

MARCH, 1916

15 CENTS

# Breezy Stories

"THE LOVE STORY  
OF A HUMAN COG"  
COMPLETE NOVELETTE

LIVE  
WIRE  
FICTION





# BUST DEVELOPED ONE OUNCE A DAY



## A New, Simple, Easy Home Method That Gives Quick, Permanent Success

Judge of my picture as to the truth of what I say to you—that the crowning glory of womanhood is a figure of beautiful proportions and exquisite development. Then ask yourself how much you would like to have such a photograph of yourself showing the feminine lines of infinite charm and grace. It would be worth more to you than a 2c stamp, so let me tell you of what I have learned—let me show you recent pictures of myself to prove what I say—for if you will write me today

### I Will Tell You How—FREE

I will tell you gladly and willingly. Why should any woman neglect an opportunity to escape the pain and heartache of being skinny, scrawny, angular and unattractive in body? Misery is not our heritage. Nature planned that you—a woman—should have the rich, pulsing lines of warm, living flesh. Why should there be that pitiful aspect—the face of a woman and the form of a man.

### Write To Me Today

I don't care how thin, or fallen, or flaccid your bust is now—I want to tell you of a new, simple, easy home method that gives quick and permanent success—I want to tell you how you can gain perfect development—one ounce a day. No physical culture—no massage, foolish baths or paste—no plasters, masks or injurious injections—I want to tell you of an absolutely new method, never before offered or told about—insuring immediate success and permanent beauty—without disappointment.

### Send No Money

Just write me a letter—address it to me personally, that's all. I will answer it by return mail—and you can have a perfect bust and figure—one ounce daily—you can be just what you want to be. You may believe me when I say that you will bless me through years of happiness for pointing the way to you, and telling you what I know. Please send your letter today to the following address:

**MRS. LOUISE INGRAM**

Suite 67A, 408 Adams Street, TOLEDO, OHIO

*Can "a nameless girl, fighting upward, cut through sin and vice, and come clean to the glory of wifehood?"*

READ

## Ashes of Embers

By FORREST HALSEY

*In March*

## YOUNG'S MAGAZINE

TO save a woman's reputation—for Mrs. Dauriston Benedict is society's favorite and so must be shielded—the girl Agnes spends the night in Dick Leigh's rooms. And when young Leigh, crossed in love, and ruined in fortune, yields to his inherited craving for drink, it is Agnes, paid girl from the cabarets, who fights his battle with him, fights almost to the death in a last terrific struggle, when Laura Benedict, angered at her cast-off lover's happiness, seeks once more to ensnare him.

*On Sale Everywhere*  
*February 15th*



1300

# BREEZY STORIES

Volume II

MARCH, 1916

Number 1

|  | Page                               |
|--|------------------------------------|
| COVER DESIGN                             | Thelma Cudlipp                     |
| THE LOVE STORY OF A HUMAN COG. Novelette | Martin Kellar . . . . . 3          |
| "NOTHING ON NEW YORK." Poem              | Percy Maxwell . . . . . 22         |
| THE CANARY. Short Story                  | Thomas J. Betts . . . . . 23       |
| THE PRICE OF A SQUARE MEAL. Short Story  | Edith M. Fraker . . . . . 28       |
| BEYOND THE STARS. Poem                   | Ethel Pomeroy . . . . . 37         |
| THE WRONG WAY. Short Story               | Hazel Marjorie Smith . . . . . 38  |
| THE GIRL WHO TRUN ME DOWN. Poem          | A. W. Davies . . . . . 47          |
| ALL THE WORLD LOVES A COCKTAIL. Sketch   | Nalbro Bartley . . . . . 48        |
| A VERACIOUS ACCOUNT. Short Story         | Ralph E. Mooney . . . . . 54       |
| THE BEAT. Short Story                    | Harriet Lummis Smith . . . . . 61  |
| BLUE IN THE SKY. Poem                    | O. C. A. Child . . . . . 67        |
| ONLY A HUSBAND. Short Story              | Carrie Louisa Shaw . . . . . 68    |
| BEAUTIFUL BERTIE. Sketch                 | Harold Susman . . . . . 71         |
| PRIMAVERA. Poem                          | Charles Divine . . . . . 74        |
| HER HOME TOWN. Short Story               | Barbara Sawtelle . . . . . 75      |
| AT TWILIGHT. Short Story                 | Helen Coale Crew . . . . . 87      |
| CORA. Poem                               | Harold Susman . . . . . 93         |
| YIELDING TO TEMPTATION. Short Story      | Louise Winter . . . . . 94         |
| IF. Poem                                 | Thomas Grant Springer . . . . . 98 |
| THE WEIGHT OF THE HAND. Sketch           | H. Forrest . . . . . 99            |
| THE PILGRIM TO BOHEMIA. Poem             | Lewis West . . . . . 101           |
| PALS. Short Story                        | S. N. Behrman . . . . . 102        |
| THE TIP OF TEMPTATION. Short Story       | Robert P. Jule . . . . . 111       |
| HER HUSBAND. Short Story                 | William Goode . . . . . 120        |
| AN EYE FOR AN EYE. Short Story           | William A. McGarry . . . . . 126   |
| MUTUAL. Poem]                            | Henry G. P. Spencer . . . . . 127  |
| GENEROUS GEORGE. Burlesque               | Townsend Cushman . . . . . 128     |

Copyright, 1916, by THE C. H. YOUNG PUB. CO., Inc.

Copyrighted, 1916, by THE C. H. YOUNG PUB. CO., Inc., Great Britain

**Yearly Subscription, \$1.50 in advance. Single Copies, 15 cts.**

Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office of the City of New York.  
Application to register title as trade mark has been filed with the United States Patent Office.

Published Monthly by THE C. H. YOUNG PUB. CO., Inc.

Office, 112-114 East 19th Street, New York, N. Y.

C. H. YOUNG, President and Treasurer.

B. O. YOUNG, Secretary

NOTE.—The Editor will be pleased to consider stories of from 1,500 to 5,000 words and novelettes of from 15,000 to 20,000 words; where stamps are enclosed, every effort will be made to secure their safe return in case of rejection. All MSS. should be typewritten or in very clear handwriting.



# Greater Love Than This

By LOUISE WINTER

*In April BREEZY STORIES*

---

**G**REATER love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend, but what is the greatest proof of love that a woman can offer?

This is the question that confronts Sybil. She has clung fast to the traditions of her youth; she has pinned her faith to the honesty of the man she has married, and she has resolutely closed her eyes to his shortcomings. Separation only deepens her tender feelings toward him, and then she is suddenly confronted with the opportunity to prove the depth of her love. Is disillusion only the natural outcome of marriage? Is it only absence that has dulled love's bright image? Will the spark be lit again when they are once more face to face? Or have they grown apart, each finding a new interest, which could easily develop into mature affection?

The question is brought home to Sybil. In which way can she show the greater love for Dan, by holding him fast, or by giving him up?

This struggle is one that confronts many women, and Sybil ends it in the only way that appears right to her.



# THE LOVE-STORY OF A HUMAN COG

By Martin Kellar

## I

THERE is so little ornamental about me that pretty girls, unless I step on their feet, don't ever trouble to look me over. As a "mixer" I was always a failure. I fear that in the direction of sociability there is something radically wrong with me, and I've often wished that I possessed more spirit. But, until the day before yesterday, when I met Miss Muriel Ward, the wish never disturbed my peace of mind.

Somehow I find myself urged to write about that meeting. I suppose my idea is to draw a picture of myself as I appear to others out of my proper element. Try as I may to avoid caricature, I have a feeling that it is going to be a comic picture.

This is the way the annoyance began. It knocked on my door early in the evening, two days ago, and Baldwin entered. Baldwin is another cog, of about my size, in the same wheel. We work in the same department. Our salaries, as long as we measure up to a certain standard of efficiency, is an even hundred dollars a month. But if a slight defect should be discovered in us, any two of a thousand other small cogs, temporarily held in reserve, will automatically replace us, and will fit in the wheel as well as we did at our best. Of course, I realized that long ago, but it never troubled me to any extent. I don't believe in brooding over the future. Besides, until day before yesterday, I've managed to steer clear of spending money except for books and necessities, and I've a comfortable little sum laid by for a rainy day.

"You read a great deal," said Baldwin, after he had helped himself to one of my cigars. "What do you get out of it?"

"I pass the time," I replied.

"Thanks," he said. "Time'll pass somehow. The question is, Do you get any fun?"

"It gives me pleasure," I returned.

"And, as I only read good books, it helps to improve my mind."

"That's a lot of bunk," was his laconic assertion. "I've worked alongside of you for four years straight, but you may call me Bismarck if I am able to notice any improvement. What do you do when you don't read? Why don't you wake up?"

What he said sounded like an echo from my conscience. Just before he entered I had been reflecting that undoubtedly I was spending too much time in my comfortable armchair, reading books. I seemed to be out of touch with everything, except my work in the office. Although I was positive that I possessed the qualities essential for genuine friendship, I knew of no man whom I could call my friend. It would be my twenty-eighth birthday the next day, and I might shake myself by the hand and offer congratulations. Nobody else would, that was certain.

"Say, Oliver," Baldwin went on, "honest, I like you, and I believe I'd do you a real favor if I took you in hand and helped you to getting shaken up a bit. Come, put the weight on your feet. Let's take a walk."

I knew his idea of taking a walk: Up and down four blocks and then a halt in a saloon for some beer. Up and down four blocks once more and then another halt for some more beer. What pleasure anybody can find in drinking a lot of beer one doesn't need and doesn't care for, passes my understanding. Beer is an abominable mixture, it seems to me.

"I'll go with you," I agreed, "but I'm not going to have any beer."

"No fear," said Baldwin. "Nix on the beer stuff to-night. Don't forget your hat."

"Oliver," he said in a confidential undertone, after we had reached the street,



"you and I are going to the Icarus with a couple of lady friends of mine."

I halted, ready to turn back. That I am anything but a ladies' man seems to have been generally recognized by everybody who knows me. Baldwin's proposition made me feel uneasy. The idea of me going to a cabaret show with two girls I did not know.

"What sort of two ladies?" I asked.

"Oh, decent girls. Don't you worry."

"What about their parents?"

"Great Scott!" said Baldwin, regarding me pityingly. "We don't want their parents along. Their parents live elsewhere, I believe; the girls don't depend on them for anything. They are telephone girls. They'll be off at eight. We are to wait for them outside the Icarus."

"We!" I exclaimed. "Don't you think you take a great deal for granted? How do you know I'll be there?"

"Well, they know somebody will be there. I promised to bring a friend. Don't back out now, old man. Between the two of us it won't cost so very much, but it'll be pretty expensive for one."

"I should think it would. Can't you get somebody else?"

"To tell you the truth," he replied, with his usual candor, "I tried to get everybody else. You were the last in the line. And I thought the experience would do you good. There's a good fellow," he grasped me by the elbow and led me along in spite of my protests. "Let me tell you right now," he continued, as if he already took my consent for granted, "so we won't have to quarrel about it afterward: The little one is my girl; you stick to the big one."

His words seemed to carry the inference that the girl I was to "stick to," being tall, was quite capable of taking care of me, so long as I footed the bill. I hoped she wouldn't be conspicuously tall, and, much to my relief, she wasn't. On her French heels she merely loomed above me by an inch and a half. I am a trifle below medium height. In almost any conference I feel most at ease when the other fellow sits down and I stand up; and, though I admire them very

much, I always feel uncomfortable in the company of tall women.

My first impressions of Miss Muriel were a little confused. Her large brown eyes sparkled with a sort of devilish mischief that got on my nerves, and she had a way of tilting her head and looking down on me that made me feel smaller as compared to her than really was the case. I judged that she had left the public school eight or ten years ago, and I was soon impressed that she had considerable more experience in the greater training school than I. She was well and neatly dressed, and struck me as being the kind of girl who could make a little go a long way. And she was disconcertingly pretty.

Baldwin called the other girl Gertie—her surname I failed to catch at the introduction. She seemed of a pleasant disposition, but I didn't like her laugh. Nor did I like Miss Muriel's laugh. I had a feeling all the time that besides the trifles that so amused them, they saw something extremely jolly in the situation, which I failed to see, and I was a little put out on that account.

