christopher Andrews.

"Ah! Mallory, is that you? Could you manage to drop around to see me to-day?

"Say, at—what about taking luncheon with me? I can talk to you while we are disposing of some mussels, if they appeal to you. All right. I'll expect you at half-past twelve, then. Good-bye!"

The rest of the day was a busy one for Christopher. When a man wants to see three or four persons in an afternoon in New York and can brook no delay, the chances are that they will be as far apart as the geographical formation of the Island of Manhattan will permit—even if they do not stray into the outlying wastes of Greater New York or of adjacent New Jersey.

Mallory had been baited with a luncheon. Captain Dundee and Dr Houghteling were less easily stalked, even with all the advantages of modern telephonic communication. The necessity of interviewing certain subordinate characters added to the complications of Christopher's afternoon.

III

"Hello, Tom!"

Christopher greeted Tom Souther the next morning on the street as naturally as if he had not been trying for an hour and a half to meet him accidentally. "Come along with me. I've something I want to talk over with you."

His manner was deceitful; it was geniality itself.

"Jump into this cab. I've an errand to do, and we can kill two birds with one stone."

With a certain air of suppressed defiance on his handsome face—defiance which glanced off Christopher's blandness without making a dent—Tom got into the cab; and the driver, who seemed to know his destination beforehand, tore through the streets.

Christopher, more genial and blander every minute, talked on the subjects of which there is never a lack for those working within hailing distance of St. Paul's. Tom did not ask him what it was Christopher wished to see him about—he was not going to play into his hand by trying to force it—and they had driven on the Barclay Street Ferry almost before he knew it.

"Yes, I want to see a man who is going to sail for Buenos Ayres to-day" Christopher anticipated the question that Tom was about to ask, "I wish I were going

with him to Brazil. *There's* a wonderful country for you, Tom! You ought to see it. We are so much taken up with our slice of America that we don't half appreciate what other parts of it are doing."

"But, look here," Tom protested, "I've got to get back to my office——"

"That's all right. I've only got to stay a minute in Hoboken, and we can talk as we go along. I shouldn't be surprised if I could make the next ferry back."

Christopher was so amiable that Tom's first guilty feeling of discomfort was gradually leaving him. The relief was considerable, and reconciled him to the waste of time. The residum of the fear that had assailed him on first meeting Christopher, however, prevented him from pressing the question of what it was that his brother-in-law wished to speak to him about. There would be plenty of time on the return trip for that.

They drove up on the docks of the North and South American line, and found the Patagonia in the bustle that attends on departure. Christopher jumped out of the cab.

"I'll wait for you here," Tom said.

"No; come along with me," Christopher insisted, pleasantly "I want you to meet Captain Dundee. They don't make his kind by the gross. He's a great chap."

IV

Christopher came off the steamer alone. A grim smile hovered around his lips, though his face was grey. Ten minutes later the Patagonia cast off her hawsers and lumbered out into the North River busily assisted by two blustering, little tugs.

The Patagonia carried more freight than passengers. Those that there were, however, were on deck, waving adieu to their friends, or watching others wave. Two only were in a stateroom below—and between these two there was some disagreement.

"I couldn't let you out if I wanted to, Mr Souther," a young lawyer of sturdy build was saying, mildly. "You saw yourself that Mr. Andrews locked us in from the outside."

"Well, by God! I will call somebody who can, then," Tom raved, nearly suffocating with anger, which as yet had hardly turned against Hendricks, being all directed towards Christopher.

"I'm afraid I can't let you do that, sir," Hendricks protested. "Mr. Andrews warned me that you might be violent at first—until you were out of sight of land, he said, and I'm afraid I shall have to keep you quiet, if you won't stay so by yourself."

"Keep me quiet! Me violent!" Tom yelled. "I'll show you whether I'm——"

He made a rush for his new found foe, but only ran, with unnecesary violence, against the five clenched fingers of Hendricks' right hand. He ran against them with the point of his jaw and the impact dispelled his anger wonderfully Sitting down in his bunk, he tried to think what day of the week it was. Hendricks dipped a towel in water and bathed his forehead, advising him to lie down and take it easy.

When the Patagonia was passing the Statue of Liberty Hendricks said, in his usual mild manner—he was a gentle chap except in the matter of his fists:

"Captain Dundee has the key. He will let us out when he thinks best."

"Key?" thought Tom, dazed. "Who had said anything about a key?" He turned over and tried to go to sleep, although for a long time a racking headache kept him awake.

V

On the evening of the third day after Christopher went over to Hoboken, Miss Creider was putting little Sophie to bed. Nothing had changed in the routine of the household, except that Mr Souther was unexplainedly absent, and that Esther was ill in bed, with two trained nurses in attendance.

Miss Creider went about her duties, soft-spoken and efficient, and could hardly go out of Sophie's sight, so attached had the child become to her.

When Sophie was in bed Miss Creider said to her, smiling, "Now we will play our sleeping game."

Sophie smiled in reply, crossed her hands on her breast, and looked up into her governess' eyes. Miss Creider stroked the forehead of the child, and presently began murmuring, in an even, monotonous voice

"Now you are going to sleep—your eyelids are heavy—your eyes are closing—c-l-o-s-i-n-g! You are sleepy—sleepy—s-l-e-e-p-y! Now you are asleep—sleeping soundly—sleeping—sleeping!"

It was as she said. The child's eyelids had flickered once or twice, and then closed over her eyes. Her breathing became the long, even breathing of slumber Miss Creider's hand still lay on the little girl's forehead—the thumb just above one eyebrow, the forefinger above the other. Presently she began to speak again, in a low tone, yet with more intensity than she had used before·

"You love me, Sophie—you love me better than you do mamma—much better—you would like me to become your mamma—you will tell papa this—I am much kinder to you than mamma is. You would like me to become your mamma—you will say this to papa when you are alone with him. It would break your heart if I should go away from you—you wish that papa could——"

The closet door opened noiselessly, and one of the nurses who had been in attendance on Esther stepped out. The other came in by the door of the room, and with her was Christopher. All three moved with the quietness made possible by felt-soled shoes.

Miss Creider sat frozen in her chair Christopher was the only one to speak, and his voice was soft and tense as Miss Creider's had been, and very cool·

"Will you kindly suggest to Sophie—while she is still under your control—that when she wakes she is to love her mother as much as ever she did?"

His tone was so gentle that it did not disturbing the sleeping child. The nurses stood impassively by. Miss Creider hesitated.

"I may tell you that it will be much better for you if you do as I say," Christopher went on, evenly "Indeed, it is your only chance of staying out of prison. Mr. Souther, as you have doubtless noticed, has gone away. He will not be back for a long time."

Miss Creider knew when to yield.

"Sophie, dear," she said, softly, "you *do* love your mother—you do love her very much."

Miss Creider raised her eyes in inquiry to Christopher

"And she does not care for you," he suggested.

Miss Creider seemed about to rebel.

Christopher made a motion towards the two nurses. "Detectives," he murmured. "Better do as I say."

There was a tremor of anger in Miss Creider's voice as she said to the child

"You no longer care for me!"

She turned to Christopher, "I hope you are satisfied now."

He nodded. "Repeat several times that she does not care for you, but only for her mother."

When she had obeyed him in every particular he motioned her to precede him out of the room, and closed the door behind him.

"A room has been prepared for you upstairs," he said. "To-morrow I will inform you about your future movements. Good night!"

VI

A few hours later, in the middle of the night, a dark form crept on stockinged feet to the front door Like a wraith, it moved along the hall. At the front door there was the clank of the chain, and then the sound of a key turning in the lock. The door opened cautiously, and then, with a smothered expletive, was closed again. Back up the hall crept the figure. When it was opposite the drawing room door the voice of Christopher Andrews came calmly from within.

"You will find another detective at the back door, Miss Creider I told you that your future movements would be decided in the morning—not to-night."

There was a silence of a few seconds

before the voice of Miss Creider answered

"I thought I should save trouble this way."

"No trouble at all, I assure you!" Christopher said, politely. "By the way, there is no possible manner in which you can get word to Mr Souther He is not even in America."

No more was said. As carefully as she had crept down, so carefully did the woman creep back to her bed.

VII

A small trunk was on top of the cab. Inside, Christopher was escorting Miss Creider on her way, next day

"You are going to Buenos Ayres," he was telling her. There was a humorous twitching to his lips as he spoke, which Miss Creider set down to sheer malignity. "I am sorry that you will have to go in a sailing vessel, but for certain reasons it is best."

He took from his pocket a large envelope and gave it to her.

"Here is money enough to provide for you until you can find some occupation. I think you will discover that in the long run its pays to walk straight."

Miss Creider took the envelope and glanced into it. As the loser in the game she was being treated with considerable magnanimity No more was said until they stood on the deck of the barkentine, Salome.

"I need hardly point out to you," Christopher observed, casually, "that it would not be safe for you to return to New York—ever So much"—he glanced at the envelope in her hand—"I am doing to avoid publicity. If it fails——" he shrugged his shoulders. "I'd rather have you in South America. My second choice is the penitentiary."

"I can tell when I'm beaten," Miss Creider answered, with asperity

To a casual onlooker twenty feet away it seemed like the ordinary parting between two acquaintances. Only one thing was lacking—they did not shake hands when the time came for the man to leave the vessel. On the wharf Christopher lingered, as if desirous of seeing the last of the lady As the Salome began sluggishly to move away from the dock he took off his hat.

"Good hunting!" he said.

He waited till the vessel was tugged well out into the river by one of the same tugs that had started the Patagonia. The identity of the tug imparted additional humor to the situation for Christopher By the time the slow-sailing Salome would reach Buenos Ayres, Tom would be well on his way back.

VIII

There are diseases of the emotions, as well as of the body and of the mind, which may be cured by rest and change and taking thought. If Tom Souther's conscience had not already told him the reason why he was being carried away, a note from Christopher, which Hendricks gave him the fourth day out, would have enlightened him. After his first blind anger abated somewhat he did some hard thinking. It was a long way to South America and back. On his homeward journey Hendricks gave him a pitiful little note from his wife, and Tom Souther came home cured.

From the dock he went straight to his home. Esther was sitting in her room, with Sophie on her lap.

She uttered a cry as she saw Tom in the doorway She sprang to her feet and held out her arms.

And Tom went to them.

THE BLACK PEARL

By L. de Tinseau

CHAPTER I

LOVE THAT HATH US IN THE NET.

* * * * *

But sweeter far than this, than these, than all,
Is first and passionate love.

"WHEN the Parisians repeat that newspaper talk about the drinking water giving out I laugh, because I know there's no truth in it," said Maurice. "We hear the same outcry every year, and what does it amount to? I know a place at the far end of the Red Sea—in a city set on a promontory of cooled lava; Aden, they call it—where for all the money on earth they could not find a drop of water, a spear of grass or a salad leaf."

"What do they do with the rain-water?" I asked.

"Oh, of course the cisterns fill when it rains, but at the time I am talking of not a drop had fallen in five years. I had stopped at Aden on my way home from China, to see the French Consul, a friend of my early boyhood days, and he was very glad to do me the honors of his rock, I assure you! As he was telling me about the place, he spoke of the trouble they had to get water

"'Where do you get water for this tea?' I asked, touching my empty cup with my cigar holder

"'From the manufactory The English distill the water of the sea, they sell it at the price of gold. This product is absolutely perfect, but the cost is ruinous. My expense for water is twenty dollars a month. They say that science has found a way to imitate Nature in everything, and probably this is true; but if a man must be ruined because he thirsts for drinking water—tough, isn't it? However, my wife has what she wants for her bath. I have that much satisfaction!'

"'And you?' said I. 'You do not bathe, I suppose?'

"'I bathe in seawater; I like it.'

"'And what do the Arabs do?'

"Oh, those fellows! I never think of them. They get water that the camels bring from the mountains. It has a bad taste, a bad odor, too, naturally it must have churned about in the hot sun, close to the camel. It infects the air. But what can they do, poor devils? They cannot buy the water from the plant; they have no money—if they had money the police regulations forbid the English to sell it to them. That water is kept for Europeans, the garrison and the ships which run in for it when they have none.'

"I had noted all that information in my little book. We looked around the place, then we went up to the Consulate. The Consul's wife, a very pretty woman, came to meet us. She was younger than Pujol —six years, perhaps. Pujol was sallow and thin. She was blooming. She was a stranger to me, Pujol had married her in Marseilles just before he left France for his consular service, and until then I had never seen her We talked of the life of the place, and the young woman told me, with a sigh, that she had but two people on her visiting list—one of them was an old Englishwoman, very stiff and censorious, the other was the innkeeper of the port, a Frenchwoman, who liked to talk with the wandering Arabs better than to talk with women.

"'And so you see just how lonely I am when my husband is writing his dispatches,' she said, with a pout.

"'Do not listen to her, Maurice,' Pajol said, with a look so fond that the blood rushed to my ears.

"That is the worst of lovers, don't you know? They create emotions, either of one kind or of another A bachelor looks

on life from his own standpoint, he is not fitted to appreciate—to understand—to—what shall I call it?—to *condone* folly. That is the word!

"She looked straight into his eyes; her own eyes were large and black. When she gave him that glance I saw about three inches of the whites of her eyes below the pupils, the pupils had run up under the eyelids, all I could see was two half-discs, dead black. Pujol gasped. No one spoke, the moment was tense. At last he murmured something I did not catch. She laughed, whirled on one heel —probably on one, she may have used both heels, but as I look at it she was on one only—and, turning her back, looked out of the window

"'My dear,' said Pujol, 'you have given Maurice a wrong impression. When you said that you had no friends but the Englishwoman and the innkeeper you forgot that you have an ardent admirer in this Arabian city.' His wife looked vexed.

"'An admirer as black as a smoke-stack!' she said.

"'Very black, but very handsome,' said her husband; 'he's by far better looking than the one who has a *right* to love you—*Nigra sum sed Formosa*—and very rich, the richest café keeper in Abyssinia, and that means that he is the richest seller of coffee in this part of the world. I will show him to you to-morrow, Maurice. You will see the luxury of a satrap—such carpets, cake, preserves, carved ivory, golden images, jewels! No wonder my wife lingers in the bazar for hours, for it *is* a bazar—nothing less! And if I did not put down the consular foot, *we* should have one just like it, for our friend the Arab would strip his house and send us everything in his possession, simply to give pleasure to "the lady," as he calls her'

"'What exaggeration!' exclaimed his wife. 'Do not listen to him, Mr. Maurice. Who could make a friend of a black man? I have not been near his shop in fifteen days.'

"After that she seated herself in a far corner of the large room and, taking a little roll of white thread and a crochet needle from her pocket, she worked rapidly on some lacelike stuff that it gave me a twinge to see. I could think of nothing but Paris and the women working in the public gardens, listening to the music of the bands. I do not like women, but—the calm domestic scene—the woman sitting with head bent, crocheting lace—it made me homesick.

"'My wife is despondent to-night,' said Pujol. 'She lost her earring yesterday'

"'Not an earring—a pearl from an earring,' she said, 'one of the two splendidly matched pearls that my husband brought from Ceylon. I have searched everywhere for it.' She came to my side and bent her head to the level of my eyes.

"'This is the mate,' she said. 'Is it not exquisite?'