It developed that the girls hadn't had their dinner, that, in fact, as a matter of course, they were looking to us to buy their dinner. I had come prepared to spend a dollar, loafing over a glass of beer, but I soon realized that it wasn't going to be that way. Miss Muriel looked up from the wine card, and said to the waiter, whom she seemed to know:

"I'll start with a Martini cocktail."

"Port wine for mine," said Gertie, who also seemed to know the waiter.

From the way Miss Muriel studied the menu I knew that she was determined to get my money's worth. She examined the list of food as a discriminating person would examine a list of books. Such a person, I've noticed, will run his finger down the list of authors—on the right-hand side—and when his eye alights on the name of some literary genius, then he will look at the titles at the left-hand side. Miss Muriel had a similar method of choosing her dinner. There were all kinds of prices, from ten cents up to two dollars, but her finger did not hesitate a fraction of a second



on any of the small figures. It stopped at the two-dollar figure, then it made a swift rectangular motion to the left, and instantly she knew what she was going to have for dinner.

"Ain't you going to have anything?" she asked me, after she had ordered about three dollars' worth of food.

I told her I had had my dinner.

"Have a sandwich, anyway," she invited, smiling generously. "For company's sake."

"Sure, take a sandwich," said Baldwin, who had ordered some kind of goulash.

So I asked the waiter to bring me a cheese sandwich and a pot of tea. At that they all lost control of themselves. I failed to see the humor in the situation, and told them so. Couldn't a man order a cheese sandwich and a pot of tea without being laughed at?

"Pardon me," said Miss Muriel, after she had recovered part of her breath, "but you looked so funny ordering that cheese sandwich and that—pot—of—tea."

Now, I am mentally neither deaf nor dumb. I am as intelligent as the average person, and I do believe I am slightly more so than Baldwin. I knew what made them laugh. When a man is out of his element he doesn't appear to his advantage; he may even act as a fool. I suppose I had behaved like some sort of clown without intending it.

Miss Muriel was kind enough to change the subject. She told me she had gone without lunch in anticipation of this princely spread, and I could well believe her, for she seemed to be reinforcing herself against a lunchless tomorrow. I didn't mind that so much, but I did object to the frequent cocktails. By looking at the wine list I found that they cost forty cents apiece, and within an hour and a half she did away with three of them. It seemed to me a reckless way of spending the money of a man she had not known for two hours. It certainly wasn't polite.

I tried to make her see it.

"They might go to your head," I warned her.

"I like them," she replied, looking at

me mockingly. "Why don't you try one—they're good."

"I am glad you like them," I lied. "But think of to-morrow."

"Bother!" said she. "They don't hurt me. Maybe you don't like this place so very well?"

"Oh, I guess it's all right," I replied evasively.

"Sure! It's all right, or you wouldn't find me here. I come here quite often with a good friend of mine; but he backed out to-night. I guess he had an appointment with another girl."

She was quiet for a space, gazing away wistfully toward a gay crowd of apparently wayward young people of the upper class. Then she expressed a wish for another of the same.

"If you think it is right," I said hesitatingly.

"It's all right as long as you don't mix them," she instructed me. "Don't ever worry about me. Wipe your chin and pull down your vest—you're in a worse state than I am." She pushed the bell for the waiter, then leaned toward me confidentially: "Did you ever hear of the poor babes that got themselves lost in the woods?" she asked.

"I didn't," I answered.

"Well, it's a sad, sad story. I'll tell it to you, some time."

I tried to think of some repartee, but as nothing appropriate occurred to me, I thought better of it, and changed the subject.

"Do your parents live in this city, Miss Ward?" I asked.

"No," she replied, sobering a little. "I left them home."

"Where is your home, may I ask?"

"Where I hang my hat," she answered indifferently.

That was hardly witty, I thought, but evidently she wished to avoid serious conversation. If there is anything I am an absolute failure at, it is in this jolly small talk that seems to cost most people no effort at all. Baldwin is an expert at it. Between him and the girls, they kept it up all the evening. They must have uttered enough nonsense to fill a good-sized book.

We stayed in the Icarus until about



closing time. When it came to settling, it gave me quite a shock to learn that the bill had crept up to fifteen dollars and sixty cents. Baldwin asked me in an undertone to pay the entire amount—he would settle with me later. It looked "piker-like," he argued, to split it between us in the restaurant. But I know Baldwin, and I made him pay his share right there.

Outside the Icarus we were assaulted by a score or so of parasite taxidrivers, every one of whom seemed to be as sure as he was of breakfast, that we were going for a midnight joyride and were only undecided as to which taxi to employ. Miss Muriel placed a meditative finger on her underlip and looked them over. Then she looked at me and smiled bewitchingly.

"Wouldn't it be nice?" she said.

"Right here, ladies; right here, gentlemen," cried the most energetic of the cabmen, and took hold of me. I tried to shake him off, but he wouldn't let go. He was looking respectfully at Miss Muriel, as though she were the mistress of the whole show.

But just then Fate stepped in, or perhaps it wasn't so much Fate, after all. I think that Nellis, knowing where to find her, must have been waiting outside for Miss Muriel. Nellis is a slightly bigger and more important cog than I am. We have known each other for several years, but beyond an occasional "Hello!" in the office, where I see him every day, we are as good as strangers to one another. We don't mix. He is more like Baldwin. And he is a handsome fellow, tall and graceful and more distinguished looking than most cogs.

The moment Miss Muriel saw him she forgot all about the taxi. The coaxing look went out of her brown eyes, and into them came a new expression which somehow I wished had been for me. She tried to look angry, but she didn't succeed.

"You're a nice one," she said to Nellis.

"I know it," Nellis laughed. "Hello, there, Oliver, old top," he hailed me. "Had a good time?"

Miss Muriel gave me no time to an-

swer. In fact, as far as she was concerned, I had ceased to exist. She tugged at his sleeve.

"Why couldn't you come?"

"I told you I had an important engagement," said Nellis carelessly.

"You didn't want to." By this time she had her hand on his arm in a way that showed plainly that she claimed him for her escort; and, actually, they were beginning to walk away.

Baldwin, who was a little ahead with Gertie, turned, and beheld me standing alone. I am still wondering what I looked like.

"Aren't you coming, Oliver?" he asked.

I was going to blurt: "Not as a fifth wheel," but the grins and stares of the twenty taxidrivers checked me. So I simply said:

"No, not to-night."

Hearing my voice, Miss Muriel seemed to recall me. She turned.

"Oh, aren't you?" she cried, affecting great disappointment. "Well, thank you for to-night, Mr. Oliver. By-by!"

Nellis came over to my desk the following afternoon. He addressed me with unusual cordiality.

"That was a mean, rotten treatment Muriel gave you last night. But don't blame me, Oliver. You saw the way she hung on to me, and I couldn't very well shake her off."

"That's all right," I said. "I am sorry I butted in; I had no idea that you and she kept company."

"Oh—as for that." He leaned leisurely against my desk, regardless of the chief clerk who was just passing. Nellis can do a good many things with impunity that we other ordinary cogs dare not dream of doing. "Muriel is nothing to me," he said.

"She is a bit of a luxury, isn't she?" I ventured.

"Not when she is with me," he asserted. "I got her out of the habit. How do you like her?"

"I think I should like her better if she would be less expensive."

"You've got her number. And she is stingy too."



"Stingy?"

"Sure she is stingy."

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand."

"You're thick as mud, Oliver," he informed me pleasantly. "I mean, of course, that she wants everything she can get out of you, short of actual cash, but she won't give you anything in return."

"You mean she is decent?"

"I mean she is wise," said Nellis. "Wise is the word, Oliver. Wanting everything and giving nothing in return isn't what I call 'decent.' She's too wise for me to waste my time on. You can have the kid, if you want her—I'm through with her."

I saw Baldwin later. He grinned shamefacedly.

"I suppose you are through with Muriel after what she did to you last night," he observed.

"Oh, I don't know about that," I answered. "I'll admit that she made me feel a bit foolish, but that may be a way she has."

"I don't get your meaning," said Baldwin. "But take my advice and hang on to your little roll. She is jolly good company, but in the long run she is a pretty poor investment."

## II

It is more than a week since some fool impulse made me write down my little excursion in a world where I evidently did not belong. I still agree with Baldwin that Muriel is a poor investment, though in the meantime something has happened which has made me think more kindly of her.

I don't often take my meals at Alexander's restaurant. The place is too far away from my lodgings for daily patronage, but on pleasant Sunday mornings I am in the habit of walking over there. The restaurant is spacious and cheerful, and I like to spend an hour or so in it, reading my paper over a second cup of coffee. They have an excellent cook; their flapjacks are uncommonly good, and you get real maple syrup with them, all for fifteen cents. Now, it so happens that Muriel and Ger-

tie live within a block of Alexander's, and they, too, have a weakness for the flapjacks. But, of course, until I unexpectedly faced them upon entering the restaurant last Sunday morning, I had no idea that they would be there.

Well, what could a man do? They caught sight of me before I saw them, or I should have turned and fled. Muriel flashed a smile at me, and indicated the empty chair at her side. Now, if I had possessed a modicum of gumption I should have ignored the invitation—she deserved it—but evidently she knew it wasn't in me to decline.

However, I tried to act as though taking breakfast with two attractive girls was an experience in which I could see no particular charm, though I have misgivings that the tone of easy familiarity I assumed impressed them as genuine. Perhaps I overdid it. It was one of my few pleasures, I told them, to read my Sunday paper over a second cup of coffee in this cheerful place. Now, I supposed, I was expected to talk to them.

"Oh, no, not necessary," said Gertie.

"Go on, read your old paper," said Muriel.

"We'll watch you do it," said Gertie.

"It'll be such fun," said Muriel.

I ruminated on that for a while, then I put the paper aside, and remarked it was a beautiful morning.

They had noticed it. The sun had chased them out of bed.

By bright daylight I had a better look at Muriel. One thing I like about her—she doesn't use powder, or, if she does, she certainly knows how to put it on. I believe she would have a fine complexion if she spent a month or two in the mountains and slept in a tent, and I believe, also, that her eyes would lose some of their deviltry with the improvement of her complexion. I call it "deviltry," but I've found it isn't always so.

"Isn't it too bad," she said. "We have to work this afternoon. Wouldn't it be nice to spend the day in the park, loafing under the trees?"

"When do you start to work?" I asked.

"At one, sharp. There should be a law preventing people from using the phone on Sundays."



I looked at my watch. "It is only nine o'clock. You have all forenoon. Why don't you make use of it?"

"Hardly worth spending carfare for the sake of it," said Gertie.

It is foreign to my nature to thrust my company on anybody, and I don't know what made me do it in this case.

"I'll take you out," I offered.

Muriel looked from me to Gertie. I believe she winked an eye.

"That would be real nice," said Gertie.

"Of course, if you'll let me," I added.

"We'll let you," said Muriel. There was a calculating look in her eyes, and suddenly they flashed with the light of a bright idea.

"Let us go in a taxi," she cried.

I sipped my coffee slowly while gathering courage to meet this insidious flank attack on my pocket-book. Then, meeting her glance, I smiled—or tried to smile.

"Nothing doing," I said.

"Piker!" flashed her brown eyes, but her lips said, ingratiatingly: "Why not?"

"Because, Miss Ward, going out in a taxi, as far as I am concerned, would be putting on airs. I can't afford to acquire any costly habits; you know that as well as I do. What is the use of pretending to be something that you really aren't—nobody will like you for it."

"A good fellow would do it, if I asked him," said Muriel, plainly unable to see my argument. "But since you look at it that way, I guess a jitney'll do."

She looked so genuinely disappointed that I almost gave in. But I realized I would feel sorry for it afterward, so, asking them if they were ready, I rose and picked up my check. The girls also got to their feet, and the waitress, beginning to clear the table, handed their checks to me. Paying for their breakfast was something that had not occurred to me, when I accepted Muriel's invitation to sit down at their table, but as the girls acted as though there was no cash register in the place, it seemed that to pay for all of us was the proper thing for me to do, and I did it.

Often before, when spending a Sunday in the park all by my lonesome, my

heart had ached when I watched the sociable crowds all about me. Toward sunset was the time I began to envy them. In the early afternoon the book I invariably had brought with me usually held my attention, and I was hardly ever moved by anything going on about me except the shifting shade of the tree I was leaning against, when it left me exposed to the full glare of the sun. But toward evening, as I said, when the dull print began to weary, I would sense in the laughter and the light and buoyant footsteps an accusation that seemed to emanate from smiling Nature herself, and I would read upon the faces that seemed the happiest that, although I had passed a tranquil and pleasant afternoon, I had as usual missed the wine.

And I would curse myself for being a bookworm and timid, and wish I were out there on the graveled path among the others, who experienced the stuff that furnished material for books, and read books when they had nothing better to do.

Well, this morning I had my wish. I looked about me in the hope of discovering some solitary pedestrian of my own species who might envy me, but it seemed that Muriel, Gertie and I had the park all to ourselves. There have been occasions, on rainy days or early in the morning, when I have enjoyed a lonely stroll in this park, and more than once, during my silent wanderings, did I have a sweet vision of some one stepping lightly at my side, some one sympathetic and understanding, her hand in mine beneath the bowers of a long sequestered path, and both of us wishing for no other companion.

Muriel could never be such a companion; Gertie far, far less. Gertie fairly overflowed with nonsense. She wanted to know why there were so few people about; she wondered every ten minutes what time it could be; she hoped the strenuous exercise of walking so fast wouldn't affect her health; and finally she wanted to sit down.

"Stick on your stilts," said Muriel. "Walk while you have a chance. It isn't every day you get a gentleman to take you out for a walk."



"It isn't every fellow I let take me," Gertie came back.

"I hope you're enjoying yourself," said Muriel, after we had walked about a mile and a half.

"I am," I replied heartily. "I do enjoy walking. If you girls are enjoying yourself as thoroughly as I am, I am perfectly content."

I think that was very handsomely said, and I believe Muriel thought so, too. She looked at me a little curiously.

"I'll bet I can beat you walking," she said. "We'll try a walking race, some day when Gertie isn't along, eh? However, as the staid old cat remarked, treading its way gingerly along a spiked fence, 'Let us take our time.' Here's a bench, and here we sit down."

"I'll say this much," she admitted, after we were seated. "There is more fun to this little hike of ours than I thought there would be. It beats by a mile sitting in the room yawning over the funny papers. That little two by four is getting my goat for sure."

"But you don't stay home much, do you?" I asked.

"Not so much now," said Muriel. "But every half hour I spend in it outside dressing and sleeping hours gives me the blues. What is a girl to do on eight dollars a week, I like to ask you—rent a furnished apartment? Everything goes to buy rags and shoes and gloves and things; if you haven't got good clothes to wear, you may as well be in jail—nobody will take you any place. Oh, I guess I know how it feels to be in jail!"

I had some inane stuff on my lips to the effect that a pretty girl like she could have all the companions she wanted, but, happily, I thought better of it in time.

"I came to this city about two years ago," she went on. "I sat by the window in the Y. W. C. A. the first Sunday I was here, watching the people go out to the park—thousands of them—and I wondered where they all were going. A kind old maid invited me to go out with her—none but a lonely, kind old maid would, for I didn't have anything fit to wear. Wasn't I lucky, though, to get

a job. But, will you believe me, for four months straight, I stuck to my little clothes closet every Sunday, because I didn't have anything to wear. I had to send some money back to the folks, you know, and the glad rags had to wait. But, say, it was tough. Talking about being in jail!"

She sat silent for a while, gazing up in the crown of a fine beech.

"And it was summer," she then sighed. "I had a feeling all the time of being cheated. You're young but once, and time does fly so. There I would keep to my room, hot as a bake-oven at times, all day long, reading stories about the upper half, always swells or near-swells, painted in colors so contrasting to the dishwater color of my own existence that in the end it gave me the blues worse than ever, and I would have a good cry. Tough? Oh, no!"

Her voice vibrated. When she looked at me again all the mockery had gone out of her eyes. They were hard, now, and regarded me resentfully, as though I was partly to blame for the barrenness of the summer she had lost.

"You could have married that well-to-do, venerable gink that was stuck on you in them days," Gertie reminded her.

"Him!" She waved the suggestion away, as if it were too loathsome to consider. "He was old enough to be my grandfather, and I knew he hit the bottle regular. I don't believe in shaking hands with the devil before you meet him."

"But didn't you go to church and try to get acquainted with some nice people?" I asked. It was just like me, to suggest something I had never tried myself.

"I told you I had nothing to wear," she flashed at me, as though impatient with my stupidity.

The answer seemed final. She had had nothing to wear, and that settled it. But just what she meant by having "nothing to wear" continued to puzzle me.

It was getting toward noon. On Muriel's suggestion we steered for a jitney within sight. I argued that there was no need to hurry—the jitney would take



us downtown in ten minutes. But Muriel insisted, and she is a headstrong person. After we had left the car I discovered why she had been so set upon returning to the city a whole hour before her duties called her to the telephone exchange. She had the jitney stop outside Alexander's restaurant, and after we had alighted, she said: "Well, come on, boys and girls, it's time for lunch." But she never meant that the treat should be on her.

Muriel disappeared up the steps of the telephone building an hour later, but she remained in my thoughts long after. I had planned the day before to spend the Sunday in the usual quiet way, and had provided myself with a copy of a pocket edition of "The Light That Failed," but Kipling proved a lifeless companion that afternoon. I told myself that I was a fool to think of the girl; if she was too wise for Nellis, she certainly would prove so in my case. As long as she suggested no other treats than jitney rides and inexpensive walks in the park, there was no danger of her bringing about my ruin; but I certainly drew the line at dinners at the Icarus and joyrides. Besides, it is plain as daylight that she is in love with Nellis, and merely regards me as a sort of queer mutt who can't possibly arouse the jealousy of any one and will come in handy once in a while to foot the bill when there is nobody else around to do it.

She had given me her telephone number and asked me to call her up, and I had given her mine. And I had taken her up on that "walking race" proposition.

We haven't had it yet. When she called me up the other evening and asked me what in the world I was doing, anyway, I reminded her of our agreement, but she replied she had been joshing, of course. A walking race! The very idea! What would her mother think of it? Good-night! She was very much afraid I wanted to take her at a sixty-mile clip along the smooth oily road that led straight to perdition. My pace was far too fast for her. Now, if I had suggested a little dinner party at that

delightful cabaret place, I would have suggested something within reason; and if I could talk Mr. Baldwin over into taking Gertie, the girls would have any evening off after eight. I thought I had her cornered right there.

"And have Nellis wait outside for you to see you home?"

There was a brief pause, then—

"Nellis wouldn't bother." She paused again, then went on briskly: "He's a cross between a fresh guy and a bad egg. I shan't ever speak to him again."

"Did—did he insult you?"

"Insult me! Oh, my, no! I'm just a working girl, you know. Nellis misunderstood me, and I misunderstood him—that's all.

"Well?" she demanded, in the ensuing pause while I was thinking of something to say.

"I don't like that Icarus cabaret," I objected. "Let us go to some other place. How about Alexander's?"

"After eight o'clock they'll have nothing to sell but pork and beans, and my doctor told me not to eat that stuff. And they've no music. Can't you see my side of it?"

"Can't you see my side of it?" I asked her in return.

"Sure I can. You love your little pile more than you do me. But don't forget, laddie, that the money you own to-morrow won't buy you the fun you could have had yesterday."

"That's a piece of sophistry," I remarked.

"It's a piece of what?"

"It doesn't matter. You can't talk me over to take you to that place— It wouldn't be right."

"Tell him he is a piker," I heard a voice—undoubtedly Gertie's—propose at her end of the wire. But Muriel evidently was too much of a lady to follow the council.

"Good-by," she wound up the conversation abruptly. "So sorry to have disturbed you."

Disturbed me. I should say she had disturbed me. Just before she called me up I had been abroad with Washington Irving on his journey through fascinating Spain; but now, try as I might, I



found it impossible to rejoin him in the spirit.

So I was almost glad to see Baldwin, when he dropped in a half hour later.

"Heard from Muriel lately?" he asked, with a grin. "Gertie was after me, only half an hour ago, in regard to blowing them to another dinner at the Icarus."

"Well, blow them," I said. "I suppose it is all right with you."

"Rats!" he replied, laughing cynically. "What is there in it? They always stick together—it's money thrown away for next to nothing. If they had their way, you could spend your whole salary on them, and if you lost your job and found yourself broke, they'd cut you dead. They strike you as capable of almost anything, at first, but after a while you'll find out that they've set themselves a certain limit. It's a game they're playing, and in a way you can't blame them much for trying to get your goat when they know you're after theirs."

"I am not trying to get anybody's goat," I replied, a little hotly. "Not in the sense you mean."

"Eh? What's that, Oliver—you aren't? Well, you can almost make me believe it. But you can be pretty sure that Muriel sizes you up as being like the rest of the bunch. I've noticed how she studies you. You're a case of still water."

"Even if a fellow was really in love with any of them," he went on, after a reflective pause, "I don't believe they would get wise. To begin with, I was stuck on Gertie in what you might call the right way, but it wore off after I had been out with her twice—cost me a week's pay. Now I am stuck on her in what I suppose you call the wrong way."

"Perhaps she didn't size you up right in the beginning," I said.

"That may be, that may be. It's just as Nellis says—they're too wise."

"Nellis used to go out with Muriel a good deal?" I said.

Baldwin laughed again. "Yes, and Muriel thought he was intending to marry her, poor girl."

"Why 'poor girl'? She is just as good as Nellis any time."

"Better, I should say, when it comes

to morals. Nellis is already married. He lives apart from his wife."

The information gave me quite a shock.

"Does Muriel know?" I asked.

"No, I am quite sure she doesn't. With all her faults, she'd cut him dead the minute she found out. They are not on speaking terms, just now, but that is merely because Nellis was a bit too fresh with her that night when he saw her home."

"You mean he insulted her?"

"Oh, well, call it that."

It occurred to me that I had never liked Nellis, and it seemed I hated him now.

"You should have told Muriel."

"Who—me? What business is that of mine? I'd only get in Dutch with Nellis. He has quite a pull with the chief, you know. I suppose I am the only one of the boys that knows he is married. He made me promise not to tell Muriel. Whatever you do, don't let on I told you."

"You needn't worry," I assured him, thoroughly disgusted with his smallness. "I shan't tell Muriel unless Nellis insults her again. She will feel better for not knowing it, perhaps."

"Careful, old man," Baldwin warned me, winking an eye. "You'll get hurt if your interest in Muriel lasts more than a month."

### III

That conversation took place about six weeks ago, and in the interim a great number of small occurrences, with Muriel as the central figure, cumulative in regard to the complete ruin of my peace of mind, have made me come to the conclusion that I was a fool in not avoiding them. I wish I had never met Muriel; I wish I had never heard of her; and even while I try to banish her from my thoughts, I yearn for her and sit with my nerves on edge waiting for her summons over the telephone.

Did anybody ever hear of a snowman playing with fire?

She would have passed out of my life



long ago if her conduct throughout our acquaintance had borne out my first unfavorable impression of her, and I should have remembered her merely with a feeling of regret that a perverted idea of what constitutes amusement should cause such a good-looking girl to travel at a pace that inevitably must lead to the bitterest of all disappointments. But that is just the trouble. There are two sides to Muriel. The side predominant is that developed by the hollow sophisms of bad companions and the veiled innuendoes of bad books, strengthened, no doubt, in the dreary summer months during which she had "nothing to wear." What went before I don't know—I have never asked her. But often I think that if Fate had led us together two or three years ago, I should have known her other side—her good side—as the stronger.

It shines through once in a while; I catch a glimpse of it, and then it is gone. But while it lasts, I feel there is a bond of sympathy between us, and with each such glimpse the bond strengthens its hold upon me, and in vain my reason struggles to regain its liberty.

When I am capable of rational reasoning, I know that this state of things can't last long. I see her quite frequently, now; Baldwin and Gertie are as a rule along and the object of our meetings is always a "good time" in some form or other. But I am out of tune with their excessive vivacity, and often I find Muriel looking at me with a speculative frown, as if wondering where my thoughts are, or if I have any at all.

As for taxi rides, we have had quite a few, and we have dined a few times at the Icarus. We would have dined there every evening if Muriel had had her way. Since I met her I haven't saved a dollar, and I used to add fifty at least to my bank account every month. Being with Muriel means spending money at a rate that often takes my breath away.