"I saw that her ear was a pretty shape, and of a color like rose-tinted ivory. In her hair was the sweet perfume of Parma violets. I looked at the black pearl, she went back to her crochet work, and Pujol and I talked until bedtime. Then I went up to my bed on the roof. In that country people sleep in the open air The next day I went with Pujol to the native quarter to see the Arab's palatial place. Mouloud ben Said was a very handsome Arab; very gentle and agreeable. Pujol and I were not alone. A man who had come from China on my ship went with us—I do not remember his name. He was coming back to Paris from a journey around the world, was a savant, passed his time searching out and copying inscriptions and making notes to send to the French Academy of Sciences. Mouloud spoke English like the Turkish merchants of Paris. As for his looks, he was a superb sample of the Arabian race—which, probably, is the most beautiful of all the races. He led us through his houses; then he gave us coffee that was to the ordinary 'best coffee' what effervescent lemonade is to champagne wine. After coffee the inevitable chiboukh and the bottle of fresh water came in.

"'This water is good,' said Mouloud ben Said. 'The camels brought it from the mountains this morning.'

" 'Not very promising,' thought I, 'but I guess I have drunk as bad in the rice swamps of lower China.' I raised my glass—the odor—what was it? *Sapristi! Violets!* Violets in the wastes of Abyssinia!

"The savant sniffed his glass, he sipped the water. Then he said to me

" 'Do you not think that this water has a perfume?'

" 'I do,' I answered.

" 'Of?' he hazarded.

" 'Of violets,' I answered, boldly.

" 'Yes, undoubtedly. Well, my dear sir, Science, our ruler and our guide, teaches us that certain derivations or by-products of coal emit the odor of the violet. Some of our perfume manufacturers, taking advantage of this fact, adulterate the violet extracts of their trade with the coal by-product. This water has come in contact with coal. Coal mines in Aden! Do you realize what that means? Why, my dear sir, there is not a kernel, not a grain of coal in this place that was not brought here from the collieries of England! This discovery means millions to commerce—a saving to the consumers of coal, and to science an important discovery.'

"He turned to our host and overwhelmed him with questions. He forced the distracted Arab to hazard conjectures as to just where the water brought by the camels was found, and how much of it each camel carried annually. He would have started for the mountains at once but for the fact that he was overdue in Paris and that he had work then ranking vicarious geological enterprises.

"In response to urgent pleas of scientific necessity, Mouloud ben Said gave him a flat, brazen bottle, which he filled with his own hand, sealed with strong Oriental wax and stamped with a seal representing a coiled serpent (the badge of his sapient society). The Arab's brows drew together at all that, but he said nothing.

"As the savant slipped the bottle into his collection case he said to me, 'Half of this water goes to the School of Mines for analysis, the other half goes to the Academy of Sciences.'

" 'You have an almost priceless bit of antiquity in that brass bottle,' said I. 'I advise you to take care of it.'

("To me a man of that stamp is like the moth who, to satisfy his natural cravings, burrows through the most superb work of ancient artists, leaving ruin in his track.)

" 'Mouloud ben Said is a queer man,' said Pujol, 'he bears pain like a Stoic. Look at him! He is suffering intensely, but he won't confess it. Let us get out of this and give him a chance to go to bed.'

" 'All right,' said I; 'go on—I will follow.'

" 'Adieu, Mouloud ben Said!' said Pujol; and, putting his arm through the savant's, he went toward the door. The Arab was close to me, watching me.

" 'Go on with them, Effendi,' said I. 'I will overtake you. (I don't know what they call themselves. Probably he was not an Effendi—whatever that may be. However, he went.)

"I seized the water bottle. I was pouring the water when the sound of a light body coming in contact with glass struck my eardrums.

" 'There's something wrong in this darned stuff!' said I to myself. I looked in my glass, and if there wasn't a black pearl lying there, as large as life—the sister of the one I had seen in the earring of the wife of Pujol! I emptied my glass over my hands, seized the pearl as it landed, and ran after the honorable Arab. I had him before my eyes until he bade us farewell and turned the corner of the narrow street.

"The scamp! He was handsome in his perfumed bournous; his pale, olive cheek, with a glow like the light on southern wine; delicately oval chin; long, straight nose, and curling, black mustache, as light and silky as the curls of a water spaniel—*and eyes!* Poor Pujol!

"What could I do? Nothing! The combination made me giddy. Pujol, the dupe; and Mouloud ben Said, young, handsome, rich, and in love with Mrs. Pujol! Her pearl in his palace—her perfume in his drinking water! I had one of two sickening alternatives."

CHAPTER II

For I would rather die than dream
Thou'rt not the glory thou didst seem!
* * * * *
Who would not dream, and dreaming die,
If to wake were misery?

—*Festus.*

"I could do one of two things—tell Pujol and kill his joy, or let him live on in his fool's paradise and find out for himself. Which ought I to choose—silence or moral murder? I chose silence.

"Happily for my plans, Pujol said that he would go down to the ship and wait with me until it sailed. I told him that I must run back to the Consulate and take leave of Mrs. Pujol, so I was free to do what I had to do.

"Mrs. Pujol met me, smiling the smile of innocence—the hypocrite!

"'Madam,' said I, stern but calm, 'here is your lost pearl. I found it, I hasten to restore it to you. There are pearls and pearls—some when lost can be found; others if lost cannot be found!'

"'My pearl!' she cried. 'My pearl that Pujol gave me! Oh, how glad I am! Where did you find it?'

"'At *Mouloud ben Said's,*' I said; 'in the water brought by the camels yesterday. I thank Fate that no one knows that I found it!' Her eyes widened.

"'I do not understand——' she began. I cut her short.

"'I do not understand, nor do I want to understand," I said, sharply. 'However, I shall not speak of the matter—to anyone. Adieu, Madam!'

"She put out her hand. I passed as if I had not seen it. I was determined to show her that I despised her. I ran down the hill to the jetty. The ship had coaled; she was whistling for me. Pujol was there, waiting for me, and I astonished him by the fervor of my embrace.

"'Poor, old fellow!' said he. 'You are lonely, going off to Paris by yourself. Try to find a wife somewhere. You never will be happy until you have someone to love you.'

"An hour later we were at sea, steaming under full power; the savant, with his sealed bottle, I with my black secret. Aden was far behind us.

* * * * *

Two years later I met Pujol and his wife in Paris, and it seemed to me that they were more tenderly devoted to one another than when I saw them in Aden. Madam's pretty ears were set off by the two black pearls. We dined together and, of course, we talked of Aden and of my visit.

"'By the way, Maurice,' said Pujol, 'you gave us something to think of when you found the lost pearl at Mouloud ben Said's. Confess, did you not wonder how it came there?'

"I stammered something—I don't know what.

"'The explanation is simple,' said Pujol. 'My thief of an Arab servant invented a "get-rich-quick," helping himself out; he sold the water that my wife left in her bathtub after her bath. We suppose that the pearl fell from its setting into the water during the bath and that it was carried out unseen and sold with the water to the Arabs. It happened—as by miracle—that you got that part of the water that retained it. Where did you find the pearl?'

"'I just missed swallowing it,' said I. 'It was in the water that Mouloud's servant gave us to drink.' I looked Mrs. Pujol in her two black eyes. She blushed.

* * * * * *

"Apropos of nothing whatever," said Maurice, "the scientists are putting their heads together over a discovery reported to the Academy of Sciences. We have reason to believe that coal has been found in Aden. I saw a note to that effect in Larousee's Review. Odd, isn't it?"

"I don't think so," said I. "Coal has been found everywhere else; why should it not be found in Aden?"

"So you look at it in that way, do you?" said Maurice.

"I certainly do," said I.

SEALED AND DELIVERED

By Stephen Chalmers

VAN CUYLER softly closed the bedroom door from the inside. A momentary impulse was to lock it; but in the darkness he drew his hand from the key and laughed at himself. Then he switched on the electric light and turned to the mirror, as a man will do after an ordeal.

He was in evening dress, but not immaculate. The upper edge of his collar lay under suspicion of a wilt. His shirt front was slightly crushed. His smooth face and usually smooth black hair bore traces of moisture and disturbance. It had been an ordeal, indeed!

But it was over now To-morrow she would go—thank God! Van Cuyler thanked God for no especial reason. It was hardly likely that the Omniscient approved his past or aided his present behavior. He had done wrong, his conscience told him. He had done right, his conceit bade him uphold.

Anyway, she would go to-morrow. She herself had broached the subject; she herself had challenged his love; she herself had voluntarily decided to sever the doubtful tie. Van Cuyler shrugged his shoulders and grimaced. The figure in the mirror shrugged and grimaced also, like some good fellow who was wholly in sympathy—with Van Cuyler But the eyes in the mirror seemed to ask, "What will become of her?"

Van Cuyler turned away and dropped into a chair with a troubled frown. What *would* become of her? Would she—could she—go back to Roder? Would that silent, deep-moving Sphinx forgive her? Van Cuyler thought—knew—that Roder would not, at least, if Roder had been as glad to get rid of her then as he, Van Cuyler, was now.

It had been an unfortunate episode. "Unfortunate" was Van Cuyler's adjective, not the world's. The world's adjective mattered little now. It had hurt in the beginning, when men turned from him at the club, but he had already suffered the pangs of the superlative, which would describe this latest development of the Van Cuyler-Roder affair The affair ended, the world's adjective would shriek a *crescendo,* then a *diminuendo* would end in the staccato *pianissimo* of occasional recollection.

Van Cuyler removed his coat. Relapsing into the chair, he absently eased off his shoes. Then he became still, with his chin pressing low on the wilted collar. He toyed with his underlip and unwillingly reviewed the history of the affair

Louise Vernon Roder was twenty when she married Roder, who was forty He, Van Cuyler, was twenty-six, born to idleness and true to the calling. Byronic of aspect, and playing his conception of the *rôle,* he precipitated the stale, old crisis. Roder, with characteristic poise, stood by the mantelpiece and stated the case to his wife and Van Cuyler. He would have denied it, but Louise Vernon Roder lifted her head and granted the premise. It was as astonishing to Roder as it was agonizing to Van Cuyler. Roder flashed her a look of admiration and said·

"I ought to do something tragic, of course, but where would be the sense? Yet I am forced to admire your moral courage, Mrs. Roder. You may choose between us. In view of your views, I waive legal right."

And she chose her husband on the moment. Why, she hardly knew, for she hated the man for his indifference, and blamed his arctic conduct for her tropic waywardness. And, perhaps, after this, life with him would be within the bounds of possibility. Roder bowed. Van Cuyler, unexpectedly humiliated, left the house.

But that was only the beginning. Van Cuyler moved in the usual circles, more Byronic than ever He was a man with

a secret sorrow, and his sorrow, like everything secret, was whispered as he passed. Where he was, the Roders were not. But the encounter came in the usual, inevitable manner He was there, unexpectedly, and Roder, unexpectedly, was absent. The whispers hushed after one great flurry Then there came a sigh of relief. Their hands had met and they were smiling like old friends. That was the evening she told him of her renewed life with Roder. He was more polar than ever. His manner was irreproachable, but in its very perfection there lay the sneer In the strained silences the furies roared in her ears. Her position was that of figurehead, governess——

"The brute!" groaned Van Cuyler, and he bowed his head before the stern finger of fate and the sleet-storm of the path of honor.

Nevertheless, they were *en route* for Japan before the end of the week. In the land of mimosa they waited for the news—that Roder was severing the knot. The news was tardy, but Van Cuyler kissed her on the brow. In this manner many marriages are recorded in hell.

It was just like Roder to be inconsiderate and forgetful of others. But he had always been an unromantic, unemotional icicle—and he was in business. After Louise Vernon Roder passed out of his line of vision he attended strictly and solely to business. It was odd that such a man should neglect the first principles of marital disappointment. It was annoying to Van Cuyler, who, while picturesquely eloquent on the subject of celestial union, had a terrestrial ambition to enter his club once more.

Besides, Japan palled. It was the heat and other things. Louise was irritable, he declared, and his mood reflected hers—naturally. It was a question of cause and effect, without being much of a question, after all. When Japan became unbearable, they sought the cure where the disease had had incipience. And in New York the second crisis occurred.

She had "seen it for some time." The hackneyed phrase awoke every grievance he had against her. Yes, it was true, He had "ceased to love" her. She had killed his celestial love with her constant reiteration of accusation. She had never loved him—celestially. Had her love laughed at worldly considerations she would have been able to close the shutter on memory But, no! Day and night she feared and regretted the past and doubted the future. It was complimentary to him! He was not thin-skinned. Her every word had pierced his fine sensibilities, until his love had died in agony Was he to be held responsible for the inertia of her thick-headed, iceberg husband? Had he not done everything to induce the fool to cut the knot? Had he, Van Cuyler, not been ready at all times to untangle the skein of her anxiety? As a man of honor, though she had killed his love by her silliness, was he not ready, even now—at this moment? And he thanked God, at that moment, that the thing was as safely impossible as the cold-blooded Roder had made it.

But it was all over now. There had been a scene, of course—one of those stage scenes of parting—quiverings, tear-bursts, reproaches, forgivings, undying promises and noble sacrifices. She would make a splendid actress. Perhaps, now— Van Cuyler looked straight before him as his conscience cried his responsibility and his mind traced her probable career. She would drift. She was just romantic enough in temperament to drift, as being the correct course. She would drift—down, down—the little woman who had trusted him, who had given up her damnably splendid husband for him! He had launched her on the swift, dark rapids which end in the vortex beneath the falls.

Van Cuyler sprang to his feet and swiftly undressed. Anyway, it was all over. He switched off the light with a snap. Between the sheets he composed himself, determined to forget in sleep. He counted the sheep leaping, one by one, over the gate and—it had all been a mistake. Seven—eight—nine—there were scores of mistakes just like it every day, as regularly as the sheep leaping over the gate. Sixteen—seventeen—eighteen—and no such venture had ever

resulted in happiness. It had been his mistake to think that he could defy precedent. But it was human to make mistakes. Of course, it was. It had been unfortunate. Out of the generosity of his soul, he would have given much to undo it all. Thirty-four—thirty-five—thirty——

II

He awoke suddenly. He was conscious that he had screamed. He was dimly aware that he had seen a figure flash across the room, and that he had heard the door click as it shut. Only dimly, for his senses were concentrated upon this agony. His brain was afire. His eyeballs were throbbing with excruciating pain. His brow and his scalp were torn and contracted with nerves. Every fibre in his body was tingling and quivering as he tumbled from the bed. His left hand was over his tortured brow, while his right groped for the electric switch. The thing seemed to elude him. It was out of order. There was no light, then the blaze of it dazzled his pained sight.

What had happened? What had she done to him? He knew it had been she. Had she stabbed him? But he felt no pain, save this throbbing, burning, tightening of his brain, his eyes, his brow. Had the primitive savage in her struck at his head while he lay asleep? God! It was like a woman—like her!

He reeled toward the mirror It was a different creature from the Van Cuyler in evening dress who met his stare. It was a disheveled man in sleeping attire and with a face twisted in agony What had happened? He looked like a madman. His brain blazed with the heat of madness. And the air—the air of the room—was faintly impregnated with a familiar, yet indeterminable, odor

He thrust his face close to the mirror His breath threw a veil of mist over the cold glass. He dashed it off with a trembling hand. Then he saw it—the mark on his forehead!

For half a minute he stared, unbelieving. Then over his face crept a pallor of horror His eyes widened and glittered. Their lustre died and the lids fell over the contracted pupils. His knees shook and bent, and presently he collapsed heavily upon the floor

When he again became cognizant of existence he was in bed. It was daylight. A physician was bending over him. In the background stood his servant. Van Cuyler looked up into the physician's eyes and saw there a light of interest and curiosity.