As for instance: We arrange over the telephone to go to a movie. Except putting into practice that long-deferred "walking race" in the park there is nothing I like better than to take Muriel to

a good photo play. Any rationally constructed scene appealing to the gentler emotions never fails in its desired effects upon Muriel—her tears are not so very far away. And she knows good humor from bad. While looking at the pictures I have at least the satisfaction that we are feeling together, and the price of admittance as compared to that pleasure is inconsiderable indeed. But, as Baldwin says: "If you think she'll let you off with twenty cents, you've got another think coming."—She will close the conversation over the telephone with something like this: "You and Baldwin come over and have a little chat before we go to the show; and, say, bring a box of chocolates." Then she tells me what kind to buy.

After the show, it is taken for granted that we visit an ice-cream parlor, then we may take an inexpensive stroll up and down the street for a half hour or so, but all the time Muriel seems to be on the lookout for some small souvenir of a character conformable with her peculiar notions of propriety, to ask her escort to buy for her. A block from their hotel she will usually stop at a fruit-stand and point out certain delicacies which she should dearly love to have. On one occasion we passed a shooting gallery, and there was no stopping her. With a perseverance that I should have admired, if each crack of the toy-rifle hadn't stung me to the quick with the realization of another nickel gone forever, she shot away a dollar and a half, and I believe she would have been quite capable of making it ten if I hadn't asked her to give somebody else a chance to spend his money. Then she actually had the nerve to call me a piker.

"Muriel," I said, "I would sooner give you three dollars for something useful than have you spend a like amount of your own money in a shooting gallery."

"I'll take you up on that," said Muriel, without an instant's hesitation. "I've got just three dollars in my pocket-book—" and she started for the shooting gallery again.

Very curious to know what she would do next, I handed her the three dollars.



Muriel took the coins, turned each of them over once.

"Dear little three dollars," she said, as she passed the money back. I felt a light pressure of her fingers.

"I take it all back, laddie, dear," she laughed. "You are not such a piker, after all."

And for the remainder of that evening she was the sort of sweet companion I had so often dreamed about.

If her gentle moods would only last!

The books lie neglected, for Muriel is always, always in my thoughts. But she doesn't care for me. She has a certain ideal, and the ideal looks very like Nellis. The day she meets that ideal and he thinks her worth the devotion of his leisure hours, it is all up with me, and, doubtless, though my whole being quivers at the thought, it would be the best thing that could ever happen to me. I should be able to recover.

I gave her a photograph of myself two weeks ago. A few days later Baldwin and I called at their room to take them to a show, and naturally I looked for the picture. But it was nowhere in sight. Most prominent among the numerous photographs, pennants and souvenir postal cards that adorn their little room, was as usual the handsome smiling image of Nellis, enclosed in an expensive frame of sterling silver, which Muriel, otherwise so parsimonious with her own money, had bought herself. When his name is mentioned she speaks of him as of some negligible person whom she used to know; but why, then, in the name of sound reason, doesn't she remove the picture from the place of honor on her dresser?

I am at a loss to understand Baldwin. His morals need mending badly. Sometimes he is cynically frank as to his motives in making love to Gertie, and at other times he hints that he may marry her some day, and seems quite sincere about it. He has adopted an "I told you so" attitude toward me. It is his unshakable opinion that Muriel is getting my goat—hoofs, beard, horns and all. He wonders what will be my size by the time Muriel gets through with me, and often I wonder myself.

We saw Nellis on the street the other day accompanying a smartly dressed young lady. He looked the other way.

"I suppose," said Muriel, with a laugh that sounded pitifully unnatural, "that I wasn't classy enough for the real rôle."

I have taken a strong dislike to Nellis since I found out that he is married. Doubtless I am a poor hand at concealing my feelings, for they seem to be reciprocated, although he endeavors to act as though he is unaware of my silent antagonism. He has assumed a friendly and condescending tone when addressing me, and often jollies me with apparent good nature in regard to Muriel.

"How is my old girl?" he asked me yesterday, as he passed me on his way to the chief's office.

His lips smiled, but I read insolence in his cold eyes.

"You mean Miss Ward?"

"Oh, call her Muriel—she likes that better. Is she beginning to reform?"

"In what way?" I countered, trying to play up to his pleasant manner.

He laughed carelessly as he moved away. "I suppose you'll be asking for a raise in salary soon," was his parting sally.

Nellis is a brother-in-law or cousin or something to one of the principal stockholders. It is considered good policy in our department to be on good terms with him. Not so very long ago his salary was no larger than mine, but due to a lucky combination of his "pull" and real ability, he was recently promoted to a position worth a hundred and fifty. I was one of the dozen over whose heads he was advanced, but I never bore him any ill will on that account, although I felt certain that I could fill the position as well as he. Unlike most of the boys in our department, whose work is confined to their papers on their desks, Nellis' duties include daily conferences with the sales manager and credit man, and once a day at least he spends ten or fifteen minutes in the chief's office. His is the sort of position which, if filled by the right man, affords splendid opportunities for further promotion and, incidentally, for "knocking."



## IV

Now I suppose he will be knocking me. On a little reflection I know that there is very little "supposing" about it—I am face to face with the certainty of it.

It is funny how things will happen! But I don't care—I am glad it happened.

Muriel and Gertie had a whole Sunday off, and we had arranged to spend the day at Minerva Beach, weather permitting.

The weather graciously permitted.

Minerva Beach nestles coyly among wood-covered slopes with a magnificent background of snow-capped mountains about three hours' boat ride from the city. The resort is composed of a small hotel in a state of neglect, a dozen summer cottages and a grocery store. It is a very beautiful spot, but on account of its distance from the city it has fewer visitors than it deserves. I had been there once before, but with no other companion than a book.

We agreed that the girls should furnish the spoons, knives and such things and Baldwin and I the tickets and the lunch. Not that Muriel permitted us to cram the lunch basket with anything we saw fit. What could we possibly know about getting up a lunch basket! First she made a list of everything we were to buy, but on second thought she decided that she had better superintend the buying. A variety of things that we hadn't thought of, or hadn't dared to think of, soon taxed the rather limited capacity of our little wicker basket, and we were compelled to get a second one to hold the fat corpse of a fowl, which the delicatessen man assured us was a chicken, and which, Muriel said, was absolutely indispensable.

Never had I known such a perfect day in June. The small steamboat pitched a little in the swell of the open sea, and there was nothing whatever in the sky or upon the shores or in our minds to mar the day, and after passing through a bit of the most perfect scenery in the universe, we landed at Minerva Beach.

We parted from the other excursionists, and carried our lunch along the beach until we came to an ideal spot.

To our left was the sun-kissed sea enclosed in a horizon of majestic mountains, to our right the land sloped gently upward into primitive wilderness; behind us was a twenty-foot high wall of solid granite, decorated with a million or so of barnacles. Our floor was granite too, smoothed by the tides of past ages. Aborigines might have squatted on it, for all we knew, feeding on raw fish with nothing to go with it. We covered it with the latest Sunday edition of a modern newspaper, and Muriel and Gertie set the table.

"Ain't I the little champion lunch rustler?" demanded Muriel. "How would you like to have me get up your lunch regular?"

"Don't mention it," said Baldwin. "We'd eat only once a week if you had your way. Do you know that this little lunch cost us ten bucks?"

"No more than that?" cried Muriel. "I must have forgotten something. But don't let the price worry you, boys—look at the time we are having!"

Muriel was quite right, I philosophized contentedly. Ten dollars, indeed! One could well afford to spend a mite of the provider against a rainy day to impress indelibly in the memory that at least once he treated himself to a corking good time. What a lot of pleasant times I had missed! I sat close to Muriel, thrilled by the warm touch of her hand. In her eyes I read that at the moment she was the Muriel I loved, and I wished that the day, with its benevolent influence upon her, would last forever.

After an energetic but futile attempt to empty the two lunch baskets, we spent a delightful hour basking in the sunlight. Then Gertie announced that she was going to take a nap, and while Baldwin improvised a pillow from the Sunday newspapers we had brought with us, Muriel and I slipped away among the barnacled boulders. Alone with her, I felt a little tongue-tied, and her remarks were mainly confined to exclamations such as: "Look at this!" and "Look at that!" There were many interesting things to look at, sea-shells and sea-stars and seaweeds, and something that had the appearance of a petrified



sack of cement. And we would stand with heads close together, while I endeavored to lecture on the objects we examined, though precious little did I know about them.

Then the reckless girl began mountain-climbing feats among the boulders, and as her high-heeled boots were not adapted for quick motion on the irregular ground, I feared that she might stumble and hurt herself. Presently, in leaping from one rock to another, she slipped on the seaweed, but happily no other damage resulted than a broken French heel.

"Good-night!" was her cry of dismay. "Got any glue about you, Mr. Oliver?"

I seated myself beside her, and after a prolonged examination of the broken heel, diagnosed that if she did no further cavortings, it might stay on until we got back to the city.

"Another expense!" she sighed—I thought with a hint that the bill for the repair of the boot ought to be included in the general excursion expenses.

Then she made a new discovery. How it happened was a mystery to her, but she had broken her brooch. It wasn't much of a brooch, she admitted, but she valued it highly because it had been given to her by a very good friend a couple of years ago. She sure did appreciate little things like that, when they came from a good friend.

"There you go again," I scolded her gently. "Why don't you come out straight and ask me to buy you a new one?"

"One doesn't ask for keepsakes," she enlightened me. "They wouldn't be much of a keepsake, if one did."

"You as good as asked."

"Well, maybe. But you do need coaxing."

"I'd sooner buy you a new pair of shoes," I blurted, recalling what I had thought a hint in her tone at the mishap to the French heel. "Then I would be doing you a real favor. You need them worse than you need the brooch."

I felt relieved, but somehow I was not much surprised, when she declined my offer.

"Little Muriel always could buy her

own boots," she replied. "If anybody told you different, don't you believe them."

I moved closer to her and gave her hand a light pressure.

"I like to think the best of you," I said, and then I felt like an idiot for talking like that.

She laughed. "How jolly!"

The situation may have seemed jolly to her. To me it was becoming something infinitely more than just "jolly." I felt it in my blood as I looked into her laughing eyes that I was sipping from the wine I had always been missing, and I wanted to drink deeply. Muriel looked her best to-day. Her cheeks glowed healthily from the exercise in the clean fresh air, and her brown eyes challenged and dared.

"You look a hundred per cent. better to-day than when I first met you," I said warmly.

"My gracious, nurse! Ain't you the kiddier!"

"Talking about jewelry," I went on, completely carried away by the warm look in her eyes. "There is a certain piece of jewelry—not a brooch or anything like that—that I should like to buy you."

"Oh!" said Muriel, without the slightest embarrassment. "What a jolt! Or do I misunderstand you? What kind of jewelry—does it look like a doughnut?"

"Muriel, can't you be serious?"

She gave me a look of commiseration.

"Well?"

"It would mean everything to you and me, Muriel, if I bought it."

She looked away over the water toward the small steamboat which was just bringing another load of excursionists.

"I wouldn't buy it if I were you," she said seriously. "I'm not the kind of girl you want."

"Muriel!"

"Forget it, laddie. You're a good boy. Sometimes I think I am not treating you right, and I feel sorry. I wish you could do something to make me love you."

"You like me now—don't you, Muriel?"

"I do—you're dear to me, just now.



But it isn't always a sunny Sunday in June."

"I know what you mean," I said, bitterly. "I am not fast enough for you."

"Fast!" she repeated, with a curious tremble. "You never had my number right. Seriously, I wouldn't want you to be fast. I like you best when you're natural. What is there in it? Nothing in the long run—I know that as well as you. It's a matter of luck what sort of fellows you are thrown in with—and I never seemed to have the right kind of luck. There's a certain type of man I have my heart set on—I suppose you know what I mean—and I've met the type several times, but he was always dishonest; never really meant to buy the little piece of jewelry I wanted so much. Sooner a necklace, a bracelet, a sunburst—anything, anything almost but showing that he really cared. You—you're the first man that ever offered to do the square thing by me, and—and I thank you for that."

I squeezed her hand and gave her the use of my handkerchief, as she had left her own in her handbag. The sunlight seemed to have gone out of the landscape as I looked toward the pier where the latest arriving excursionists were just landing.

Then that happened which seemed to envelop the whole magnificent scenery in sinister gloom. There could be no mistake about it—I knew only too well the well-built, graceful and smartly-dressed figure. On the narrow trestle above the tidelands, along which the excursionists were walking toward the shore, I beheld the man who, I knew, at the moment was in Muriel's thoughts. Nellis had been on that boat, and it was quite likely that we would meet him before we left Minerva Beach.

From appearances he had no other companion than a lean, pipe-smoking person in whose company I had often seen him—a chartered accountant, I believe he is. I did not make my discovery known, and I hoped that his arrival had escaped Gertie and Baldwin, whose voices I heard a short distance away. There was a possibility that Nellis would follow the beach in the opposite direc-

tion from the course we had taken, and, if we left on an earlier boat, a meeting with him might be avoided.

Muriel's tears did not last long. Her eyes still shimmered as she returned the handkerchief.

"We'll talk about that some other time," she said. "Don't forget we are out to have a good time."

I could follow her train of reasoning perfectly well. She hadn't exactly handed me what she herself would term "the cold turkey"—she had me still on the string. Unobtrusive Oliver, so unlike the type of dashing young man of pleasing address and charming manners that was her ideal, would do as a last refuge. Being so quiet and unassertive, it stood to reason that he would never cut much of a figure in the world; but, other hopes gone, he would do quite well as a permanent meal-ticket and relieve her mind forever of the haunting fear of becoming a lonely old maid.

Gertie and Baldwin could have done nicely all the afternoon without us joining them. They were holding hands under the funny paper, pretending to be deeply interested in the latest doings of the Katzenjammer Kids.

"You may go and play some more, children," Baldwin granted, "providing you behave."

"Let us all play some game," Muriel proposed, as she seated herself at one side of the rock that had screened our lunch party from intrusive eyes.

I went to the other side of the boulder, and had a look at the portion of the newly arrived picnickers that were coming our way. It was turning out as I had feared—Nellis and his friend were steering straight for us, and, as if to make the meeting with them unavoidable, Baldwin and Gertie decided that it was their turn to play, and began climbing to the top of the large block of granite.

"Hello!" Baldwin suddenly exclaimed. "Look who is coming."

"Who?" asked Muriel.

"Nobody," said Baldwin, catching my eye. But it was too late. Muriel's curiosity had been aroused.

I could see how the sight of Nellis



agitated her. She stood motionless for a moment, as if undecided whether to step behind the boulder or remain where she could not help being observed by him. Even as she appeared to make up her mind to stay out of sight, Nellis saw her.

"Why, hello, Muriel!" he hailed, waving his hat. Then he and his friend came up to us. "Hello, Gertie! Hello, everybody! Where's your chaperon, girls?" he bantered. "The idea of you going picnicking without asking me along!"

He introduced his friend. I was so put out by the intrusion that, although I caught the name, I wouldn't have known it a minute later.

"Come on, sit down and have some lunch," Gertie invited. "You don't know what you have been missing."

"No," Nellis returned, his eyes on Muriel with a peculiar intensity that suggested that until this moment he had never really valued the girl as she ought to be valued. "It appears that I've missed something."

That his remark had no reference to the lunch was clear to all of us. Baldwin scowled behind his back. Muriel evidently failed to appreciate his veiled flattery, and, it pleased me to notice, seemed to resent it when he seated himself beside her. If she had bestowed upon me a similar look of strong disapproval, it would have tied my awkward tongue altogether, but it failed to freeze Nellis. From appearances he took for granted that he had a perfect right to monopolize her, and, I must say, he did it with good effect. It wasn't long before the ice was melted, and that accomplished, the scornful expression in her eyes soon gave way to a look that made my heart ache with bitterness, for just so had I wished that she should look at me.

In a little while the conversation was no longer general. Nellis lowered his voice to a soft purr when he spoke to Muriel, and presently she responded either in the same confidential murmur or with laughing monosyllables. Baldwin and Gertie began amusing themselves with tossing pebbles at an empty

bottle, and Nellis' friend tried to get me to discuss the European war. The cadaverous chap, whatever his name was, seemed to be an insufferable bore. And all the time, while he was talking, he was helping himself to the very best of the leavings of our expensive lunch.

As I thought the situation over, while pretending to be listening to a pro-German opinion of the Russians, it came to me that Nellis was playing on a presumption that his "pull" in the office would prevent any demonstration on my part capable of arousing his displeasure. Now, he was wrong in that—I never gave much thought to his superior position other than I would like to have it myself.

Nellis stood up and helped Muriel to her feet. He might have let go of her after she stood upright, but he kept supporting her as though he was giving her a walking-lesson. It may be chivalrous to act that way toward a young and healthy woman. I don't know. I only know that it would have given me immense relief if I had shouted at him: "Hands off!" I am glad now I didn't.

"We'll just take a little stroll along the beach," said Muriel, with an apologetic look at me.

"Don't worry about us, old man," Nellis added patronizingly. "If we should miss the boat you go on, we'll take the next one home."

Even now, in a cooler moment, I am sure that I had every excuse for acting as I did. Muriel loved this man; she wanted him to marry her. It was my duty as a friend and as a gentleman, if for no other reason, to disillusion her before it was too late.

"Whatever you do, Nellis," I replied, succeeding, I think, in speaking calmly, "don't be out too late—your wife may be waiting for you."

He started. It seemed to me that his eyes turned green.

"Wife!" ejaculated Muriel, pushing away the arm he had around her waist. "Wife!" she repeated, with a catch in her throat.

I tried to act as though I had noticed neither his discomfiture nor her consternation.



"What are you giving us?" spoke Nellis, with an uneasy laugh.

"The straight goods, I hope," I answered, returning his hostile glare with interest, but endeavoring to seem surprised at his question. "You have a wife, haven't you?"

Muriel looked from him to me with big staring eyes.

"Where the deuce did you get your information?" he asked, seemingly recovering from the first shock, and doubtless relying on Baldwin's lacking the nerve to bear me out. I shan't deny that I began to feel uncomfortable. I only had Baldwin's word for Nellis being a married man, and I had promised him never to let out who told me. But I must say this for Baldwin—at bottom he is far from being a bad fellow. He came to my rescue like a gentleman.

"If you want to know, Nellis," said Baldwin, drawing a little. "I gave him the information, and between you and me and Tom, Dick and Harry, don't you think it's about time Muriel knows?"

"Straight?" cried Muriel, turning with flashing eyes to Nellis.

"Well, what about it?" he answered, with a grin that made me wonder where his good looks had gone. "I've got a perfect right to be married, haven't I?"

"You snake!" Muriel flashed. "I pity your wife!"

"Gently, gently," he laughed, as he stooped and picked up his hat. "Nice way to treat your guests, don't you think?" He motioned to the lunch-devouring numskull. "Let us leave this crater before there's a general eruption. If we stay much longer," he added, with a contemptuous look at me, "this poor little insignificant simp——"

I have a flash of recollection of Muriel regarding me curiously, as if wondering what I would do, but I did not stop to think of the look, nor of anything. I went straight for Nellis, stepping, I believe, on his lurching friend, and I drove straight from the shoulder at his classic chin and closed his face before he could finish what he had on his mind. Once more I felt the impact as my fist connected with some part of his head, then something hit me, and

down we went together, and with a sense of surprise I found myself on top. But the next moment hands pulled us apart, and then, first, I realized with a feeling of mortification that I had lost my temper and my dignity and was emerging from the first scrap I had been in since my last inglorious battle as a boy at school.

Inadvertently I rubbed the shin of my left leg, which was beginning to hurt.

"He kicked!" cried Muriel, in a tone of crushing contempt. "The big jellyfish—he kicked!"

Although my mind was in a state of confusion, I was quite capable of appreciating the sting in Muriel's epithet. It must have wounded Nellis terribly, for he is anything but a jellyfish; if he had been at all prepared for my attack he would have toppled me over before I had reached his chin.

Nellis was saying things too, chiefly directed at me, but I scarcely heard them, and presently I was aware that he and his friend had left us.

"Does it hurt bad?" Muriel asked, bending over me as I continued automatically to rub my shin.

"Oh, no."

"What are you rubbing it for, then?" she asked again, this time in the half-vexed, half-solicitous tone of a mother addressing her youngster. "Let's have a look at it."

I was interested myself. Strange as it may seem, it was with a sense of satisfaction that, having exposed the leg, I discovered a slight abrasion and a tinge of blue on the skin. I wished there had been more abrasion.

"The big brute!" Muriel exclaimed, as she tied her own handkerchief around the hurt. "I'm glad you licked him."

I caught Baldwin grinning. He told me later that if he hadn't been handy to pull us apart, Nellis would have finished the fray by carrying me down to the beach and giving me a ducking.

But I don't quite agree with Baldwin in that.

V

"What do you intend to do after you get the polite little slip in your pay-



envelope?" Baldwin asked me two days later.

"Polite little slip?"

"Regretting that owing to the necessity of cutting down expenses, or some such bunk, the company will hereafter try to get along without your valuable services. You're in for it, Oliver. Nellis is the champion knocker—you won't be the first one he succeeded in getting canned. I suppose I'll get mine next, for butting in as I did."

"I am awfully sorry, old man," I said, "if I should be the cause of it."

"Don't think for a moment I blame you, Oliver. I believe I would have acted as you did, if I had been in your shoes. If I should get fired, I'd be most concerned on account of Gertie." Baldwin paused, bending to strike a match on the sole of his shoe. "You know," he went on, facing the floor, "Gertie and I are feeling different about everything since last Sunday."

"Different?"

"Sure!" Baldwin blushed. "You chump, do you want everything with a spoon?"

Then I saw. They have it all settled. Come what will, Gertie and Baldwin have made up their minds to fight it out together. It must be great to be one of the parties to such an understanding.

I haven't seen Muriel since last Sunday, and I don't know just how I stand with her, for she had very little to say on the way home. She was quieter than I ever thought it possible for her to be. I have an idea that she knows Nellis' position in the office, and consequently has her misgivings as regards my job. Muriel wouldn't waste her time on a man out of a job—or would she? I don't know. Muriel is such a puzzle.

If she should say to me: "Job or no job, money or no money, it is you and I together through thick and thin," what wouldn't I be capable of doing!

## VI

Poor Nellis! I almost wish I could feel sorry for him.

It appears that to-day, after he had

told his little story, the chief, who otherwise is far too busy a man to trouble about investigating such matters, had a few minutes to spare. I divined the reason, when I was called into his office, and it puzzled me that I should be sent for at all, since it is well known that he considers the polite little slip in one's pay-envelope the easiest and most expedient procedure of discharging employees.

Nellis was present. He looked nervous, and avoided my glance. The chief came straight to the point.

"Aren't you hurting your reputation, Oliver?" he asked me, with a frown.

"No, sir," I answered, as soon as he paused. "Not in any way whatever."

I believe that some of the timidness was knocked out of me last Sunday. Ordinarily the very shock of the implication would have made me stammer and appear guilty.

"Eh!" the chief ejaculated, with apparent surprise. "No? Well, I couldn't bring myself to believe it of you; that's why I called you."

He paused again, regarding me with more interest than he had shown toward me in all the years I have worked for him.

"Thank you, Mr. Carman," I said simply.

The chief turned to Nellis. "Let us have it all from the beginning," he suggested. "Just as you told it to me."

"I can't see the use of it, Mr. Carman," Nellis objected. "I have told you, and if you don't believe me—"

"It isn't a matter of disbelieving you at all," the chief interrupted him calmly. "I want to give Oliver a fair chance of vindicating himself, if he can."

"I had the firm's interests at heart," Nellis asserted heatedly. "Checking up my statements like this doesn't seem necessary."

"Oh, doesn't it," said the chief coldly. "Well, I don't quite agree with you. Among other things," he addressed me, evenly, "Nellis tells me that you spend a good deal of your time at cabaret shows in the company of disreputable women. Now, you know very well I can't have that kind of man working for me."



I had it on my lips to call Nellis the blackest kind of a liar; but luckily I had enough sense to realize that the chief would be more favorably impressed if I kept cool. So I simply said:

"If you'll give me three minutes of your time, Mr. Carman, I'll tell you just how much of it is true."