"Feeling better?" said the doctor "Your servant called me. Tell me just what happened before you fell."

Van Cuyler hesitated a moment, then said:

"Let me speak with my servant a moment, please. Roberts," he said, when the physician had withdrawn, "is there —anything—on my forehead?"

"Yes, sir Looks like a burn, sir, or perhaps you fell and struck the bureau."

"Most likely," said Van Cuyler "Is—call Mrs. Van Cuyler, Roberts."

"She—beg pardon, sir—Mrs. Van Cuyler's gone—gone out. She isn't in her room, sir."

"Very well. I will see the doctor," said the patient, quickly.

"I cannot pretend to understand this, of course," said the physician. "But you need not make a confidant of me if you do not wish to."

"Someone entered my room—I think," said Van Cuyler, evasively. "Tell me, what is the matter with my head?"

"It looks like a burn," said the physician, with a frown, "as if you had been branded with some flat, oval object. There are traces of a design, but in the present inflamed state of the wound I cannot decipher it."

Van Cuyler felt relieved. But almost immediately he half raised himself in bed and asked, with an air of wildness.

"When it heals will—the thing—show?"

"I'm afraid so," the doctor replied. "There will always be a scar. Oh, you mean the cipher? That I cannot tell. Much depends upon the tissue. It might be more undecipherable than it is now, or—but it is not serious."

The physician was watching the face of the patient and wondering what the withheld story might be. It was certainly not the wound which had kept the man unconscious for five hours. He had experienced some shock. It was clear to the doctor that his patient had been branded—probably in his sleep. For what reason? There was a woman, of course. Only a woman could have conceived such a thing. He wondered what that twisted design was, which writhed in relief in the centre of the oval wound. However, the patient was not communicative and the physician was professionally hardened to mysteries. He presently went away, but he thought of the incident as he hemmed and hawed over the Countess de Chatelaine's hypochondria. Then he forgot.

Van Cuyler lay in bed, with his head tightly bandaged. His eyes looked blankly at the ceiling and a cloud of utter darkness was upon his soul. It was all over. She had gone—he was delivered. But she had left him—branded! He knew what the imprint on his forehead was, and gradually the horror of his position dawned upon him. He could feel the brand, not upon his brow as much as upon his soul. It had stirred him, as by some magic touch, to a realization of his naked self. He could face the world no more. He was ashamed to face his own servant, despite the bandage. He was branded—branded with the mark of Cain! Worse than the mark of Cain! He had murdered a woman's soul—stabbed her heart—strangled her faith. And this was the sign.

Late in the afternoon Roberts brought him a letter. He knew it was from her before he took it. The servant cast a pitying glance upon his master and went out. Van Cuyler read:

"Do you remember, when my love was gold and my faith was steel, how you kissed me on the forehead and sealed our union? .I shall cherish the memory of that kiss as a redeeming blossom for my grave. Had you accepted your responsibility, the world would have forgiven, or forgotten. But in shirking the issue you acknowledged the sin. I ask you to forgive me, but the memory of your kiss burned my brow and maddened me for a time. LOUISE."

When the wound was healed Van Cuyler faced himself in the mirror. He had changed much in two weeks, and his face was pale from confinement to his room. And on his brow was a livid oval, in the centre of which were intertwined the delicate lines of the letters "L. V R."

III

Van Cuyler was still standing before the mirror He had drawn his hat low over his brow. The scar, though indistinct, was still visible.

But the time had come when he must go forth. There was no longer the shadow of an excuse for remaining in these rooms. Sooner or later he must face the world. Now was the time, if ever He summoned Roberts—for no reason save to accustom himself to the ordeal of meeting his fellows.

"I am going out, Roberts," he said, quietly.

"Yes, sir," said the servant, mechanically

Van Cuyler waited, as if he expected Roberts to say something more. But that was all. The servant opened the door for him and he passed out to the elevator. As he went down he was conscious that the "boy" was eyeing him askance.

"Hope yo' feelin' bettah, sah," said the boy

"Quite well—perfectly well!" Van Cuyler snapped. What was the "boy" looking at? Was the scar so very visible? Could the boy read art lettering? Van Cuyler instinctively adjusted his hat and stepped from the elevator with an inward anathema. The fresh air revived his spirits somewhat. He walked to the avenue and started southward at a brisk pace, swinging his cane defiantly.

He would have done with it—get it over at once. He would go to the club and face the members. He wondered if the story had leaked. The first part of it

had, as he knew to his cost. He had not forgotten the civility—the painful civility—of his fellows when the Van Cuyler-Roder affair was first rumored. He had not forgotten the "cuts" when the rumor became certainty. True, he had some friends, who were enemies of Roder, and Louise had had sympathizers who knew of Roder's exasperating ways.

But his heart sank as he viewed the prospect before him. He was now on neither side of the affair. He was the pariah—the outcast, without even the status of the sinner in the controversy. He stopped short on the avenue and groaned. He must face them with the damning brand on his brow—the sign which told a whole tragic story in three intertwined letters. God! What a revenge! Roder would hear of it and laugh—his half-suppressed, frozen laugh. The newspapers——

A carriage went past. Two women turned their heads curiously and bowed. His hand arose instinctively to his hat, but fell to his side without removing it. The detail stung him to a sense of the enormity of his degradation. Wherever he went, social usages would demand the revealing of the brand. It would be like baring his soul to a hell of whispering devils!

He wandered on. He was conscious that his destination lay in one of the crosstown streets. But he did not arouse himself until he stood before a sign which announced a dermatologist. The idea had come like a star out of the gloom of those two weeks of mental turmoil. At first he had planned to call in a surgeon of intimate acquaintance and have the oval seal removed, but the horror of his self-consciousness had driven him to one who could not possibly know him nor his history; one who was more skilled also in the treatment of facial blots.

The dermatologist was a benign, spectacled person, who at once clasped his hands ecstatically and cried:

"Bless me! Is that a birthmark?"

"It shall be your business to remove it," said Van Cuyler, sharply.

"Tut, tut!" said the spectacled person. "I see. Of recent doing—hey? Most remarkable! L. V. R.—hey? Looks like a seal. How on earth did you come by that? It isn't tattooed. Bless me! *You've been branded!*"

The dermatologist shouted the words as if he had made an amazing discovery. Van Cuyler started as if he had been stabbed. He suddenly heard himself cursing the man, whose expression changed from surprise to anger. Then the purple blood rushed over the dermatologist's face.

"Stop!" he cried. "How dare you, sir! Leave my office! You have been branded by someone who has suffered more at your hands than I will allow you to inflict upon me. Leave this place at once, and may you carry that seal to hell, where you belong!"

Van Cuyler, pallid as a dead man, presently found himself in Madison Square, facing an acquaintance.

"'Pon my word, it's Van Cuyler!" cried the acquaintance. "Where the dickens have *you* been? Heard you were ill. You *do* look a bit off. What have you been doing with yourself?"

"I—I——" said Van Cuyler, dazedly, "I've been hunting—deer hunting—in Maine."

"Get anything? Or was it the kind spelled with an 'a'? What's this about——"

The acquaintance stopped talking. Van Cuyler certainly looked ill—very ill, indeed.

"Look here, old man!" said the friend. "You're not—what the dickens is that on your brow?"

"That?" echoed Van Cuyler, monotonously. "Why, that——"

He was seized with an impulse to run, but the hand of the acquaintance was on his shoulder, grasping it with kindly firmness. He wished that the ground could open and he—or the acquaintance—be engulfed in the abyss. But there was no escape. Desperation seized him. He snatched his hat from his head, baring his brow to the other's gaze.

"That!" he snarled. "*That's* what it is! Read it—damn you!—read it! And tell 'em all she did it—Louise Vernon Roder. Nothing like getting the story

straight. She branded me in my sleep. I deserved it, too. I'll carry it to hell, where I belong!"

In another second he was rushing across the square, with his hat in his hand.

"Poor fellow! Poor, old Van!" murmured the acquaintance. "I knew something would happen. But—good heaven! To think——"

That was the last time Van Cuyler was seen in New York.

IV

Van Cuyler sat on the veranda of the rough, wooden structure which he had come to cherish as a home and a refuge. The moon sailed in a dense, blue sky and cast brilliant gleams upon the frond-lances of the palms. Save for the Indians and the booming, whirring denizens of the surrounding *selvas,* he was alone—absolutely alone.

For five years he had sought this refuge—refuge from the eyes of man and woman. Time and again he had thought himself secure, shut off from all possibility of the truth becoming known. Men looked at his brow when they first met him, and some unguardedly questioned once, but never twice. Women asked, not Van Cuyler, but the men who associated with him. Gaining no information whence none could be forthcoming with truth, women speculated, romanced, even courted, until by dint of undying curiosity they caught a whisper from the far-blown winds. Again—time and again—Van Cuyler fled! When it seemed that there was no escape from the curse; when he had wandered, like Cain, over the face of the earth; when the pistol had been all but pressed to his temple, this refuge in the remote forests of Venezuela had opened to him.

Before that he had repeatedly essayed the removal of the telltale monogram from his brow, but ever his hand—his nerve—something—failed him. Ever after that last day in New York the conviction remained with him that he was destined to carry the seal "to hell, where he belonged." As time went on, too, he grew more regardless of the world's curiosity The seal was upon his soul the more it flamed upon his forehead. He might obliterate the monogram, but the scar—the memory of the scar—would remain with him, fraught with bitter meaning to himself.

There were even times when, like a religious fanatic, he rejoiced in the livid insignia of his past. But, despite that, he had welcomed the refuge in the *selvas.* As superintendent of a vast rubber-land concession, he was alone and supreme, like a sea captain among his subordinates, only Van Cuyler found more satisfaction in his isolation. The Indians feared him, for the strange mark on his brow As a rule, there was not a white man within a hundred miles.

But to-night there was—or should be—one. He was a director of the American concern which held the concession, and he was coming to look over the ground. He had sailed from New York three weeks before. From Port-of-Spain he had come up the river to Ciudad Bolivar Six days before, Van Cuyler's peons had gone to meet him with horses and pack-mules. The New Yorker was expected—to-night.

The coming of the man stirred the old dread in Van Cuyler, all the more that for seven months he had known peace. But why trouble himself? The fact that the visitor came from New York was of trivial moment. He need not necessarily be a New Yorker, and if a New Yorker, not necessarily one who had ever heard of Van Cuyler, or Roder, or the seal.

Yet he was troubled. It was the old story over again. From New York! He already saw the man's eyes travel to the strange mark. He anticipated the questioning silence and the awkward change of unspoken subject. Already he could see the man back in New York, with his strange tale of the white man in the *selvas* with the monogram stamped on his brow. It might be months, or years, but one day a face would light up and a tongue utter the name

"Van Cuyler!"

"Well, what of it? What had he to do with New York? All who knew, knew;

as for the rest—yet, if the story could only die, he himself would die—in peace.

There was a shouting in the far *selvas* and a near response from the Indian huts. He was coming. Presently there was a desultory ring of shod hoofs striking a loose stone. Several mounted men rode into the clearing and drew up before the low veranda. Van Cuyler extended a hand to greet the tall man, with the quiet, white man's voice.

"Come inside," said the superintendent.

"Something of a ride," said the director, following Van Cuyler into the lighted house.

The superintendent laid the lamp on the table and resolutely raised his eyes to the visitor's face. For a moment his senses seemed to be leaving him, but he pulled himself together He himself had changed—terribly He, the other, might not recognize him. But the brand was unique. Van Cuyler saw recognition succeed the startled flash in the director's eyes. The superintendent sank heavily into a chair and buried his face in his arms.

"Roder!"

The man who had once given her the seal stared at the collapsed figure before him. An Indian peon was standing in the doorway, with an armful of satchels and with wide-open eyes.

"Oh, you poor devil!" said the director, at last.

He waved the peon away and himself went out into the clearing, where he stood with his lips pursed to a vain whistle, staring up at the moon. All animosity had vanished from his heart. There was nothing in it for Van Cuyler but pity—pity!—the sympathy of one man for another against the common enemy—a woman.

And the woman? Roder had watched through those five years. She had drifted—yes. She had developed a voice. She had divorced him, Roder. She had married an impresario, been divorced, and married a leading actor And now she was leading lady to a second Thespian light, and another divorce was pending against her. And this poor devil——

Van Cuyler in the meantime had arisen from the chair and gone to his sleeping room. A sudden weight had lifted from his soul. It seemed that his sin was expiated, that a relenting fate had guided this man to his side; had made him utter the rough words which conveyed absolute forgiveness.

From a corner he snatched a steel ramrod and shoved it into the flame of the lamp. Slowly the metal heated and began to glow When it was tipped with a brilliant, radiating red, he stepped swiftly to the cracked mirror beside the bed, and looked for the last time at the intertwined L. V R.

For a moment it seemed that a face—the shadow of a once fair, grief-stricken face—was looking over his shoulder It vanished instantly, but in fading it seemed to have assumed a mocking expression. So quickly had the illusion come and gone that the glow of the heated rod had not diminished.

His hand was steady as he raised the ramrod above his head. Then he brought the branding iron down toward the accursed blot—slowly! One stab, and—the steel rod clanged on the floor Van Cuyler staggered. His hands were over his eyes as of yore. His brain was afire as of yore. His eyes were throbbing as of yore.

But it was done! The seal was obliterated. He drew away his hands. It was dark—pitch dark. The lamp must have gone out. Despite the intense pain, he felt in his pocket for a match. He struck it. It was still dark! For a moment he stood still. Then, with his hands before him, he felt for the table and the lamp. He passed his hand over the funnel. The hot vapor scorched it. The lamp was still burning—and it was dark!

Again he stood still and thought. He tried to recall why he had not made use of the hot metal before. Then he remembered and laughed. It was the story of an Italian who had destroyed his "evil eye" by passing a hot poker before his sight. Ah, yes! That was it.

He laughed again and groped around the table. He drew open a drawer and felt for the remedy.

Roder, looking up at the moon, heard the shot.

AT THE SIGN OF EROS

By Walter Pulitzer

Author of "Cupid's Pack of Cards," "Cozy Corner Confidences," etc.

* * *

WILLING TO TAKE CHANCES.

I.

He kissed her on the cheek.
"Oh, *help*!" exclaimed the maid.
He said, "Oh, thanks! I'll manage—
You'll see I need no *aid!*"

II.

He kissed her on the lips.
"How *dared* you!" cried the maid.
He said, "I dared because I'm brave,
Of germs I'm not afraid!"

* * *

The girl who elopes with a baseball player evidently thinks she has a good catch!

* * *

SWEET NOTHINGS—WITH A GRAIN OF SALT.

"The papers say he took her to a hotel."
"Well, there are two sides to every story, you know"
"Yes, and sometimes four sides and a ceiling."

HE—Dearest, my *single* thought is but for you.
SHE—Then I wish you wouldn't think of me that way any more!

GEBHART—That Miss Knowitt has brains enough for two.
CARSONE—Then you should marry her without delay

MURIEL—I don't think you'd better speak to papa to-night, Reggie.
REGGIE—Why so, dear? Is he indisposed?
MURIEL—Yes, tired and cross. You know, nothing so completely exhausts poor papa as cutting coupons from his government bonds!

* * *

It is not diplomacy for a man with a large family of daughters to keep a dog.

A MIDNIGHT TRAGEDY.

She stealthily arose from bed.
She groped around for her husband's clothes.
Finding them at last, she proceeded to search the pockets.
"Foiled!" she wailed between her chattering teeth.
Then she descended the stairs to the hall.
On the hatrack hung her husband's overcoat.
She delved into the pockets one by one.
"My God!" she cried. "The letters I gave him this morning are gone. *He must have mailed them!*"
Heart-broken, she went back to bed.

* * *

Much *adieu* about nothing—a woman's farewell!

* * *

M'YES!

"Dearest Ethel," began the young man, fervently, "you are different from any other girl I ever knew"
"In what way?" asked his bride-to-be.
"Why—er—you see," he replied, rather at a loss how to proceed, "you accepted me."

* * *

A TRUE SPORT

Said The Slipper to The Corset, "I have more fun than you. I dance every night!"
Said The Corset to The Slipper, "More fun, eh? Why, I'm on a big bust all the time!"

TO A GIRL CROSSING BROADWAY

Providence sends the naughty wind
That blows your skirts knee-high,
But God is good and He sends the dust
That blows in the bad man's eye!

* * *

FROM A SOCIETY JOURNAL.

"When a gentleman and a lady are walking up the street the lady should walk inside the gentleman."—*Exchange.*
This is awful!

* * *

Love and the world laughs *at* you!

THE WILSON-WHITES' DIVORCE

By Maitland LeRoy Osborne

THE Wilson-Whites were ennuied with living and satiated with sensations. They suffered also from that malignant and peculiarly American disorder, too much money. Neither of them had ever had a wish ungratified; therefore, they found existence stale, unprofitable and unsatisfying. Occasionally, 'tis true, they succeeded for a time in deluding themselves into the belief that they were enjoying something, but sooner or later the disillusionment was sure to come.

And so they wearily plodded the rounds of society resorts and fulfilled their social obligations at Newport, Bar Harbor, the mountains, the seashore, the country, Florida, London — wherever Fashion set up its temporary glittering court, and danced and feasted and wore fine raiment in beautiful uniformity with their "set."

Living always under the shadow of wealth, born to purple and fine linen, brought up to believe money the most beautiful, necessary and desirable thing in the world, it was not strange that they could not realize the nature of the burden that bore them down. All they were conscious of was a vague discomfort, a lack of contentment, a longing for something highly desirable that they could not define. When the longing grew particularly acute they went out and bought something and played with it for an hour, or a day, or a month, and tried to imagine themselves amused, and felt vaguely aggrieved that the same undefined longing persisted still.

It was a pity, too, for, really, they were both rather nice, good-natured, amusing people, whom anyone would have been glad to be friends with if they hadn't had so much money. If Bobby, for instance, had been a bank clerk, or an architect, or a rising young lawyer, and had had to economize a bit on clothes and limit his expenditure for cigars, and if Dolly had had to get along with one maid and do most of her own cooking and have her last year's gowns made over to look like new, they'd have been a most delightful couple to know, and would have got more real, genuine, satisfying enjoyment out of one year of life than from an eternity of existence handicapped with their burden of inherited wealth.

Even if Bobby had amassed the money himself it would have been vastly different; but all he had ever had to do with money was to spend it, without thought of where it came from or how much was left. And Dolly likewise. They knew, both of them, in a vague way, that some forgotten ancestor had thoughtfully laid the cornerstone of their fortunes in the dim obscurity of the past, and that other ancestors, coming after, had builded up the structure into an imposing, solid fact; and that still other later ancestors had judiciously invested in mines and railroads and steamship lines that unfailingly grew and prospered and added golden increment to their millions.

And so Bobby and Dolly had grown from pampered, uninteresting childhood to pampered, uninteresting youth, carefully guided in the narrow pathway which it was permitted them to tread. Even their marriage had been arranged for them, years and years before they had had any thought of it, and both being well-behaved, obedient children, when the proper time arrived, they obeyed the prompting of their monitors and accepted matrimony with as much emotion as they accepted their daily bath.

Five years of marital placidity convinced them both that marriage was somewhat of a bore. Perhaps if they had had children it might have been otherwise; but, while they would have perfunctorily accepted parenthood, they experienced no particular longing for its responsibilities and joys, and drifted into the category of childless people of

fashion, feeling merely, in a vague way, that life, that owed them so much, had somehow cheated them of part of their inheritance.

Dolly it was who first felt the fetters galling. So many of her acquaintances had slipped the matrimonial yoke for more or less valid reasons that she began, hazily at first, to wonder what it would seem like to be divorced. It would be a new sensation at least, and sensations, vivid ones, were necessary to her happiness.

When she mentioned the subject of her cogitations to Bobby, he stared at her first in bewilderment. Then, blunderingly, in his clumsy, man fashion, he tried to assign a reason for her discontent.

"It isn't any one particular thing, Bobby," she said, plaintively. "I can't explain, even to myself, just why I want a divorce. All I know is that I do want it. Perhaps if you beat me occasionally or got disgracefully drunk or gambled atrociously or ran after other women I might love you with fervor and devotion. But it's all so—so commonplace and unamusing that I'm tired of it. I want a change. So if you don't mind, Bobby, I think I'll get a divorce."

Bobby lit a cigarette and smoked reflectively. "It is rather stupid," he assented. "If it will amuse you any to be divorced, go ahead. I—I'd like to please you, Dolly," he said, a trifle shyly.

"You're a dear, good boy!" answered Dolly, with animation. "I'll see Plunkett at once." Plunkett being the staid, irreproachable man of law, who safeguarded Dolly's funded interests.

For the very rich the pathway to the divorce court is strewn with roses. With twenty trunks, two maids, an auto and a chauffeur, Dolly departed in strict incognito for the North Dakota divorce colony, where she established herself in the most comfortable, commodious and exclusive suite of the most expensive hostelry there established for sheltering wealthy women weary of the tie that tires, and prepared to pass the allotted period of probation in strict seclusion.

Meanwhile Bobby moped about his clubs, motored, rode and golfed, and practiced the rôle of ex-husband, experiencing alternate boredom and relief. That Dolly telegraphed him daily bulletins of her doings and wrote him weekly bulky letters filled with lively gossip did not strike him as incongruous. He considered himself still on the best of terms with her, executed her commissions with faithfulness and dispatch, and spent an entire afternoon in selecting a diamond pin and pearl necklace as a gift to her on the occasion of her birthday.

On the day of her return he was at the station an hour before her train was due, and when she descended from the parlor car pushed his way through the crowd to greet her eagerly, and nearly kissed her before he remembered. Then he blushed and fumbled awkwardly with his hat, while Dolly giggled. On the day after the decree was granted they met again, Bobby openly doleful, Dolly a trifle subdued.

"Let's go somewhere and have lunch," he suggested, mournfully, "and—er—celebrate the—er—joyful occasion."

"All right," assented Dolly. "It's the last time. Henceforth we meet as strangers. But we'll always be good friends, won't we, Bobby?" she asked, anxiously. "It isn't as though we were going to part in anger." Then, musingly, "I wonder how it's going to seem! Anyway," hopefully, "if we don't like it we can get married all over again, can't we, Bobby?"

Bobby blushed a dull red and turned his head away. "Then it isn't—isn't Wentworth?" he asked, huskily.

Dolly gazed at him in wide-eyed astonishment. "Why, Bobby!" she gasped. "The idea!"

Bobby grew still more red. "I'm such a duffer!" he confessed, humbly. "And I rather fancied it might be him, you know," he said. "Anyway, I'm glad it isn't."

Later he managed awkwardly to voice a thought that had troubled him for days. "If anything should happen, Dolly," he said, "if you should need money, or—or be sick, or anything of that sort, you'll let me know, won't you?"

"Why, of course, Bobby," Dolly agreed, readily.

"And you'd better let me send you that new car I bought last month," he suggested. "It's a mighty nice little car, and it's upholstered in green leather You always liked green, you know"

"Thanks, awfully!" said Dolly "And now I must really go, Bobby We don't want folks to gossip, you know"

And so they parted, and Dolly went to eat of the fleshpots of Newport, while Bobby, feeling somehow very much alone in the world, went to Florida to fish for tarpon, and loafed forlornly about the clubhouse and smoked innumerable cigars.

Time passed, as Time has a way of doing, and in the fullness thereof Dolly went abroad and was very gay in the London season, fluttered about Paris like a butterfly, renewed old acquaintances in Nice; took a peep at Switzerland, and finally settled down at Venice for an extended stay. The picturesque sights along the grand canal charmed her color-loving soul; the silent, slow-gliding gondolas suggested mystery and intrigue, and the restfulness and quiet of her daily life in the shadow of the Bridge of Sighs soothed her restless spirit to tranquillity.

And then, one day, a chance meeting with a lately arrived acquaintance brought disquieting news of Bobby. Some astounding financial upheaval had left him penniless. Her first thought was to cable funds to him—her second to go to him in person and offer him a share of her own fortune on any terms he might dictate. She felt more than a little doubtful of his accepting financial aid from her, proffered from a distance, but if she bore it to him with her own hands she felt confident of overcoming any scruples he might advance.

Stopping only long enough to make the absolutely necessary preparations for her journey and leaving one of her maids to complete the packing of her baggage and attend to forwarding it, she set out in a fever of impatience for America. The tremor of agitation and concern that overcame her when she thought of Bobby penniless, perhaps friendless and in actual want, confused and frightened her Was she in love with him, after all? she asked herself, and could not find the answer to the question.

So changed had Bobby become in the months of her absence that at first she hardly knew him. She had left him bored, listless, precise in speech and manner She returned to find him alert, bright eyed, restless with energy, somewhat slangy as to conversation and careless as to costume—in a word, intensely alive and human.

He was so different from what she had expected that she was confused and self-conscious. The carefully considered speech that she had mentally prepared, in which she had intended to gradually lead up to the proposal of sharing her fortune with him in such a way that he could not refuse her offer, fled completely from her mind.

"Oh, Bobby!" she cried, instead. "I was in Venice when I heard of it, and I started for home at once, and I've cried myself to sleep every night, and won't you please—please take half of my horrid money? If you won't I shall be desperate!"

Bobby grinned joyously and held up both hands in protest. "That's awfully good and generous of you, Dolly," he said, "but I couldn't do it, really. I don't want it—honest—and I couldn't take it if I did."

"But I heard you had lost every dollar," said Dolly, piteously, "and I didn't know but what you might even be—be hungry, and I've worried dreadfully."

Bobby grinned. "I did lose it," he answered, "and I don't know yet just how, but I'm not worrying about it for a minute, and I haven't been hungry very long at a time. It was something of a shock at first, of course, and I didn't get used to the feeling of being poor all at once; but now I'm finding out what a lot of fun there is in the world, and you couldn't hire me to be rich again. When I found I'd got to get out and hustle for something to eat and a place to sleep, I took stock of my accomplishments and decided I wasn't really fitted by inclination and training for any calling except that of a chauffeur. You know, I was a pretty good amateur mechanician before

the crash came. It didn't take me long to find a place as driver in one of the big garages, and in a few months I got to be manager Now I'm selling cars on commission and demonstrating for one of the big firms, and in a year or so I expect to be able to open a garage of my own.

"I've got acquainted with a lot of mighty interesting people—just common, human people, you know—and I like 'em, and I like hustling around for business, and getting it. I used to think living was an awful bore, but it isn't. It's the greatest fun there is—just living and working, and having a good time on the side. It's great!"

Dolly gazed at him with speculative eyes. "Do you suppose, Bobby," she queried, "that you could teach me to like it?"

"I'll bet I could!" answered Bobby "But you'd have to get rid of your money first—every dollar of it. Give it to somebody you've got a grudge against, or endow a hospital or something."

"If I did, would you—would you marry me again, Bobby?" she asked, anxiously.

"Would I!" exclaimed Bobby, rapturously. "You'd have to hire a special policeman to keep me from doing it. There's just one girl in all this great, big world I want—and that's you, Dolly."

"I believe it would be worth the price, Bobby," said Dolly, with shining eyes. "I'll see Plunkett to-day and get him to put my money in trust for a children's hospital, and then we'll go round, Bobby, and hunt up poor, little, sick and crippled children and send them there. But—but, Bobby—suppose—we might"—she hid her face against his shoulder and spoke in a hushed and trembling voice—"perhaps we might have children ourselves, Bobby."

He drew her close to his breast. "I hope we will, sweetheart," he said, solemnly; "but if we do, we won't handicap them with wealth. They shall have a chance to grow up free and happy." Then he kissed her, and presently she went to see Plunkett, and astonished that staid person, for the first and only time in his life.

And shortly afterwards she and Bobby were married again, and if you should happen to be privileged to make their acquaintance, you would say that they were the happiest and most contented couple you ever met, and that they had three of the most charming children you ever saw—that is, unless you happen to have children yourself.

THE WITNESS

By Robert Braco

EXASPERATED by his indifference, Rosalie looked at him with an expression even more strangely catlike than usual, and told him, with her cold, cruel smile, without even taking the trouble to hide her meanness, that her husband had not gone away on a journey, as she had let him think. No, no, it was not true, he was here—the beast—sleeping in the very next room! When Rudolfo heard this he felt his blood grow cold in his veins and clutched at his heart, which seemed to come to a sudden standstill after one violent throb.

"Do you want to hear him snore? Just approach the door and listen. Come along!"

"No, I prefer to remain where I am. I believe you—do not doubt for a moment that I believe you. But why did you summon me here this night? Why did you send over the old hag Mathilda to tell me that he was going to Rome by the 10.40 train? What sort of jest is this? The devil take it!"

He spoke all this in a hardly audible whisper; the slight little fellow shivered in all his body. His womanish, beardless

face was drawn, and his eyes looked uneasily from one door to the other. Of his usual bravado—that of the *blasé*, twenty-year-old woman's darling—not a vestige remained. The unconquerable, panicky fear made him as weak as a child.

"Do you want to hear him snore?" cruelly repeated Rosalia, in a low voice.

"Stop! What do I want to hear him snore for? You must be mad! I want to get out of here—that is all I want. Do you understand?"

"No—that you will not. See, here I have the key from the outside door. You have fallen into a trap, my young poet, and you shall stay in it!"

"But, tell me what you have on your mind to-night. Why do you look at me in such a way, and why are you speaking to me like this?"

"Why do I look and speak to you in this way? You do not know, do you? But yesterday at the fountain of the public park—do you recollect?"

"Well—and?"

"I told you, 'To-morrow is Saturday. Antonio will, in all probability, have to leave on a journey. Can you come to me about 11 p. m.'?"

"Well—well, speak further."

"You did not reply to me, but continued to gaze like one entranced after a passing hearse."

"Don't you know that the sight of a hearse always makes a strange impression on me?"

"You did not give me an answer—you actor, you! Because you had already made other arrangements.

"I?"

"Yes, an appointment with another woman: and as Antonio did not leave the city, after all. I nevertheless managed to lure you here by a lie, so as to keep you from running to the other one."

"But listen to me. It is now a month since you have bothered me with all kinds of foolish suspicions."

"And you, poor boy! are as innocent of any wrong as a new-born babe. Now, look here, you ninny! You have read so many books and have written a heap of poetry, and are nevertheless such a simpleton that you could not even notice that I have known everything for a long time. Such a puny, little thing as yourself—such a weakling—cannot hide for long his treachery to the woman whom he professes to love!"

"With your foolish talk, you will yet bring a misfortune upon me. Let me get out of here!"

"I will let you go; but only under one condition."

"Go ahead; let us hear your condition, but be quick about it."

"That you confess everything to me."

"And what have I to confess?"

"Don't lie!"

"I lie—I lie?"