"Fire away," said the chief.

Then, paying no attention to the slanderer, I looked the chief straight in the eyes, and told him, not the whole story, but whatever I thought had direct bearing on Nellis' charge. It took longer than three minutes; I believe it took ten; but not once did the chief interrupt me with words to the effect that the time granted was up.

"That doesn't sound a whit like your story," he said to Nellis, when finally I was through.

Nellis by this time had himself well in hand.

"No," he said carelessly, "I never thought it would. It is for you to decide whom to believe, Mr. Carman. I'll only say this, that Mr. Thompson would never have thought of doubting my word."

Mr. Thompson is Nellis' powerful relative. It required but little penetration to perceive that he was reminding the chief of his influence. But right there he committed an awful blunder—I was surprised that he didn't know his man better than that. As I have sized up Mr. Carman, he is by nature too much of a real fighter to tolerate any attempts at intimidation, especially from a subordinate. And I felt certain that, whatever had been his position before, he was now against Nellis, though any one that didn't know him would have thought that he was rather pleased at being informed of the touching intimacy with one of the principal stockholders.

"Oh, is that so?" he said pleasantly, but with an ominous glitter in his gray eyes. "But in what way could Mr. Thompson possibly be concerned with this case? Why mention his name at all, Mr. Nellis? Why?"

"Thank you, that's all," the chief dismissed me, and so I missed Nellis' answer. As the door closed after me, I heard the chief repeat: "Why?"

A few minutes later Nellis passed me on the way to his desk, where he began packing together his personal effects. I bent over my work, and when I looked up again he had left the office.

Half an hour later the chief called me again.

"Finish whatever work you have on hand," he addressed me formally, "and get up the necessary data for your successor." He paused, I think to study the puzzled look on my face. "Nellis resigned," he added in his usual grouchy tone. "I think that you might be a likely man for his job. Anyhow, I'm going to give you a tryout. You can take his desk in the morning."

## VII

I kept the good news to myself. Baldwin's astonishment when he sees me at Nellis' desk in the morning will be worth the small effort of restraint. Besides, I didn't want Baldwin to tell Gertie, who of course would lose no time passing the news to Muriel.

Early in the evening I called up Muriel.

"When did you last see the sun go down?" I asked her.

"I was just watching it slip down over the housetops when you called up," she replied.

"Let us watch it set together," I suggested. "We'll get out in the park in plenty of time to see it, if we take a taxi."

"Taxi!" cried Muriel. "I'm surprised at you. A jitney'll take us out just as fast."

So we went out in a crowded jitney, and very little was said on the way.

There is a bench out in the combination park and wilderness that very few people seem to know about. It is situated a little way off the main road, and a narrow path through a thick underbrush leads to it. It is in a state of decay, sagging at one end, and its back has been defaced with a great number of in-artistic incisions of mortally wounded hearts, initials and dates of twenty years. But it commands a view toward the west



of a great expanse of water, and, directly below it, the green waves, dashing against cliffs and boulders, chant the unbroken melody of eons. That secluded spot has been a favorite resort of mine on tranquil evenings; but more than once have I experienced a sense of guilt, when the crunching of dry leaves behind me announced the approach of two would-be engravers of hearts and arrows, and I heard their vexed, disappointed "Oh, pshaw!" or words to that effect.

Clearly it was my lucky day—the bench was unoccupied. At first Muriel didn't like the looks of it. She felt like walking and reminded me of the "walking race" I still had coming to me. But as we had come out to see the sunset she finally consented.

"I never knew there was such a place in the park," she said. "How did you come to know?"

"Oh, I spend a lot of time here, dreaming how nice it would be to watch the sunset from this bench together with a girl like you."

"You surprise me."

"In what way, Muriel?"

"I never thought it possible that you could use such language."

"Isn't it good language?"

"Oh, perfect."

A pause ensued, during which the big disc of liquid gold sank all too swiftly into the sea. A veritable maze of things to say, beautiful and sincere things, mere sentimental drivel, suggested themselves to me, but at the moment they all seemed a little irrelevant.

"Did you get the heel on your shoe fixed?" I asked, in order to keep the conversation going.

"I bought a new pair," she replied, "with low heels."

"That makes you only half an inch taller than I am. I am glad you got low heels."

"There it went," said Muriel, alluding to the last gleam of the disappearing sun. "It seems funny to think that it keeps right on going, doesn't it? I suppose if you travel fast enough toward the west, you'll see it setting all the time."

"And it would never be night. You didn't get your brooch fixed, Muriel."

"Stupid old brooch," she muttered.

"Would you smile if I got you another?"

She withdrew her hand from mine, and her tone sounded formal.

"If you feel that way——"

"But, you know," I went on, again taking possession of her hand, "that I'd sooner get you that little piece of jewelry that looks like a doughnut."

Her hand, warm and limp in mine, clasped about my fingers.

"Would you really take the chance?"

"Why should I be afraid?"

"You love your ease so much. Pretty soon you'll find it quite a bother to be tied to a nervous live wire like I am."

"I need a live wire like you to stir me up once in a while," I confessed.

"I believe you do," said Muriel. "What you need is a monthly or weekly scrap."

Her lips smiled and her eyes took on a dreamy expression. I divined that she already saw a vision of one of those scraps and found it amusing.

"Oh, laddie," she went on, with lowered voice, returning the pressure of my hand, but still looking away, "I care for you much more than I used to, for I know what you risked when you fell out with Nellis, and you did it all for my sake. And I like you because he kicked you, as I despise him for doing it. And," she added, her voice trembling between laughter and tears, "I can't help loving you for the way you made a cannonball out of yourself when he insulted you."

"Then it is all settled," I whispered, after I had kissed her. "But, since you know what Nellis can do, sweetheart—I am sure to lose my job."

"What do we care!" said Muriel, caressing my hand. "You'll get another job. And if it takes time, we'll be as saving as we possibly can. It's all so different, now, dear. I never really cared for that cheap imitation of a gay life. It was only Nellis and his kind that made me believe I did."

"That makes it all the easier," I said, striving very hard to speak composedly. "You and I won't have to pinch, Muriel."



I'll tell you a secret, if you'll promise me not to let it out when you see Gertie."

"I'll promise," she laughed.

"Nellis lost his job through knocking me, and I've succeeded him. I am now getting a hundred and fifty a month."

Muriel was dumfounded; she wouldn't believe me at first.

"Fact," I assured her.

"How much money have you got in the bank?" she asked me bluntly, after I had told her of the interview with the chief.

It was just like her to ask such a question, but she was entitled to know.

"Two thousand dollars," I told her.

Again she kissed me. "Honest!" she laughed. "I love you twice as much."

The thought of all that money seemed to render her speechless with joy for the next minute.

"What are you thinking about, sweetheart?" I asked.

"A little bungalow in the suburbs and chickens," muttered Muriel, contentedly.

## "NOTHING ON NEW YORK"

(With apologies to R. K.)

By Percy Maxwell

I've danced the quadrille when I've 'ad to,  
I've waltzed an' I've polka'd galore;  
I've done the schottische an' been mad to  
Fandango from eight until four.  
There's been Spanish beauties I've danced with,  
An' Dagoes an' Malays an' such;  
An' niggers jet-black 'ave I pranced with—  
So 'elp me, I've clogged with the Dutch.  
I 'ave done pirouettin's in Russia,  
The va-souviener in Greece;  
Some 'eavy flat-footin' in Prussia,  
An' a can-can all night once in Nice.  
An' there was a gal out in Cairo,  
Who taught me the *dreb-el-kaber*;  
'Twas so doggone zippy, I thought I'd go dippy  
When I learnt about dancin' from 'er.

I've seen sheep-shearers' 'ops in Australyer  
I've done minuets in Peru;  
But as dances them things is a failure,  
As I learned from a Bombay 'Indoo.  
For she taught me subtle embraces  
That I never knew could occur;  
By the banks of the 'Waddy I've 'ugged 'er slim body,  
When I learnt about dancin' from 'er.  
But them 'eathen dancers are rotten  
Compared to a gal I 'ave found;  
All them of the past is forgotten,  
When the kid I would sing of comes round.  
For 'ere in New York is a wonder  
Whose step is as soft as a purr,  
An' when I feel whirlie, I'm off to this girlie  
To learn about dancin' from 'er.



## THE CANARY

By Thomas J. Betts

IT rained. It was a real North China rain. For three days it had been raining—three days of downpour that had converted the roads to sloughs, dissolved all the painstakingly erected boundary walls, flooded the entire Wang mansion with the exception of the *k'ang*, and finally brought down the southeast corner of the Wang roof with a crash.

This last catastrophe was the cause of Hsing Chi's being sent out to obtain a board to cover the aperture. Hsing Chi was sent because she was the strongest girl and therefore best fitted for the errand. Accordingly she took the family umbrella and sallied forth.

Wang Ma Ssu had philosophically resumed his pipe and was just commencing his observations on the weather, intending to incorporate therein sundry remarks on the slowness, undutifulness, and general undesirability of female offspring, when Hsing Chi's voice was heard to declare piercingly:

"A dead outside-country man!"

"Dead? Ai! Verily this place and house are cursed," wailed Mrs. Wang. "Already we have famine and flood, and now we shall be persecuted for the death of this foreigner. Aii-i——"

"Silence, woman!" ordered the patriarch, then to Hsing Chi: "Is he really dead?"

"I cannot look," came hesitatingly from Hsing Chi.

"The Gods spare me from like female spawn. I shall see myself. Give me the umbrella," and Ma Ssu half stepped, half waded to the threshold.

He had no need to go farther; almost at the door lay, half-submerged in the yellow mud, a form clad in what were once white ducks. Even as he watched, it writhed and twisted hideously.

"*Huo lan*—the cholera," remarked the father sententiously.

"Ai-i——" began his wife, only to be checked by his stern glance. The old man remained in an attitude of thought for an inordinately long time. His face assumed the vacant look of the Mongolian immersed in contemplation. Meanwhile the bundle at his feet writhed and twisted and bubbled in the mud. At last the master spoke:

"Take him inside."

"But it will bring us bad luck, disfavor, law suits——"

"Silence, woman. This man is at present dying. If he dies on our threshold, we shall be blamed. If we take him in and he lives, we shall obtain great reward. If he dies, we can bury him secretly and no one will be the wiser. Besides, am I a man and a father to have my will gainsaid by such as ye? Take him in." Having delivered his pronouncement, Ma Ssu returned to his dry corner of the *k'ang*, his pipe, and his philosophic content, while the rest of the family struggled in with the straining white form and laid it on the driest damp spot to be found.

Thus came Harry Foster to the house of Wang.

*Swish—Swish—Swish.*

Foster stirred and slowly opened his eyes. How heavy they were! The exertion seemed too much for him, so he let them drop down again. It was an exquisite feeling to lie there in a glorious state of helplessness. Lie *there*—where? His curiosity, first sign of convalescence, began to assert itself. Where? Not in the Japanese district—he remembered leaving it in the small hours, and the glow through his eyelids proclaimed day—how many days later he did not then know. He was not at home. He was conscious of a different atmosphere from that of his bachelor quarters. Where, then?

*Swish—Swish—Swish.*

"Stop it!" he tried to mutter peevishly,



only to find utterance impossible. "Stop what?" he thought. He must find out; it might give him a clue to his whereabouts. His eyes must open. There!

In a flash he caught the salient details of his surroundings. Mocha-colored walls of mud, blackened toward the ceiling with sable soot, a few rude pieces of furniture, worn and polished by the hands of a generation of users to the same all-pervading hue, rendered an aspect of hopeless monotony. He lay on a matting-covered *k'ang*—the North China bed, radiator and isle of safety—which conveyed, from the blackened fireplace opposite, through a flue in its interior to the rude chimney by his side, such of the smoke and heat as did not escape into the room. The only cheerful note in the squalor was a fugitive sunbeam that, gliding through the "coffin-length" door, rested upon his face. All this he saw in a flash, before his eyelids fell of their own weight. It was enough. It showed him where he was; and if he needed confirmation, the "atmosphere," a mingling of stuffiness, steaming millet and just a hint of fish, afforded it. He was in a Chinese house, and the house of a low-class Chinaman at that.