"Lying will not do you any good. I could tell you who she is, where she lives, and what she does, the insipid thing who is enamored with you. But because I still love you very much, you rascal, you, I am prepared—do you hear?—I am even prepared to forgive and to spare you, if you prove to me your repentance and contrition by frankly confessing everything and promising never again to go near her."

Intoxicated by maddening jealousy, to which still clung a slight feeling of hope that her suspicions were unfounded, her words sounded sincere and her lips burned. She wished to find out if he was deceiving her, and for that reason she had lured him into a place where he could at any moment be caught by that huge creature—her husband—thinking that fear would force the truth from the lips of the slight, puny little fellow whom she loved as only a woman past forty can love, and hoping that her suspicions might prove false and that he would not have anything to confess. She cajoled and persuaded him as one persuades a child to confess to the foolish mischief it has committed. Bending close to his ear, she said:

"Well, go ahead: tell me everything—mind you, everything!"

In his fear and excitement he was slowly coming to the conclusion that she must have been shadowing him for some time, and really knew as much as she pretended to know. For a moment he

hesitated; then he said, in the tone of one who does not choose to commit himself·

"If you know everything, as you say, why do you need me to tell you?"

"Why? Because a thorough confession," she replied, searching for words, "would make it again possible for me to trust you. Then I should not fear any more treachery and falsehood on your part. Do you understand me—yes? Do you understand, my love?"

"Shall I invent a story, just to please you?"

"Take care! Take care!"

"Give me the key and let me go!"

"I tell you, take care!"

"No, no; do not shout so loud."

"Either you obey and confess or I will really begin to shout, and that will be very unfortunate for you. There is no other way out of the difficulty—neither for you nor for me."

"Curse you!"

"Tell me everything and you shall go free."

Seeing that, though he feared her threat very much, he nevertheless could not find anything to confess, her suspicions became partly allayed, and she was ready to believe that her fears were unfounded. A little more torture and a little more resistance on his part and she would have loudly proclaimed his innocence.

But he, beside himself with fear, was already half conquerer and ready to surrender. He was drawn into the trap she had set for him, as if driven by some magical power.

"She must have shadowed me," he thought. "And maybe she has taken the letter which I thought I lost out of my pocket. She knows perfectly well for whom I have deceived her It would be better for me to try and calm her by a confession than to exasperate this terrible woman still further She is really capable, if thwarted, of handing me over to her brute of a husband."

"Rudolfo, my Rudolfo, do not force me to commit a foolish action—nay, a crime! Very well, then, you have deceived me. What do I demand of you now? What are my hopes? That you should show yourself repentant, good, upright and frank. Don't you see that I cannot act otherwise?"

She spoke the last words a little louder than before, and Rudolfo, shivering with fear, quickly put his hand over her mouth.

"Sh—sh! Sh—sh! I will—I will tell you all!"

Rosalia kept silent. It seemed to her that her head was bursting. A fiery stream of wrath ran through her nerves. But she well understood that now, more than ever, she had need of her whole self-possession. After a short pause she succeeded in regaining her self-command and in saying, in a voice fraught with gratitude:

"Thanks—thanks, my darling! Go on and tell me."

"Do you swear to let me go unmolested, and that you will forgive me?"

"I swear! Come, tell me."

"There is but little to be told. We became fascinated without wishing it."

"So! Without wishing it?"

"Of course! I am sorry I have not any letter with me so you could convince yourself with you own eyes. I am really sorry. The letter which you probably have—which you have taken out of my pocket——"

"Which I took out of your pocket?" (She had never taken any letter from him; but, with her habitual slyness, she divined that he must have lost one, and greedily upheld him in his fear of her having it in her hands) "Well, go ahead."

"This letter is the only one from which one could not see the truth at the first glance."

"And what is the truth?"

"The truth is that I have only been drawn to her from pity."

"Is that so—really? From the letter one could judge quite otherwise."

"And, nevertheless, if I had not pitied her——"

"You would not——"

"I would not have let her love me; no, I would not."

"By the way——"

"Why are you interrupting me, Rosalia?"

"By the way, is she beautiful?"

"Beautiful? No."

"Is she young?"

"Young? Yes, she is. But she does not please me."

"Ah! She does not please you?"

"Not at all."

"But, tell me, why—why do you always carry her picture secreted with you?"

"What!" he exclaimed, thunderstruck with amazement. "Even this you know?"

Rosalia's eyes, which were now ablaze with anger, opened wide. She gnashed her teeth and shook him violently by his shoulders.

"No," she said, flinging the words into his face. "No, I did not know it, I did not know anything, I simply guessed it—everything, everything, everything! You traitor!"

"You may beat me, torture me, but, for God's sake, don't shout so!" he whispered, while a cold sweat covered his brow.

But the woman he had betrayed, on hearing his pleading, suddenly recollected that she had her bloody revenge here by her hand, and she stepped back from him, screaming so loudly that her cries resounded through the stillness of the night

"You mean, despicable creature! You loathsome reptile! You believe that I would forgive you?"

"Do not shout so—please do not shout so!"

"You believed it? You ass!"

"Rosalia, we are lost!"

"Yes, we are lost! I want to see you die—and you will die!"

For a moment she listened, then she said

"Here he comes. It is fulfilled!"

And the monster, who had only a moment before been fast asleep, rushed in like an earthquake. Only half clad, he looked like some ludicrous, huge beast, and everything in the room—the walls, the furniture—seemed to vibrate with fear at his approach. Rudolfo uttered a groan and shrank back with outstretched arms, as if trying to ward off a blow, in his backward step he overturned a chair and hurt his shoulder by striking the wall. Rosalia looked on, her eyes spurting the fire of rage and hatred in the dim light of the room, and screamed

"Kill him! Kill him!"

But her husband did not even approach Rudolfo. He rushed straight at her, with the revolver clutched tight in his fist, and roared

"No, this is for you!" and he fired. She fell to the floor, her hands tightly pressed to her breast, from which the blood was already gushing, but her lips still pleaded for the death of her treacherous lover

"Kill him! Kill him! I beg of you, kill him also!"

Rudolfo crouched behind the overturned chair His whole body shook convulsively with fear. The husband approached him and gazed at him for several minutes in silence, then he said, in a calm, collected voice

"Look you here! I am going in to dress. You wait for me. You will have to accompany me to the police station. You are to be my witness. Do you understand?"

SINGING WOOD—A STUDY

By Virginia Leila Wentz

IDEALS, sentiment, dreams — ah, they were all very well for youth, she told herself. But she was a woman now; she could do without them. There were other things more necessary to her life. This, for example She lifted her huge muff of ermine and laid her soft cheek caressingly against it. Oh, the queenly feel of the thing—how all her life she had longed for just such luxury! And this: With a glance of pride, she swept the aristocratic equipments of the motor car in which they were spinning up the avenue.

How she loved the easy, luxuriant things of life—dainty viands, lavish apparel; the adulation of the passing glance, the glitter of many electrics! She, Angela Markham, was not made for domesticity, she mused, as the car turned into Fifty-seventh street; she was an exotic. She craved the stimulus of continual excitement; the outside, ostentatious atmosphere of restaurant, theatre, hotel.

"Wake up, Angela! You haven't uttered a word for ten minutes. That won't do, you know. Mind you, I'll expect my wife to be a credit to me in conversation. Why, that's one of the reasons that first made me determined to marry you—you're such a corker in conversation. Yes, sir!"—the man at her side smiled coarsely—"you're one of the best talkers I ever bucked up against!"

There was a jewel of Purdie's on Angela's finger Under her big muff she pressed it rather sharply into her flesh as he spoke. Why had the mere fact of her deciding to marry this man suddenly made hm so obnoxious to her? Yesterday, doubtless, his eyes had been just as small and cold and flinty, his jaw just as heavy, his speech just as vulgar.

"One can't always be up to conversation, you know," she said, biting her scarlet underlip. Quickly she turned her tactics and smiled at him—one of her radiant, dimpled smiles. "Just wait till we get to Sherry's to-night. I'll make up for it at Sherry's."

At Carnegie Hall they alighted from the motor car. The lobby of the house was deserted, and behind the swinging doors of the auditorium scattering volleys of applause told that they were late for the concert; that they had missed the first number, at least.

After a little delay, the manager of the concert appeared on the stage and announced that, owing to a sudden illness, Herr Kreizel, the celebrated violinist, would not be able to appear, but that he had supplied a substitute to give the promised numbers. Angela missed the name of the substitute, there was such a talkative, old gentleman back of her. However, it made very little difference, she'd come principally to hear Mlle. Carmel sing. Over in Paris, in the days when she was studying music herself, Mademoiselle had been a friend of hers.

Of a sudden, Angela went white and her lorgnon dropped clattering to the floor Five years ago!—and there he stood but as yesterday! A slight, inconspicuous figure, holding his precious Amati—a man still young, with thick, black hair, a lofty, intelligent forehead; wide, sensitive nostrils, an air of calmness and serenity, and an indescribable expression of pride, high thinking and artistic fire.

At the first sweet, silver sound of the strings under the bow Angela shuddered. Ah, no, no—dear God, not that!—not Beethoven's Romance in G!

Presently, as the witchery of the music compelled her, she lost the subjective mood, and viewed things from an objective point of view. The auditorium faded away. The consciousness of two young lovers, both struggling for the sake of their respective arts in obscure attic lodgings on La Rue de la Tour d'Auvergne, became very real to her.

"Look, sweetheart!" she heard the man

saying. "See how that sunset displays the gems of Fairyland on the slopes of the Montmartre!" They had pushed the cheesecloth curtains in her tiny studio window further apart, and were standing with their faces lifted to the light. "Do you know, dear," he went on, turning to the girl reverently, "you might pose for the mystery of womanhood as you stand so, the splendid rose flame bathing you. And to think that you've promised to be my little wife—that I'm to have the exquisite privilege of sheltering you always. It maddens me now, sometimes, to know what you are being deprived of—you who are the fairest, sweetest flower in all God's garden! But, Angela, I have it in me to succeed. When I get my mother's mortgage paid off, I shall work for you with all the fire of my soul, all the strength of my fingers, all the concentration of my brain. I shall make it up to you—I——"

She could hear the girl's happy, young laugh break in with the note of joyful tenderness and reassurance. Had she, Angela Markham, really laughed like that once? she wondered. It seemed rather strange now that any woman could have such a happy, unspoiled laugh.

"Gad! that young devil of a violinist's got an ear for music, all right. Wonder who he is! Never heard of him before; did you? But, anyhow, they're all a sentimental, poverty-stricken lot. Ain't you glad you lost your voice, Angela, and had to chuck up your music? Ain't you glad you're goin' to marry a Wall Street man instead of a musician?" The young woman with the ermine muff shivered as Purdie's plump, ostentatiously jeweled hand fell a trifle heavily on her own.

In response to unanimous plaudits from the audience, the slim figure with the Amati was raising his beloved instrument to his chin for an encore.

What was the melody he played? Only two in that audience had ever heard it before. It grew up like a white flower in the ferny spaces of deep woods. It gathered strength as does the night, star following star. It ceased as the dawn begins, with quiet, peaceful color. A few notes, low and firm and equal, and it was done.

The first time Angela had heard him play it was the hour of impoverisation. How unforgettably she recalled the setting! Outside the little attic studios the thinning rain had begun to whisper silence—beyond the reach of temptation, to speak in mere words. He had picked up his precious fiddle, as calm in the glint of firelight it lay, and lovingly his fingers had quivered for an instant along the strings. How he loved it! "It's not wood and steel, sweetheart; but immortality Listen!" The whispering silence had passed upward, trailing its silken skirts into space, and then—and then——

A hot tear splashed on Angela's white-gloved hand—the first that had moistened her heavy, black lashes in years. With a sickening effort, she fetched herself together Fortunately, however, her escort had not observed the miracle. He was stretching his ruddy, fat neck to notice someone on the other side of the house.

"That's him, I bet!" he ejaculated, turning to Angela. "See that man over there with the bald head? Well, that's the architect I was talkin' to this morning about the plans for our new house. It'll be a bird, I can tell you!"

She forced a smile to her lips, and it stayed there in artificial, piteous fashion until her favorite andante dispelled it.

Under her glove she turned the big solitaire around and around uncertainly. Suppose—suppose—before it was too late—— "After all, the world is well lost for love, is it not?" she mused. There seemed to be a strange, sweet fascination in the thought.

In the silence that followed the violinist's final disappearance from the stage Angelica overheard a bit of monologue on the part of the talkative, old gentleman sitting just behind. Purdie had gone out for a moment to telephone.

"Ah, he has genius, I tell you! Now that at last his chance has come, he won't lack for engagements. Can't help but make a hit, you see. Met him a couple of years ago, in Berlin, where he was

burying his talent in an orchestra—second fiddle, at that. Fancy! He was working like a dog, teaching, too—helping to lift the mortgage on his mother's farm in Normandy, and educating his little sister. His face—you never saw so much suffering condensed into one face. He was beardless, but old; eager, determined, desperate, but tired. It appears, to cap the climax, that a girl who had been to him the sum of all things excellent—one of your honest American girls, by the way—had thrown him over, having aspirations of her own, and tiring of the long road it took him to travel to success. Well, well, the world moves on, and if you could guess another little story that's back of his appearance here to-day——"

Here his feminine companion interposed a low-pitched question.

"Yes, Miss Cleverness, how did you guess? I'd thought it was a secret. Yes, it's Herr Kreizel's daughter. There she is, over there—that box in the first right-hand tier. Pretty as a picture, isn't she? And just as sweet as she is beautiful, I assure you. They'll make an ideal couple, and Herr Kreizel is simply dippy over it. He loves that young fellow already like a son, and will give him every chance."

* * * * * *

When Purdie returned, a few minutes later, he found Angela's lorgnon bearing upon the box in the first right-hand tier. There was a girl there—a dark, lovely, Murillo-faced girl, with the candor of one of Perugino's trumpeting angels on her young brow.

"Who are you rubbering at this time, Angela?" he asked, with coarse good nature. Angela folded her lorgnon.

"I believe I'm a bit bored and have a headache," she said in answer. "Come, let's go. We can hear Mlle. Carmel another time."

THE AWAKENING OF HALSEY

By Richard Harold Warner

WHEN the usher brought the note to his box, young Tom Halsey's hands trembled so violently that for a moment he was unable to tear open the long-coveted missive.

The letter, in a round, childish but not illiterate handwriting, ran as follows:

"DEAR MR. HALSEY:

"I have decided to reward you for your long perseverance. Come and see me tomorrow at three o'clock, at my apartment in the Roumania. Very sincerely,

"VALERIE."

Halsey sat as one stunned, unable to comprehend the fact that such joy really was to be his, and that the will-o'-the-wisp which he had pursued so fruitlessly for nearly a year was at last within his grasp. With unseeing eyes, he stared at the last act of "The Maid of Granada," finding nothing of interest in the tawdry spectacle, which he was witnessing tonight for the eighteenth time. But when the chorus finally subsided and retired to the back of the stage, and the orchestra burst into the opening bars of a lilting bolero, Halsey leaned over the rail, his face tense with excitement. This moment was very familiar to him, and fraught with greatest import.

Suddenly, a small, graceful figure glided upon the stage, and for a moment stood poised full in the glare of the calcium. Smiling saucily from under the slant of her turban, with one white arm raised above her head, she looked the very incarnation of that unreal, enchanted land—the Spain of comic opera. Then, with a click of her castanets and a stamp of her heels, she threw herself headlong into the dance, tugging more forcibly

with every glide, every inimitable pirouette, at the heartstrings of the pale-faced boy gazing so hungrily from the dim recesses of the box. And this was Valérie, the celebrated dancer, who had deigned to bid to her apartment Tom Halsey, scion of one of the oldest families in America and a sophomore in a great New England university

When she had whirled from sight for the last time, Halsey abruptly left the theatre and walked on air to his hotel. He retired at once, but only to pass a sleepless night, so great was his excitement at the prospect of all that the next day held forth.

Less than two years before, Tom Halsey had been plunged from the lofty but unsubstantial heights created by an adoring mother and a long line of elderly tutors into the vortex of college life. Here his family affiliations had placed him, willy nilly, among a crowd of men with whom his position and wealth were his only points in common. They liked him, borrowed money from him, and frankly found him uncongenial.

Of all their strange diversions, the one of which the prosy youth disapproved most strongly was the stage-door habit. He abominated and feared the beauties of the footlights, and avoided them as he would the plague. But one night he saw Valérie dance in "The Maid of Granada," when it was being tried out on the road before the New York opening, and from that moment the peaceful course of his life was changed. Great as was the incongruity between the two, the dancer appealed strongly to Halsey; he endowed her with qualities which she did not possess in the slightest degree, and fancied himself in love with her Formerly standing high in his studies, his scholarship now declined appreciably, and he was frequently absent from college altogether His companions noticed the change, but attributed it to anything but the real cause.

When Valérie received the first of Halsey's stilted, self-conscious letters begging her to waive the formality of an introduction in the face of their lack of mutual friends, she threw it aside with a shrug. Her novitiate had been served some time before, and she was familiar with most types of college men. But when the letters became more and more frequent, increasing in intensity while losing nothing in awkwardness, and flowers came almost daily from the same source, she realized that this was a stubborn case. But she decided upon action only when the sight of his face staring at her from the box at her left began to get on her nerves. Being a kind-hearted person, she resolved to let her admirer down as easily as possible, having abundant faith in her own crude powers to carry the affair through with complete success. It was then that she wrote the note.

Promptly at three, the next afternoon, Halsey entered the Roumania. It was a cheap, new apartment house, and he wondered how such an exquisite being as his Valérie could live in such a place. It seemed as if the elevator rose miles in its course from the gaudy imitation onyx on the first floor to the red-painted burlap of the eleventh, where the divinity dwelt. But at last he found himself ringing the doorbell of her apartment.

After some delay the door was opened, and Halsey saw before him a small figure clad in a long, trailing house gown. Dim as was the light in the narrow hall, he felt instinctively that this was Valérie.

"Come in!" she said, in a musical, Irish voice, and Halsey followed her into a small sitting room, which reeked with the combined odors of cooking and tobacco smoke. The hideous wall paper was partially concealed by innumerable photographs—some of Valérie, and some of a coarse-looking man in baseball clothes. Over the gas-log fireplace hung the crayon portrait of a very fat, old woman.

He was too dazed to grasp the full significance of his surroundings, when his companion turned suddenly and looked him sharply in the face.

"Well, I never!" she cried, in well-simulated surprise. "I did'nt know you. You're Mr Halsey, the boy that's been sending me all those bully flowers. Well, they were lovely, and I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure. I gave ma a lot, too,

and she was crazy about them. She thinks you're all to the candy, all right. But sit down and rest yourself."

Recoiling from this greeting as if the woman had struck him, he mutely obeyed. He stared stupidly into the pretty, rather ordinary face before him, recognizing every feature of the dainty elf he had so long worshiped; yet, in some vague, inexplicable way, finding them sadly lacking in the charm they had conveyed across the footlights. All unconsciously, he had regarded Valérie as a being immeasurably removed from her prosaic fellow-mortals, had she greeted him wearing a Spanish turban and red-heeled slippers, and led him into an exotic bower where he heard only the strum of guitars and the click of castanets, he would have evinced no surprise. But to find her dwelling contentedly in a Harlem flat—it was too horrible.

Conversation did not flourish. Halsey sat in the silent detachment of his confusion, facing the vital necessity of a complete readjustment of the life he had been leading for the past year, yet, with the optimism of youth, refusing to see that the end had really come.

Valérie was evidently making conversation, glibly uttering banalities.

"You know, I never do answer mash notes, and I never meet a fellow without an introduction. I don't care much for college boys, anyhow—they're too fresh. But I saw you were different, and I liked your nerve, so I made up my mind I'd let you come and see us, and ma didn't mind a bit."

There was a lull, and Halsey roused himself with an effort. Loth to surrender all at once the roseate dreams he had been cherishing for so long, he decided to ask Valérie to dine with him at some gay restaurant. Perhaps, with the light and music, the old glamour would return, and at any rate, he probably would be seen and recognized by some envious acquaintance, who would spread the news about college.

Whether artlessly or with motive, Halsey never knew, Valérie suddenly called out:

"Oh, you, Bill! come on in! I've got some one here I want you to meet;" and after a short pause a big, hulking fellow, dressed in his shirtsleeves, and smoking a stumpy pipe, entered the room.

"Bill, this is Mr Halsey, the college boy I was telling you about," said Valérie.

"He's my husband, you know," she explained, proudly, to Halsey; "he's Bill Gilligan, the pitcher—you know Bill, of course?"

Halsey heard his own voice, as though it were issuing from a cave, saying something, he wasn't sure what.

"I ain't played fer de las' two seasons," vouchsafed Gilligan, relinquishing Halsey's hand from a vise-like squeeze, "rheumatiz, you know. Been flat on me back mos' o' de time. It 'u'd been purty tough if it hadn't been fer Mary—dat's de kid here. But she's worked hard dancin', an' has kep' us all a-goin' She's a reg'lar brick, dat 'un."

"Oh, go on!" retorted Valérie, deprecatingly "Wait till you're gone, Mr Halsey, then he'll sing a different tune." But the affectionate smile she turned toward the big fellow belied her words.

As a telling theatrical climax to all that had gone before, a shrill cry at that moment burst upon their ears.

"Bring him in, ma," called Valérie, and a large woman, evidently the original of the crayon, waddled in, dragging a wailing child.

"There—there!" crooned the dancer, seizing it. "Mother's lamb was sleepy, so he was!"

She looked over the baby's head.

"Ma, this is Mr. Halsey—that nice boy that sent us all those lovely flowers. And," turning to Halsey, "this is my mother, Mrs. Quinn."

Mrs. Quinn beamed at Halsey

"Well, well!" she puffed. "Ain't he the nice, little feller! I was afther tellin' ye, Mary, that is was a gintleman he was. But maybe the poor b'y is hungry—be afther givin' him a bite to eat."

"Sure!" said Valérie, cordially, "or why not stay to dinner with us? I'll give you the best frankfurters you ever laid your two eyes on. No, must be going? Well, now that *is* too bad."

Halsey reached the street somehow,

and fled, with extreme taximetric speed, to the Grand Central.

"A ticket for Boston," he muttered, thickly, to the ticket man.

A DECOY ENGAGEMENT

By Charles Foley.

MARCH 1—I am eighteen years old; not beautiful, to be sure, but have been called pretty, charming and other things to the same effect. I fear, however, that I please men in the aggregate, so to speak. I have made no individual conquests. And my worldly wise friend Blanche tells me that my charms are a sort of an ensemble attractiveness, but lack characteristic details which might impress themselves temptingly on the fickle memory of man. I don't want to be an old main, and I am told that I must acquire this accomplishment of individuality. But how? Here's the rub! Shall I train my eyebrows, Chinese fashion, after the recipe of Dr. Mathusin? The process is painful and the effect doubtful. Perhaps a coiffure of some extravagance? My mamma is so old-fashioned, and papa is so backward with financial assistance! It is a hard proposition, but I do not despair.

March 6—Last night, at the Boucart ball, a subdued whisper greeted the appearance of that hussy, Miss Bell. She is positively skinny. And why did she create a sensation? Her engagement was announced last week. It is astonishing how every male found something interesting about her, whereas she had never been noticed before. The men showered compliments upon her. The mothers and daughters studied her. In a word, they all bowed to that great event in our circles—a fashionable engagement.

The men fairly fought for the honor of dancing with her, especially Alfred Boucart. They sought to inveigle her into conservatory-nook tête-a-têtes and looked across when her fiancé claimed her. It was a curious sight. Doubtlessly, the fact that the fruit was forbidden made it appear so luscious. I have it! In order to get a fiancé worth while one must get previously engaged. A mock betrothal to catch a backward wooer. Is it a hint of fate?

March 8—My plan is assuming shape. I need a man of whom I can easily rid myself when the time comes—an artificial minnow to catch my golden trout, perhaps Alfred Boucart, who surely *is* worth while. I need an accomplice who would strike sail before Alfred, the victorious rival.

But where can I find this paragon of complacency? Perhaps Cousin Paul. He would be surely acceptable to my parents. Mamma worships him, and papa has been throwing out hints about Paul for a month or two. Paul is a lieutenant and stationed at Fontainebleau. He comes to Paris for the week-end, and would not be too much in evidence. It is true, we have never been exceptionally good friends. I like to tease him, and he is stubborn and quick-tempered. Will he agree? He is dining with us to-morrow.

March 10—Last night after dinner I found an opportunity to take Paul into my confidence.

"Dear Paul," I said, "I have a brilliant idea. Would you like to be engaged to me?"

He drew back in astonishment. "And do you call that a brilliant idea?"

"Just for a lark, you goose! Only a mock engagement, in order to fool the others."

Then I explained to him my plan. Paul is an inveterate disciple of Walton, and, while I am not perfectly clear about fishing terms, I used language that would appeal to him:

"I want you for a bait to catch the

real fish—a sort of tin minnow to make the big fish bite."

"Not a strictly dignified proceeding, I admit," said Paul. "Then, when Mr. Right comes along, I, an officer, must retire and be humiliated. Still, the idea is not so stupid, as far as you are concerned. But I must dance attendance on you—play the lover and so forth. Thank you for the job!"

He was not very flattering.

"Do it to please me, like a dear," I coaxed him. "I shall never tease you again as long as I live."

"Very well, then," he agreed, with a sigh. "I shall do it in the interest of the family. But it is a risky proposition. If you should fail to catch your fish, I might be forced to keep the bargain, and I might be caught on the fishing line and would have to stick."

The old folks were agreeably surprised. Mamma is heralding the glad news among friends to-day. The first congratulations are beginning to reach me.

March 17—This is the night of the second season ball at Boucart's. I am surrounded by an admiring throng. I still see them fighting for my smile—*my* smile this time. After the second waltz Alfred Boucart asked me for the honor of the next dance. I shyly looked at Paul. Paul played his part to perfection. With a little hesitation, and not a bit too amiably, he left me free for the next contra-dance. With unwonted fire Alfred plunged into the dancing throng. We stopped near the little salon and he began, with a depressed tone, sad-eyed and sighing:

"It is true, then? You are to marry your cousin?"

"My family wished it."

"Don't you love him?"

I played the confused and undecided. I can blush at will, and I think I blushed prettily.

"I think so. I am not sure, though. I never thought I would have a chance to love anybody but Paul, and I never expected anyone but Paul to love me."

"But if another should come," he continued; "if another did love you, madly and truly?"

"Well, he would have confessed his love long ago, so what is the use of talking? Let us dance on."

He was about to say something else—something difficult to express—but at that moment Paul met us, and, with well-simulated annoyance and impatience, seized my arm.

"Where have you been all this time, Madeleine? I have been looking for you all over."

He looked so jealous that Alfred withdrew with apologies.

"Is this the fish you are after?" whispered Paul, with a faint sneer.

"Yes."

"Lord! What a curious taste! Well, let us waltz."

He caught my waist with a military swagger. I must admit that he pressed me a little more than absolutely necessary. He whispered all sorts of nonsense in my ear, and his blond mustache tickled me. We waltzed several times past Boucart, whose sorrowful glance seemed to follow me about the ballroom.

As often as we caught sight of him, Paul grasped me with renewed vehemence. Now no longer his mustache, but his lips, dry and warm, pressed my cheek. I had to ask him to stop. "The waltz is almost over, Paul. Take me to my seat."

Alfred Boucart rushed toward us, but Paul curtly informed him:

"My cousin has reserved all the following dances for me."

Alfred retired, with disappointment written all over his face.

Paul has certainly a genius for acting. He was true to life in his rôle of an enamored fiancé. I helped him to the best of my ability. I roared at his jokes, was affectionate, flattering and admiring. I did not fail, however, to cast occasionally a meaning glance at Alfred, shy, sympathizing, encouraging.

As we were leaving, Alfred rushed into the wardrobe room, but Paul, with a dry "Pardon me!" seized my furs and carefully assisted me.

Alfred shook hands, and I said, "Adieu!"

"Nay, *au revoir!*" significantly whispered the goldfish.

Paul in the meanwhile had gained the bottom of the stairway and called up, impatiently

"Hurry—hurry, Madeleine! What is keeping you?"

I rushed after him, and when we sat in the carriage I leaned over and kissed Paul on the cheek

"Thank you—thank you! You did splendidly, but how it must have bored you!"

"Oh, not at all; on the contrary. But I can't get over your liking that silly ass!"

March 24—The third Boucart ball. Alfred is still holding out, but there is no doubt that he is in love with me to his ears.

March 30—The last ball at Boucart's and—a bite! Alfred promised to see papa to-morrow. I did not need to coach Paul to-night. He simply would not let me out of his arms.

March 31—At last! Alfred has spoken to papa. I confessed that I loved him. Mamma was amazed; papa was beside himself. They scolded me and reproached me with breaking my word with Paul. I finally admitted that my engagement to Paul was all a bluff and that Paul is willing to withdraw as soon as I give him the cue.

I ran immediately to the library and held out both hands to my accommodating cousin.

"Paul, old boy! Thanks to your aid, I have won out. I give you your freedom."

He looked as cross as a bear, and yelled at me·

"Damn your freedom!"

"What do you mean?" I asked, in a pained tone of voice. "You will not even shake hands with me?"

"I want something better than a handshake."

"I don't understand you."

"On the contrary, you understand me only too well." He was speaking fast and angrily. "I permitted you to coax me into this undignified, humiliating deception—a mock engagement—but I have become a sure-enough fiancé. I am no make-believe lover. I am tired of dancing for Boucart's account and warming a place for somebody else. Your idea of a tin minnow was not so bad, but, as far as I am concerned, I prefer to be the real fish, and, while you may give me my freedom, I refuse to accept it."

"But, dear Paul!"

"No buts about it. I refuse to withdraw. I love you, and you only. I shall stick, and you can get out of this scrape the best you know how."

April 1—I don't know a way out. Papa is furious; mamma is crying; Alfred sighs, and Paul swears. I shall go crazy!