*Swish—Swish—Swish.*

What was the noise? He must find out. A glance would do it. Carefully he located the sound; it was to the left by the fireplace. He must husband his strength and make sure of the direction. Now for the effort! Employing all his strength, he rolled back the heavy lids.

There, crouched against the fireplace, was a girl. A Chinese girl, and yet pretty—pretty from the foreign standpoint. Her huddled attitude as she scraped the big pot, her torn and dirty clothes, her disheveled hair, all could not conceal the fact that she was pretty. Sallow-skinned she was, and almond-eyed, with high cheek bones. Still she was pleasing to the eye of a dissolute foreigner who barely lived, and that due in no measure to himself. All this in a glance, then the leaden lids would not be denied, but sank heavily over his eyes, and he was falling, falling, falling.

Thus came Hsing Chi of the house of Wang into the life of Harry Foster.

What followed next was natural, almost inevitable. Take a young American college man, place him in a treaty-port where, as in no other place, not even in Clapham itself, does smug, British middle-class conventionality reign so supreme. Let him make a few false steps, call too infrequently upon his employer's wife, call too frequently upon some one's else, and he attains social ostracism. Take now this social outcast and steep him injudiciously in alcohol. After a due season, the effects may be observed to consist in a fondness for more alcohol, a taste for the Japanese quarter, social extinction in the world of gentlemen, and a quasi-respectable position in a quasi-respectable firm owned by a half-caste of doubtful reputation. After three years, this descent had finally brought Foster to the Wang mansion. Here the downward course paused only long enough to take on Hsing Chi, to whom it seemed—and was—no decline, but rather a soaring flight higher than her hopes had ever conceived. Then the descent continued until together they ended in a neat, red-brick, mud-roofed dwelling on the outskirts of the foreign settlement. Foster had reached bottom. He "kept a Canary."

Whatever Foster's moral degradation might have been, a physical improvement was clearly shown. He found his socks carefully darned, his ducks always spotless, and (for he was not naturally alcoholic), his craving for drink gradually abating. He had already dropped, or had been dropped, which, it was hard to say, from the Club; he had shunned, or had been carefully excluded from the society of the women of his own race for over a year, so he merely continued to taste the accumulated dregs of degradation with a compensatory bit of sugar thrown in. As for Hsing Chi, she was thoroughly happy, reveling in servants and clothes and food, all of which she had merely experienced, never enjoyed, before. Her life was idyllic in the extreme.

In fact it was too idyllic. She began to feel, something rare in a Chinaman, supposedly unknown in the female of the kind, and most injudicious in a chattel



like Hsing Chi. She began to feel an interest in Foster, an interest which grew into an ownership. She began to feel proud of him, to exult in him, and one day she became aware of a Fact, a great, gripping momentous fact, and she was blissful in the thought that there soon would be an indissoluble bond between them and that he would be hers, hers, hers!

And then came Miss Allen, tall, blonde, and with a fascinating, cool superiority that was too evidently ingrained in her nature to be thought of as a pose. Some time previously Miss Allen's father, having possessed himself of a generous portion of the money then afloat in Wall Street, was allowing himself and the Street a period of mutual recuperation. To keep his mind away from all business cares he sailed on a pleasure trip to England. He returned much refreshed, and with most of the stock of Brigglesworth and Jones—a fixture on the Coast since the day of the Clippers. Accordingly, when his daughter granted him an interview one morning and explained her intention of going around the world via London and Siberia, he had provided her with a dependent and dependable chaperon, ordered all the outposts of Brigglesworth and Jones to see to her safety and comfort, tendered her a letter of credit, kissed her most successfully, if somewhat unaccustomedly, and clambering into his limousine, ordered "Office."

In due course Miss Allen reached Tien Chou and the open arms of Brigglesworth and Jones. There, she remembered—she forgot only when necessary—that Harry Foster, who had amused her at times, was in the vicinity. So she demanded him. After sundry hints from her hostess as to what was "the thing" had only evoked a counter hint as to the eligibility of the chief assistant of the branch for promotion, the Taipan's wife asked Foster to dinner. Very formally he declined.

Miss Allen was puzzled, but not in the least angry. Her will was so seldom thwarted that she was quite at a loss as to what to do. One evening after tennis she met Foster. Very decent he looked, thanks to Hsing Chi; and, the dependent

and dependable chaperon being dismissed, they had a most pleasant talk of the places and people they both knew. Eventually, Foster never knew how, he had promised to come and see her. What is more, he came, and came again. Miss Allen's hostess was aghast, the community was shocked. But what cared they, the infra-man and the super-woman?

He came again, and yet again. There were walks and rides and billiards and singles on the private court. Then, of course, it happened, and kisses were exchanged and the old heavy seal ring left his little finger. Incidentally there were confessions followed by swift forgiveness, the injunction to "never do it again," and his removal to the Port's apology for an hotel.

Hsing Chi was too much wrapped up in her approaching triumph to notice anything at first. True that Fa, her lord, was out occasionally; but that was only his own good pleasure and as such to be respected. True also that certain of her own sex and race made insinuations; they were merely envious. Besides, it was manlike to lapse occasionally and there was That which would bring him back again.

Then came the crash, intensified by its appalling suddenness. An old harridan yelled to her across the mud wall that "Fa, the outsider, has left you, shameless one, to go with the tall foreign woman."

Loyal Hsing Chi did not believe it. Fa, her lord, would return soon and give that East-West the lie. She would wait and be reassured. She waited one day, two days. Oh, the agony of that waiting! Then the zealous neighbor informed her that "Fa, the outsider, is at the hotel. Go, sell your goods and return in your shame to the gutter whence you came!" Suddenly she felt that it was all true.

She would go to Foster. She went—and was turned away. Distracted, she returned to the little red house. What *could* she do? Slowly her meagre intelligence revolved the possible courses of action. Gradually a final hope was evolved. She would go to see this great lady and plead with her for her own.

Feverishly she donned her best, a



weird, exotic combination of pinks and greens and reds. Hastily she arranged her hair, brushing it with oil until it shone and glistened. Then she sped at first, though her gait was ever growing slower, to the Taipan's house.

Miss Allen was bored, prettily bored, daintily bored, but, nonetheless, undeniably bored. She consulted her little watch pettishly. Three o'clock, and it was beneath the dignity of a foreigner to stir before four-thirty. She permitted herself the luxury of a yawn. For the first time in her life she wanted to pack her own trunks, anything to occupy the next hour. She longed ardently for the land of the free—free to pack their own trunks if they so desired. She was glad she was leaving the next day. And yet—these subtle bonds of the East, She languorously stretched her lithe limbs, reveling in the silky feel of her negligee.

Catlike footsteps pulsed outside and there came a scratching at her door.

"Come in, Lee."

The door softly opened and Lee glided in, six feet of fallow, noiseless deference.

"Missee, outside have catchee one piecee China girl, wanchee talkee you. My have talkee, you no can see. She say you mus' see. Makee plenty bobbely. My tinkee you tellum go 'way, she go. Jus' now plenty much lose face."

Miss Allen's face assumed its customary *hauteur*. What could a Chinawoman want with her? It was preposterous. Lee should have known better than to interrupt her *siesta*. She would have the woman sent away at once. The whole thing was absurd and—it was an hour and a half until tea. After all, this unknown woman with her unknown mission might be interesting. She was sure to be more interesting than the collection of "new" books, the pride of her host, all of which she had read just two years ago. And it was an hour and a half until tea.

"Let her come in, Lee. You stay here, perhaps she doesn't speak English."

Lee flitted out, noiselessly, efficiently, giving a sense of restful ease.

Little Hsing Chi sat in the shade of the kitchen, terrified lest she should fail to gain entrance, still more terrified lest

she should succeed. Lee reappeared, calm and majestic.

"The Presence desires your appearance. Come."

She was to see the Goddess. Might she be given strength to plead! The Gods help her, and her love for Fal Trembling she followed, through halls as large as the whole little red house, up stairs that seemed *li* high. She perceived the color of hangings and embroideries, the dull glint of ancient bronzes, the sheen of polished brass, as a blur of shimmering tones that only enhanced the power and magnificence of that One whom she had come to confront.

They reached a carved door at the end of a hall. Lee scratched at it characteristically. A clear voice—Her voice—rang out in the foreign tongue and he swung the barrier open, motioning her to enter.

She got in—how, she never knew—and stood dazzled, a little, vari-colored blot in a mass of soft tones. Everything was in tawny brown, harmonious, yet each brown individual and distinct. The pongee curtains differed from the tan walls, both curtains and walls struck a different note from the Tientsin rugs. The Ningpo varnish of the woodwork was yet another brown, the covers of the furniture were a delicate expression of the same color, while through the great French windows the room was flooded with the tawny, Northern sunshine. There, standing in the sun's rays, its light playing on the lustrous silk of her negligee, enhancing the whiteness of her ivory skin, and making an aureole of her glòrious, golden hair, stood the Presence, tall, cool, assured, regal.

Hsing Chi looked and looked and looked. How could she dare?

"Gutter-bred! Do you forget your manners?"

Lee's voice brought her to. Quickly she made the correct salutation, her left hand across her breast, down on her right knee until her limp right hand touched the floor. Then she arose, humbly yet with a certain dignity, trying to conceal the love and hope and fear that were swirling and eddying within her. She *must* speak. Now was her chance.



Hesitatingly, punctuating her plea with rhythmic bobs, she began:

"Oh, Illustrious Lady, the small one knows that you are good, sees that you are beautiful, trusts to your pity, and asks——"

"What is she saying, Lee?"

"She talkee you b'long plenty good look see."

"Oh." Miss Allen, who, in spite of being inured to admiration, was never displeased with it, smiled. "Tell her to go on."

Hsing Chi took heart. The pleading in her voice was ably seconded by her tight-clenched hands. "And asks—and asks—you not to take away her—her man. Oh, great Lady, you mighty self does not need him; to me he is the sun. Let him stay! Let him stay! Do not take him from me!"

"What is it, Lee?"

"She talkee—she talkee—no b'long plover my talkee she talkee what."

"Go on, Lee."

"She talkee have got one piecee man b'long she. You takee him away."

Miss Allen smiled. It was a hard smile, but still it showed gratification. After all, was she not being paid the supreme compliment that one woman can tender another? This was doubtless one of those who had participated in the "past" which Harry had abjured for her sake. On the whole, she thought, the situation was interesting. To her it was new. She would prolong it.

"What does she mean?"

"Thing! What words are these? What man?"

"Mighty Presence, I, all unworthy that I am, love and used to hold, *Fa lao yie*. Now you have looked upon him and he sees me no more. You can have many men, why take mine? For he is mine, mine, mine—my all, and now—*Ai-i*——" she began the long Northern wail, checking herself until the sobs died and then went on: "He is so much to me, to you he can never be the half." She sank and half shuffled, half crawled to the white woman's feet. "You are great and I am small, yet we be sisters, thou and I; we feel in the same way. Oh, grant me my man——"

Miss Allen stirred uneasily. She needed no interpreter to understand.

"Show her out."

Hsing Chi understood the gesture. Hastily she began again:

"Oh, Lady, yield him to me! I beg! I pray! He is mine, not yours. Mine by right! I carry that within me that makes him mine. Give me back the father of my child!" Breathing convulsively, her arms folded against her breast, Hsing Chi paused.

"Show her out. But tell me first what she has just said."

"She talkee—she talkee *Fa lao yie* b'long her, no b'long Missy. Bimeby one piecee small chilo—come b'long *Fa*. . ."

Miss Allen raged. "This is too much. I will not stand it. I refuse. Take her away at once!"

Hsing Chi rose; tall she appeared, incongruous no longer. She seemed the impersonation of the long-suffering East risen at last, dignified and defiant.

"Tell her," she cried with outstretched arms, "tell her that a woman's curse rests upon her, that a mother's curse is on her head!" The attitude could not be long maintained. She grew shrill and strident.

"Tell her, tell her . . ."

For once Lee was out of countenance. "Come, Spawn!" he ordered, and led her forth.

It was sunset. In the bow of the little coasting steamer that was taking them to Shanghai, the Cathedral and a "sure 'nuff" marriage, as she expressed it, were Foster and Miss Allen. Owing to the sinuous course of the river, they were heading West. In the dimming twilight the ugly banks of the river assumed a becoming indefiniteness. The setting sun, crowned with aureoles of pink and orange and purple, transmuted the ugly brown of the waves.