THE LOVE OF THE UNDERWORLD

By John F. Dillon

THE warm night wind that crept over the swinging doors sent the blue haze of smoke that filled the place whirling about in eddies and crossed the room, leaving a swirl of dust and the rattle and roar of the crowded street. For a moment the girl in the doorway stood undecided, a look of disappointment on her face, then the swinging doors creaked loudly behind her, and she wound her way in and out among the tables, until she found a place where she could sit undisturbed and watch the entrance. For a long time she waited. The blue haze of smoke grew denser and the hum of voices louder, and always above the clink of the glasses and the shuffling of feet rose the tinkling sounds of the piano. To-night, though, the gaudy splendor of it all, the ever-changing crowd, and the ballad singer, had no place in her mind. The accustomed sounds had a familiarity that annoyed, and unrest showed in her shifting eyes; peculiar eyes, small and close together—too close, in fact—and brown in color, that strangely contrasted with the mass of yellow hair that piled up above her low, retreating forehead. Always, her eyes were toward the door, her slim figure leaning over the table, a flush of red in the gaunt hollows of her usually pale cheeks; her coarse, red fingers interlocked, waiting. Men and women came. Men and women went, and the disappointment in the girl's eyes lived in fitful gleams. Soon she was quite conscious that someone had taken the other chair at the table, some subtle instinct telling her who it was. Without turning her head, she asked, with an attempt at a smile:

"Late t'night, ain't cha, Maud?"

Maud signaled a waiter before she answered, "Little." Then, "Same old crowd," quickly, with a wave of her hand toward the tables. "Warm, isn't it?"

Meg nodded her head and was silent. Maud gazed about the room, her eyes shifting from the more familiar faces to those of the unknown. After a silence, "All alone to-night, Meg?"

"Yep."

The terseness of the answer held Maud's attention. A little patch of blue smoke went floating past, and she sat watching the other until a sudden thought sent the blood surging into her face. Leaning across the table until her lips almost met Meg's ear, she demanded, angrily

"Who are you waiting for, Meg?"

"N—no one," stammered Meg. "Who sed I wuz?" defiantly.

"No one said so. But if you are waiting for him——" Maud stopped, threateningly, and Meg cowered back in her chair.

"Now, look here, Maud," whimpered Meg, "you ain't——"

"I tell you he belongs to me! Do you hear?"

"Y—e—s, but——"

"I'll not tell you again!" menacingly.

Meg shrank away as Maud gulped down her pony of brandy and glared across the table. The flush was gone from her cheek; the brown eyes seemed almost black, and the coarse, red fingers tapped the table top out of time with the tinkling piano. Over the tops of the swinging doors came the noise of the street, partially drowning the rasping voice of the singer After a while the sullen look in Meg's eyes died out, but her voice was shaky and high pitched in complaint when she spoke.

"He belonged to me b'fore you came," she whined, looking around with renewed courage. "He wuz satisfied until he met youse, with y'r fine ways an' nice talk. He don't know nuthin' 'bout the kind o' life you lived in b'fore you came—" Meg glanced across the table and what she saw in Maud's eyes made her stop. "I

—I mean," she faltered, "he ain't used to gran' ladies an' s'ciety an'——"

"I tell you he is mine, and I am going to keep him," determinedly. "That settles it."

Meg's coarse, red fingers went on tapping the table top and her lips trembled nervously as she looked into vacancy. Someone on the opposite side of the room was quarreling in loud tones, but she never heard. The piano was tinkling away, and Maud was looking into her face, trying to read her thoughts. After a time she moistened her lips and began another effort at conciliation.

"I know you like him, Maud, but I love him. Him an' me were kids t'gether. Youse couldn't love him, Maud, like I do, fer you wuz a fine lady once, an' he's only rough an' coarse, like me. Youse got good folks somewhere, an' mebbe some day you'd go back home an'——"

"Home!" laughed Maud, bitterly. "Yes, I have a home, but"—something in her throat seemed to choke her, and the sensual lips quivered—"but I'm only a discard in the game of life now," she finished, tremblingly.

There was a wistfulness in her words that appealed to Meg, in spite of herself. "I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, Maud; but if you'd only keep away from Dan, I—I—ain't cha goin' to help me?" she pleaded. "'Sides, you ain't strong, Maud," went on Meg, without waiting for an answer, a queer look in her eyes. "Th' doctor at the dispensary 'cross the street sed a sudden shock might kill you an'——"

"It's a lie! I am strong. I am——" The passionate outbreak almost ended in a shriek, so loud was her voice in denial. Yet the bluish tinge about her mouth contradicted her protest. "And I'm going to keep Dan—do you hear? I'm going to keep him."

"Mebbe so. We'll see." Maud made no answer, and Meg lapsed into a silence that even the sound of the tinkling piano failed to penetrate.

Maud cleared her throat to attract Meg's attention. "You've been good to me, Meg, and I want to be friends with you, but I can't give up Dan; it would kill me." Meg made no reply, and Maud leaned across the table and asked:

"What are you thinking about, Meg?" placing her hand on Meg's arm.

Meg started slightly. "I wuz thinkin'," she almost whispered, "'bout Dan—an' you—and me—an' the hereafter."

Maud shuddered at the word and turned away, knowing Meg's sharp eyes were watching her narrowly

"I wuz thinkin', Maud, if ther' wuz any chance fer you an' me after we died."

"For you and me?" Maud repeated, softly; "for you and me? Why, that's nonsense! When you are dead, you are dead. There is nothing else." The forced laugh ended in a cynical smile, and she shook her head and swallowed hard.

"But if there should be," persisted Meg; "if there is a hereafter, there might be some chance for me; but for you—well, I don't know. I never knew anything but this," motioning around with her hand, "and the gutter I never had anyone, 'ceptin' Dan, to tell me right from wrong. It's different wit' you. You had folks, an' schoolin', an' things. An' you had a mother—maybe she's waitin' fer you to come home——"

"Don't! For God's sake, don't!" The cynical smile was gone from Maud's lips, and little furrows showed on the painted cheeks where the tears ran down. The cringing tones of Meg died away to a smothered undertone, and the coarse, red fingers twisted themselves in her dress as she sat quietly, while Maud sobbed aloud.

Maud had ceased crying and sat staring into the bottom of the glass in front of her, unmindful of the present, when a touch on the shoulder aroused her.

"Thinkin', Maud?" his strong voice rising above the tinkling piano.

"Yes; just a little, Dan. Take a chair"

Dan slipped into the proffered chair and the three made a feeble attempt at conversation. Soon an awkward pause fell between them. Meg moved uneasily in her chair and bit her lips nervously as she watched the other two.

"Tell her yet, Meg?" he questioned, finally, leaning across the table. Maud looked up, wonderingly.

"No, Dan, I—I wuz 'fraid. You tell her"

For a second he hesitated. Then, "Me and Meg's married!" he blurted out. "Yes, since yest'd'y," he finished, without noticing the sudden paling of the cheeks in front of him. "We made up our——"

"Ketch her, Dan, she's fainted!" cried Meg, hoarsely.

The coarse, red fingers of Meg locked and interlocked as they waited until the doctor from the dispensary across the street came. He shook his head sadly and murmured something about heart disease and sudden shock, and the queer look lit up Meg's eyes again as she stood in the doorway, unmindful of the crowded street, and watched the ambulance disappear around the corner When she turned again the tinkling piano was going on as before, and the haze of smoke was drifting about in eddies, and now and then above the music was the hum of voices. With a long-drawn sigh, the girl took her chair at the table, her hand closing over the man facing her, and for a long time neither spoke.

"What'll we do?" asked Dan, suddenly, breaking the silence.

The girl made no reply at first, but sat staring at the floor Over in the corner, the tinkling piano still sounded and the blue haze of smoke whirled about with every fresh gust of wind that came over the tops of the swinging doors. The crowd was thinned out now, and the empty tables gave the place a forlorn appearance. The girl breathed another sigh and looked up.

"Let's go home, Dan," she said, at last.

ON BROADWAY AND OFF

"THE iron nerve of ye Broadway 'masher,'" said Henry E. Dixey, in "Mary Jane's Pa," "reminds me of Bud, a reporter chap I knew once. He was told one night to get aboard a sleeping-car, find an all-important senator and interview him.

"Some hours later Bud strolled calmly in and stated that after a personal search of every car on the train he had failed to find the senator

"'Do you mean that you looked into all the sleeping-car berths, Bud?'

"'Yes, that's what I done,' said Bud.

"'But, Bud,' the editor exclaimed in consternation, 'weren't a good many of these berths occupied by ladies?'

"'Sure,' said Bud.

"'But what did you do when you found a lady who had retired?'

"'When I busted the curtain open and looked in and a woman jumped up and screamed, I took off my hat and says "That's all right, lady, you ain't the man I'm looking fer!"'"

"My suffragette sisters are intensely interesting," said Miss Eleanor Robson in "The Dawn of To-morrow," "but equal rights—well, I don't know, it's as the Western youth put it to the religious worker who, during the course of a 'Talk for men,' expressed his conviction that no young man should visit any place to which he would not feel justified in taking his own sister

"Is there any young man present who thinks one may safely disregard this wise rule?' asked the speaker

"Whereupon a youth in the rear of the hall arose and shouted in a stentorian tone

"'Yes, sir, I do!'

"'And what, sir,' demanded the angry and surprised speaker, 'is the place which you yourself would think of visiting to which you could not take your sister?'

"'The barber-shop!' replied the youth."

"It was an especially bad Broadway theatrical 'casualty,'" explained Robert

Edeson, "and the S. R. O. sign had been turned to the wall. One night, after the curtain was rung up, a small boy was discovered sobbing in front of the box office. The manager of the theater went to the lad and kindly asked him what the trouble was.

"'I want my money back,' sobbed the boy, in answer to the query In surprise, the manager asked his reason for such a request.

"'Because—because I'm afraid to sit up in the gallery all alone!' he wailed. His money was returned."

Elsie Janis, in "The Fair Co-Ed," was watching a dyspeptic friend solemnly extracting two tablets from a silver purse and swallow them, after a dinner at the Knickerbocker

"I wonder," she said contemplatively, "did Moses have that same after-dinner complaint you've got?"

"Eh?" said the friend. "How on earth do I know? Why?"

"Our Sunday school teacher used to say," pointed out Miss Janis gravely, "that the Lord gave Moses two tablets."

"It isn't safe nowadays for a parent to get 'fresh' with his up-to-date offspring," mused Wilton Lackaye, in "The Battle." "I breakfasted with a friend the other day, and Walter, aged five, had eaten the soft portions of his toast at breakfast and piled the crusts on his plate.

"'When I was a little boy,' remarked his father, 'I always ate the crust of my toast.'

"'Did you like them?' asked the little fellow, cheerfully

"'Yes,' replied the parent.

"'You may have these,'" replied Master Walter, pushing his plate across the table."

Jimmie Powers, in "Havana," can always draw a bunch of laughs off the boards as well as on. This is his newest.

"A colonel in General Lee's division in the late Civil War sometimes indulged in more applejack than was good for him. Passing him one evening, leaning against a tree, the General said

"'Good evening, Colonel. Come over to my tent for a moment, please.'

"'S-s-cuse me, G-g-en'ral, 's-s-cuse me,' replied the Colonel. 'It's 'bout all I can do to stay where I am.'"

"When I read the unimaginative apologies and retractions of some of our public officials," said William Hodge, in "The Man From Home," "I am reminded of the only really fine specimen of apology I ever saw It ran like this:

"'I, the undersigned A. C. du Plessis, retract hereby everything I have said against the innocent Mr G. P Bezuidenhout, calling myself an infamous liar, and striking my mouth with the exclamation, "You mendacious mouth, why do you lie so?" I declare, further, that I know nothing against the character of Mr G. P. Bezuidenhout. I call myself, besides, a genuine liar of the first class. —A. C. du Plessis.'"

DON QUIXOTE DE PEYSTER-JONES

By Jean Carmichael

HIS real name was Richard Van Rensselaer De Peyster-Jones, but Marie Trenholm christened him Don Quixote one winter afternoon, when he was having tea with her before the open fire in the Trenholms' library.

"You still have your romantic ideas, I see, Van," she said, smiling at him over the rim of her cup. "Europe has made you worse, if anything, than you were before. You are always expecting to have something exciting and romantic turn up in prosaic, matter-of-fact New York, that cares for nothing but the Almighty Dollar. You are an anachronism. You should have been born a century or two ago. Athos and Porthos and d'Artagnan would have been excellent playmates for you."

"That's all very well," said De Peyster-Jones gravely, as he rose to go, "but I still think that even in New York strange and romantic things do happen if you are looking for them, and I find it an excellent way of amusing myself—to look for them. We all get our fun in different ways," he reminded her "Some people prefer bridge."

"You need not be sarcastic," she retorted. "I'm going to call you Don Quixote. Don't go and be peevish. You must go? Well, come soon again and tell me of your adventures. Yes, I can hear your motor champing its bit outside—your gayly caparisoned charger, rather" She pushed aside the heavy draperies and glanced out of the long window. "You're driving yourself? Where's Wilson?"

"Wilson has an ignominous toothache that makes him look like Tweedledum or his twin, and makes him cross as thunder, so I sent him home and am chauffing myself. Good-bye. I go now and seek adventures. Wish me Godspeed."

Marie gave him her hand, smiling with merry, mischievous gray eyes. "Good-bye, Don Quixote De Peyster-Jones," she said. "Go and tilt at wind-mills and rescue Dulcineas and then come and tell me all about it. God-speed!"

He found it was dark when the door closed behind him, and he stopped a moment to turn up his collar, as the evening air was damp and cold, before going down to his motor at the curb. It is a quiet street, although the noise and glitter of lights on Fifth avenue are only a couple of blocks away, and as he looked up and down in either direction he noticed how deserted it was. It was very still, too, he could hear the click of some one's heels on the sidewalk a half block away.

He was still standing there, quite in the shadow, when a cab dashed up to a house two doors away and a man sprang out and turned to assist a young woman. At a word from the man, the driver whipped up his horse and disappeared in the direction of Fifth avenue.

Ordinarily this episode would not have attracted any one's attention, not even De Peyster-Jones's, although he was always looking for mystery and romance, but there was something about the sudden appearance of the man and the girl, and the fact that they were still standing on the sidewalk talking excitedly, that made him linger a moment, watching them curiously.

"It certainly isn't all right," he said, as he heard the girl's voice raised more and more excitedly She seemed to be protesting against something vigorously, and when the man laid his hand on her arm and tried to lead her toward the steps of the house she drew back with a little frightened cry

De Peyster-Jones started down the steps two at a time. At the sound of his footsteps the girl turned a beautiful, imploring, excited face, and made a

movement toward him, holding out her hands.

"Oh!" she cried wildly, "save me! save me! He is trying to make me go into this horrible place. For heaven's sake, save me!"

The man, a big, powerful, disagreeable-looking person, seized her by the arm and tried to hurry her away by force. Then, behind her back, he tapped his forehead significantly and shrugged his shoulders.

As it happened, De Peyster-Jones had been reading only that morning a description of an abduction that corresponded to this affair exactly Besides that, he recalled a dozen cases of rich young women being shut up in insane hospitals when they were as sane as himself. The girl was pleading with all the eloquence of her soft, brown eyes. Being Don Quixote, he did not stop an instant to think what was the expedient thing to do. Instead, he suddenly and neatly knocked down the astonished villain with a melodramatic "Take that, you brute!" hurried the girl into the automobile and dashed away down the street to the avenue.

In the excitement of the moment, with his blood athrill, he did not even stop to think that his prophecy of romantic adventures was being fulfilled, until he had safely piloted the car into the stream of motor cars and broughams. Then, in the glare of electric lights, he turned and looked at the girl.

She had seemed, in the dim light of the side street, very slight and delicate and attractive, but now, in the bright light, he saw that she was amazingly beautiful and distinguished looking. He fairly gasped. Talk about modern New York furnishing no field for romantic happenings! This was an adventure, to rescue so beautiful a lady in distress and run away with her in approved cavalier fashion. Even d'Artagnan could have done no more. What a tale he would have to tell Marie

"Well," he said, "now that I have rescued you from that brute, what would you like me to do next? Shall I take you home?"

The girl had been looking straight ahead of her, with a look of wild enjoyment on her face at the speed with which they were incurring the risk of arrest by the mounted police. Now she turned her great, dark eyes upon his face with a curious look in them.

"No, not yet," she said. "I want to drive like the wind. Can't we, just for a little while?" Her voice was soft and melting. There was something child-like, appealing, about her

"Wait until we get out of the avenue," he said, and made his way slowly through the lines of vehicles, crossed over and entered the park. Then, as there were no policemen in sight and as it was dark, he let his Packard go, and they went as he had never before dared go except on deserted roads far out in the country The wind whistled in their ears, the trees and shrubs and electric lights raced by There was an element of danger about it that was all that was needed to complete the romantic adventure.

Across the park they sped, through Ninety-sixth street to Riverside drive, and then up that almost deserted boulevard. Out of the corner of his eye he could see that the girl was leaning forward, her lips parted in sheer physical enjoyment. He noticed that her coat was fur-lined, and that she had turned up her collar, so he knew that there was no danger of her taking cold. When they had driven at this amazing speed for half an hour and were miles out of town, De Peyster-Jones, remembering that it must be nearly dinner-time, slowed down and turned to look at her

"Well," he said, a little breathless, "that was a wild ride and a most unsociable one. Do you realize that we have not said more than a dozen words since we started? Don't you think we had better go back now? It's nearly dinner time, and I suppose," he added regretfully, "that you will be wanting to get back home."

Until then the girl seemed to have forgotten everything but the pure joy of rushing through the cold darkness, now

she sank back in a little, limp heap on the seat.

"Oh, yes," she said. All the life and animation seemed to have gone out of her voice. "I live—I am stopping at—" She hesitated and seemed to be searching her memory for a moment and then gave the number and street.

"I'm sorry," he said, "to have to go back. I wish we were old, old friends and you could come and dine with me at some nice, little, quiet restaurant, but I suppose Mrs. Grundy would object."

But she was not listening to him. Her eyes were staring in a frightened sort of way ahead of her, and she shuddered.

"Oh, that horrible man!" she said, in a low, tense sort of voice.

De Peyster-Jones had turned and was driving back more slowly, so that they could talk.

"He called himself a doctor," she went on, "and he made me get into that cab and drove me to that dreadful place. He said I was ill—insane. Just fancy that!" She laughed. "If you hadn't come just at that moment he would have put me into that prison of a place and I could never, never have gotten out again. How can I thank you?" She turned grateful eyes to him.

"Heavens, my dear girl," he cried impulsively, "don't thank me. I'm glad I had the chance to knock down that brute of a doctor man. Just fancy his having the nerve to do a thing like that! What were your family thinking of? Did they know it?"

She was not listening to him, but was leaning forward, peering into the darkness. "Oh, how beautiful it is!" she cried. "The Palisades are over there in the dark across the river, and look at the lights ahead—and, oh, see, there goes the night boat! It's a fairy palace, isn't it, with all the lights reflected in the water? Oh, this is such a heavenly ride! I never came up here at night before. Drive faster!—faster! I can't go fast enough."

To please her, although it was against his better judgment, he let the Packard go, and, with a snort like a live creature, it sprang forward down the long glittering path above the black river When they had crossed the park again and the girl saw the lights and crowds on Fifth avenue just ahead, she gave a little, petulant cry

"Oh, dear, I don't want to go home! That was the most heavenly drive I ever took. No one ever let me go so fast before. It was like flying. I always long to let an automobile out to the very top of its speed, just the way when I am riding I want to gallop all the time. They won't let one do that in New York, that's why I love the country so. Some day, perhaps, you'll take me again?" She turned to him in her fascinating, pleading, little way.

"Of course I will," De Peyster-Jones smiled down at her, thinking how very, very lovely she was, with the black ostrich plume curling against her bronze hair and all the color in her cheeks. "Any time you say. My name, by the way, is De Peyster-Jones. Do you mind if I ask who you are?"

She was leaning back against the leather cushions, her hat shading her eyes, but he could see that a little change had come over her face, as she stared ahead of her. They were crossing Fifty-seventh street slowly The avenue was crowded with people, driving somewhere to dinner. De Peyster-Jones saw no end of acquaintances and friends, some of whom looked curiously at him and his companion, and he realized that it was a little odd to be out alone in an open motor-car on a cold winter evening with a beautifully-gowned, aristocratic-looking girl.

"Mrs. Grundy will object," he muttered, and then turned to her again. "I shall want to come and find out if everything is all right with you," he said gently "Won't you be good enough to tell me who you are?"

Hardly had he uttered the words than the girl, who had been staring straight ahead of her, so strangely absorbed in her own thoughts, suddenly sprang up on the seat of the car, poised on tiptoe, with arms outstretched, her face upturned to the stars, and cried ecstatical-

ly, "I am Joy! Joy! Joy! Take me to the Never-Never Land."

A horrible possibility flashed through De Peyster-Jones. What had he done? The girl was as mad as a March hare. He saw the crowds on the sidewalks and in the passing stream of carriages and motor-cars stare and shrug their shoulders and laugh. He pulled her down to the seat.

"For heaven's sake, don't do that!" he cried. Then, remembering what he had heard about the treatment of insane patients, he spoke more soothingly to her "Sit down, Joy," he went on; "we will go as fast as we can to the Never-Never Land. See how we are flying!—faster than Peter Pan or Wendy or the other children. Isn't it glorious?"

He tried to keep a watchful eye on her, lest she try to spring out of the car. He could see a mad light in her eyes, and he decided that to drive a motor-car through a crowded street with an insane girl sitting beside one is a trying experience, to put it mildly. He wondered what Marie would think if she could see him. He began to wonder if he would ever see Marie again. The girl might be even now plotting to shoot him or stab him with a Merry Widow hatpin or kill herself by jumping from the car. And, besides all those possibilities, he supposed that when he returned her to the bosom of her family, there would be a reckoning. Poor Don Quixote De Peyster-Jones!

"See, the fairy lights! We are flying, Peter Pan!" He stole a glance at her and saw that she had clasped her hands in a child-like, excited, little way She was evidently quite absorbed in her fairy play, and he sighed to think of the awful pity of it.

He turned into her street and stopped in a moment before 605. "Here we are, at the Never-Never Land!" he cried, springing out and turning to help her

She hesitated a moment, looked up at the big brown stone front and seemed meditating flight. De Peyster-Jones turned cold with fright. This tactful maneuvering on his part was wearing on his nerves, but he summoned up all his cheerfulness and courage.

"Come, fly, Peter Pan!" he said, holding out both hands. "Show me how you fly," and instantly she leaped into space, with arms outstretched like wings.

Unlike Peter Pan, she would have tumbled in a little heap if his strong arms had not caught her. Before she realized it, he had half carried her up the steps and had rung the bell.

Fortunately, the butler came almost instantly Behind him, in the spacious hall, De Peyster-Jones could see an anxious group. In their midst he recognized, notwithstanding his bandaged head—perhaps on account of it—the doctor from whose professional clutches he had abducted the girl an hour and a half before. Then his courage left him. Seeing the various members of her family come rushing forward, and hearing the girl's wild cry of, "Oh, I've been flying, mother, really flying!" and her wilder laughter, he turned and fled down to the waiting motor-car and dashed madly away.

HIS VANQUISHED STAR

By Marian L. Robbins

"WHY, that's Sybil St. Clair, the girl who's to give a Salome dance at Clavering's stag dinner on the twenty-fourth," answered Robert Van Anden, in response to his friend's query. "You'd better stay over for it. She's worth it. Jove, she's divine!"

The two young men were seated at a table in a Bohemian resort, famous for its grilled dishes. It was an early hour for dinner and the tables were not yet filled. Nothing but the leafy shrubs, here and there, in green-painted tubs, interfered with their view of the girl. The perfect poise of her head and her indefin-

able grace of carriage as she entered had at once attracted Philip Dexter's attention.

"Do you mean that she makes a business of displaying her physical charms for the edification of stag diners?" demanded Dexter harshly; for he was a man not given to discussing women.

"Perhaps not quite that. But she's sprung two or three daring surprises this winter—popping out of a pie as a nymph, and all of that sort of thing. The fellows, to a man, are crazy over her Clavering's in the lead just now, I believe." rattled on the gossipy Mr. Van Anden, while his friend was absorbed in a study of the girl. His relish of the savory viands suddenly left him as he feasted upon the exquisite profile of Miss St. Clair.

In a glance about the room she encountered his steady gaze bent upon her. Their eyes met and held in tangled depths for a second, then, in becoming embarrassment, the girl quickly fell to a study of the menu, while every pulse in the man's head hammered from the contact with those wondrous eyes.

"Van, I want to meet her," said Dexter, maddened by a sudden satanic impulse.

"What, *you?*—an engaged man! I'm ashamed of you!" in a tone of banter. "Her fascinations must indeed be alluring to charm the nonchalant Mr. Dexter clear across the room," and Van Anden laughed sacrilegiously

Dexter made no reply His mind at that moment was assailed by a vision ethereal in its dimness as a beckoning star through the mist, he saw the delicate face of Millicent, with its wistful eyes, pure to their limpid depths. But the memory of the far-away girl was reluctantly overcome by the assertive beauty, in all its vividness, of the nearby girl.

"I mean what I say," he protested with vehemence, as he drew some bills from his pocket and paid the check.

Philip Dexter was a tall, well-set-up young man of thirty. His face was strong, even severe when in repose. His movements were quick and marked by a decision which bespoke a commanding nature.

"Introduce me as Mr. Warrington of Philadelphia," Dexter said in a low but firm tone, as he followed Van Anden across to the table which Miss St. Clair occupied alone.

She received them most cordially. There were no half-tones in the girl's make-up. She radiated always in the superlative degree. Following a few jocular remarks, Van Anden pleaded a forgotten engagement, and, to Dexter's surprise and rage, left him. The next moment, however, he felt a fierce joy at having this magnificent creature to himself. His obsession was complete. The shimmering shades of gold through her brown hair, the mellow, dreamy eyes, with their heavy lids, the full red lips—all claimed from him their toll.

"Then you do not live in New York, Mr. Warrington?" she queried, in a low, rich voice.

"No, worse luck," Dexter answered.

"It *must* be hard luck to live any place else than in this little old New York," and she smiled across into his eyes as she drained a glass of the wine he had ordered.

Her smile set his every nerve a-quiver. A wave of anger swept over him, as he felt himself hopelessly unbalanced. His vanquished star struggled in vain through the haze which clouded his brain.

"Have you always lived here?" he inquired, without taking his eyes from her.

"No," came faintly A sudden quiver of pain crossed her face.

"Well, don't take it so seriously," he said.

"Let's not take anything seriously tonight," she answered with tempting daring. The phantom had vanished and she was again her own gay self.

Before they rose to leave he asked, "Would you enjoy a turn around the park before going home?"

"I should like nothing better!" she declared, witchery in her eyes.

To the attuned senses of the man, the cab seemed suffused with a deliciously

feminine aroma, as subtle and uncloying as that of a tropical flower

"Tell me about yourself," she said in a low, persuasive voice.

Something—perhaps his vanquished star—kept him from telling her the truth.

"I'm just a young man from Philadelphia, enjoying the rarest good luck." He spoke in a deep and vibrant tone.

"I wonder if it *is* good luck that has brought us together?" she said softly

"I can only swear for myself. Aren't you sure about yourself?" he asked hoarsely, covering her hand in a passionate pressure.

"I'm only sure that I'm happy," she whispered.

"You've bewitched me!" he cried, as he crushed her to him and held her "I'm engaged to another girl—do you hear?" he said desperately. "I'm out of my senses!"

"Don't let there be any other girl tonight," she breathed. And his vanquished star gradually faded entirely from sight.

When they reached Miss St. Clair's apartments, Dexter followed her into a very cozy suite of rooms. Almost the first object his eyes fell upon was a miniature. He passed his hands over his eyes, as if to clear his sight. He clutched the chair in a tightened grip and stared dumbly It was a picture of Millicent! All that was best in him responded. His vanquished star reappeared and the man's better nature was again in dominance. His expression was tense and drawn as he turned to the girl with the question "How did you get this?"

"Why, that's my little sister Millie." Almost before her words had died away a quick suspicion seized her

"Good God!" he exclaimed. He sank into a chair and buried his head in his hands to struggle with his thoughts. So this was the mysterious sister who was supporting Millicent—the girl who was to be his wife—the sister of his wife, posing in the studios, popping out of pies —little higher than a "woman of the streets."

In passionate frenzy she cried, "Who are you, anyway?"

The man's voice was pitiful with suppressed agony as he answered, "I'm Philip Dexter, of Chicago, and am engaged to your little sister Millicent! God help us!"

With the instinct of a tiger to save its young, the girl fell to her knees before him.

"She's as sweet as a dove, my little Millie is." The man winced under the words. "Don't rob her of her happiness because she is my sister!" she pleaded. "At least I am living an honest life, though you shrink from having for a wife the sister of a Salome dancer. But, for Millie's sake, I beg you! She has a nature like crystal-clear water, and even she would open her eyes in horror at the thought of her sister as a dancing-girl of the studios." With great effort she held herself together while she made her appeal.

"Since we were left without parents and without money, I have worked for her—not always as now, though it is only for Millie's sake I am defending my mode of earning an honest living—and have tried to keep her far away, that she might never know the seamy side of my life," she continued, in torturing self-accusation. The big frame of the man shuddered.

"You are a good man—I know your sort. Don't let this night make any difference in her life, I beg you! I'll promise never to come near her."

Her crowning self-sacrifice was made, and, covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears and wept as though each sob would wrench her heart from its place.

The savagery which at first had burned in the man's breast turned into compassion as he listened while she bared her soul to him. He raised her gently. For one long moment he looked into her tear-brimming eyes before he said

"This night shall make no difference in her life. And—I believe you—and respect you for your bravery."

Then, with a very white face, he strode from the room, out into the night.

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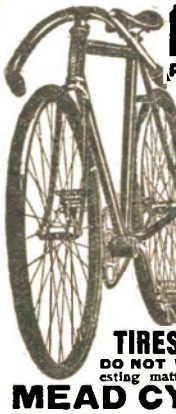

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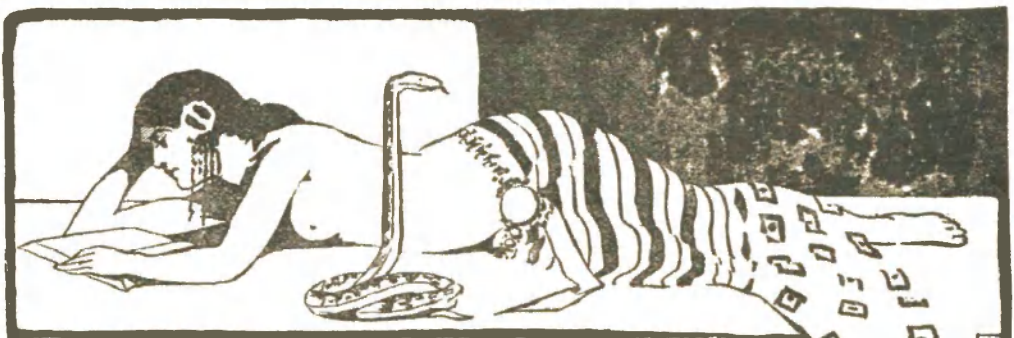

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