"Sweetheart," whispered Foster, "are you happy?"

"Harry!"

"Then I am happy, the world is happy. . ."

Back in the cozy house, Hsing Chi was adding her mite to the already sufficiently perplexing race problem of the Coast.



## THE PRICE OF A SQUARE MEAL

By Edith M. Fraker

### I

**E**VEN the wind seemed hungry as it shrieked and buffeted about the little cabin. The snow drifted in through the cracks to lie in piles, or slowly melt to sluggish pools according to its proximity to the stove.

Allen Herrick sat by the little square cookstove in which a fire mutinously spluttered. He had on a great coat and held his hands over the stove while he gazed at the swirling snow out of the one remaining pane in the half sash of window. His face was pale and his hands looked thin and blue. He rose and walked to the box which did service as a cupboard, and searched its every crevice. He had done this repeatedly during the morning, and as before his search did not reveal the smallest crumb. Impatiently he threw the tin dishes on the floor and kicked them out of his way. Again he sat by the stove.

For a fortnight he had not eaten a satisfying meal, and now for three days he had not tasted a morsel. The state of his hunger was becoming acute. The cold seemed unendurable in his famished condition. Yet his only choice was to shiver here in his own cabin or loaf about the saloon farther up the straggling camp. There the evidence of a few eatables aggravated his misery; besides, the men gathered there more than half suspected his plight, and their sympathy was not of a sort tending to alleviate his suffering. Some one might offer him a drink, but even liquor was too scarce to be lavish of now. He had never formed a taste for intoxicants, still when a day or two before he had been offered a drink, he had accepted it because he thought it might bring relief to his gnawing appetite. The nausea which resulted had been so much worse than his hunger that he had

no inclination to repeat the experiment.

The storm had raged for three weeks and showed no sign of abating. Many among the motley inhabitants of the camp had none too much, and others than he were awaiting slow crawling starvation. Only two men had anything to spare and they made the hungry pay dearly for whatever they got. Only the day before Herrick had offered old Peter Skelton his claim for board till the storm should break, but that shrewd old gamester replied that the claim was worthless and that grub was worth too much just then to take any chances on. Herrick had even reduced his request to a small quantity of provision; still the old man refused. This morning he had offered it for one square meal, but Skelton, who in ordinary circumstances had been an ordinary man, was now playing for a fortune out of the sufferings of his fellows, and answered that he had not a bean save for the gold in his fist.

Herrick's brain seemed whirling with the eddying snow. He took a picture from his pocket and looked longingly at the smiling face. The features wavered, grew dim, then slowly mingled with the heavy features and dull countenance of an Indian face. When again he seemed to waken, his hands lay on the cold stove—the fire had gone out. Outside the window was the same confusion of drifting white.

He began pacing rapidly about his cabin to warm himself and to endeavor to think clearly. He could see but two possibilities before him; if he remained here, there was no doubt death was not far off, and the alternative—he had been thinking of it for days, always with disgust. Either way all was lost. He must find some way to justify himself; it was an expedient which life necessitated.

Buttoning his coat up tightly and pull-



ing his cap low over his eyes, he went out into the storm that seemed taunting him as it shrieked and buffeted him about. He went to the saloon hoping to find some way yet to escape his dilemma. All was as it had been for days, the same men playing the same games, the same men winning, the same men drunk or drinking. They were all ruffians and Herrick knew them for what they were. Though it was warm here, the atmosphere reeked with tobacco smoke and foul odors. He felt better out in the storm so soon went out again. He struggled about through the snow drifts, till completely weary, he turned resolutely toward the substantial log house of Peter Skelton.

He was let in by the half-breed wife, who greeted him none too cordially and watched him closely through her half-closed eyes. The smell of baking bread, of the pot of beans and hot coffee roused his appetite almost beyond control. Walking to where an awkward, square-built girl sat by the window, he addressed her with a friendly greeting.

The girl grinned at him, showing her large, even white teeth. No coyness shaded the gleam of pleasure in her dark eyes. He began some light conversation about the storm which she answered dully, never taking her gaze from his face. His appetite was growing rampant, so though his very soul revolted, he plunged desperately to the purpose of his visit.

"You do not know how lonely it is down at my cabin, Maggie," he said dejectedly. "I've been thinking of you for days, until to-day I could bear the loneliness and the thinking no longer, and have come to tell you." That every word was intrinsically true he held as a sop to his conscience. "You know I've nothing and am a pretty worthless shift all right. But I've come to ask you if you are willing to promise to become my wife?"

Maggie's wit had followed his words slowly but she comprehended his final meaning. Her face shone with emotion as she threw her arms about him, and if his reception lacked warmth she did not notice it in her own abandon.

As soon as the mother had understood the drift affairs were taking, she busied herself about her work and began setting dinner on the table.

"I seem to have come just at dinner time," he said apologetically. "I guess I better run back for a bit."

Maggie protested, laying strong, detaining hands on his arm, and the old woman spoke sullenly, pointing to a place at the table.

"Better set down and eat a bite. The men won't be up from the saloon 'fore dark. We'll eat and not wait on 'em."

For his own sake and to keep from betraying his real condition, Herrick struggled for self-control with every bite. Maggie sat and watched him, too satisfied to need food. When she found opportunity, she confided to him:

"Dad's been trying to make me marry old Sandy because he has them big mines, but I wouldn't do it because of you."

For the time, Herrick was glad he had not lost his last chance for a dinner.

As the men returning passed the window, old Pete saw something which saved the intruder from being kicked out without any preliminary ceremony. In the firelight he saw Maggie seated beside Herrick on the bench with her arms about his neck.

Herrick explained his presence in a manly and straightforward manner which made an impression on the greedy old man, and the girl's evident delight reached something in her father's heart. She was his trump card, but, after all, he could doubtless use Herrick to his advantage. However, his suspicion was not disarmed. He had a good deal of experience with the world and a shrewd insight into human nature.

"I'll O. K. the proposition if you will marry the girl right off," he gruffly consented.

Herrick pleaded his lack of means, and the embarrassing position in which it would place him, trying to conceal his own repugnance to the proposal, and how deeply he was disconcerted.

"That don't figure at all. I guess you know I've got plenty," the old man replied maliciously. "I won't have you



hangin' about and palaverin' round my girl. You marry her to-morrow, or old Sandy does."

He saw that reasons or objections were useless, and to seem to hesitate would only make the situation worse. He had gone too far to retract, that would be to fall old Pete's victim. He felt too weak and ill to try to contend with him; his head was giddy. He had sprung a trap which was closing on him and he was not able to try to escape.

"You know we do not do so among our people, Pete, but I am willing to meet your wishes. What do you say, Maggie?"

The girl replied rudely, without the suspicion of a blush, "Suits me, all right."

So it came about that Herrick found himself warmed at the great fireplace, eating his fill of sour-dough bread, beans and bacon, with strong coffee, carrying in the wood and making himself handy about the house of Peter Skelton. The relief was so genuine that at first he was almost content. Two days after his marriage the storm broke. The next week a dog sled arrived with mail from Dawson.

There was a long legal-looking envelope for Allen Herrick and he hastened to read its contents. His uncle's lawyer wished to inform him that an accident had at one stroke instantly removed from earthly concerns both his uncle and cousin, and respectfully informed him, as the only surviving relative, that he was sole heir of the estate estimated to be worth nearly a million dollars. Herrick looked at the postmark. The letter had been in Dawson a week at the time of his nuptials.

He thrust the envelope in his pocket and sat looking out across the sunlit snow, trying to find some philosophy in the course of fate. Skelton had been watching him closely and took the liberty to make an inquiry.

"News, eh?" he asked.

"Yes," Herrick answered frankly. "My uncle and his son have both been instantly killed in an accident."

Skelton had noted a lawyer's address on the envelope and his eyes narrowed significantly.

"Not the worst news perhaps. Something coming maybe?" he queried.

Herrick shrugged his shoulders. "I hardly think so. The old man had a little, I believe, but he is not likely to have thought of me."

As soon as he could do so without observers, Herrick burned the letter, for he dared not trust Peter's inquiring mind.

The following days passed by monotonously, and a fever began to burn in his heart. He was moody and restless. Inwardly he cursed the Irish in Maggie, wishing that she possessed the stolid Indian disposition of her mother, but she clung to him, lavishing on him a sort of dumb affection like an uncouth animal. Her caresses were almost unendurable and he daily loathed his position more intensely.

He looked forward eagerly to the opening of spring. It was with real joy, therefore, that he hailed a proposal from Skelton to make a trip to Juneau. Some business demanded his presence there, and he wished to bring back a supply of provisions, so he purposed taking Herrick and a half-breed driver to help him part of the way returning; and if they chose, they might all go down to Juneau. To be doing something, to be out in the open was unspeakable relief. He had not yet decided what to reply to the lawyer's communication, nor had the least thought of escape from his present condition come to his mind. He had resolved to strike out for himself in some enterprise in the spring and not remain the mere puppet of old Peter, but had not decided what it should be. He intended to fulfill his nominal obligations to Maggie, though in just what way he had not determined.

He had spent his life among people who observed the normal ideals of society, and had conformed to them simply as a matter of course. He had scarce given them a thought or made a venture into the philosophy of social relations. Now he clung to the traditions of his people as one sinking clings to a plank. He now recognized his weakness in giving way to his hunger, for what it was, but he did not realize that his present chafing



was because of the same lack of endurance.

A ship from San Francisco rode at anchor at the wharf of Juneau. As Herrick looked at her a mad desire to run away seemed to overwhelm him. At night he could hear the soft lapping of the waves; they seemed to be enticing him away to freedom. He could not fight with himself in his small room, so he dressed and went out to walk the street. At length he found himself at the wharf, whither he seemed to have come without his own volition.

It was dark, but he could see the gentle rocking of the white ship. A man passed near him and halted watching him. Herrick addressed him civilly and was soon in close conversation with the captain of the ship. The tide was in, they were making ready to put off. As the life convict leaps for the one chance of possible escape, Herrick grasped this opportunity without reflecting.

The captain was very moderate in his demands, and smuggled him on to the boat. When the captain considerably died of an over-indulgence in his favorite Scotch, the day before they put into port, Herrick thought himself fortunate indeed, and had small change to telegraph for money for the remaining expenses of his journey from Seattle.

## II

Once again in his old place, among his own people, the northland seemed only an unpleasant dream, and he could almost persuade himself that the ties that bound him there were a mere nightmare.

During the summer the girl with the fair face was away and he hoped she would wed the other man and save him from embarrassment, but early in the fall she returned. He went to see her to convince himself, he argued with his conscience, that she was irrevocably lost to him. He found her frankly glad to see him, more charming and winsome, more wholly to be desired than ever. The pain of being near her was too great, so pleading a business engagement, he soon took his leave.

He resolved that he would not seek her company again, and for weeks bravely kept to his purpose. One day as he rode toward the country, fleeing from his longing to see her, he met her by the wayside with her runabout disabled. He had no choice but to take her home, and there he lingered, throwing his resolution away. Thereafter, he came frequently, always moody and reserved, always resolving not to go again, and as often breaking his resolve. For he hungered for her presence, and, like the hunger of his body in the Alaskan winter, it mastered him.

One afternoon they walked down to the little gate of the garden and stood for a while to watch the sun setting far across the water. She had been silent and preoccupied. Suddenly she raised her lovely face to his and spoke slowly and gently.

"Why do you always come and go away thus, Allen? You seem sad when you are with me, and not as you used to be. Will you not tell me what has come between us?"

"I have no right to the pleasure I have filched; no right to impose on you," he said bitterly.

"But you do not tell me. Why must this be all we may have?"

"If you love me, it should not be—it can not be. If you wish it, I am wholly yours; for I love you."

Herrick wrestled long with his conscience that night; not for the sake of the girl at the north, not even for the sake of the girl he loved, but because he felt the odium with which the thing he was about to do was branded. At length he justified himself; doubtless Maggie had married again and he was free, save in a technical sense. Besides, he had always felt that his alliance with her was a bond for which he was hardly responsible. Still, he knew how the other girl would regard the matter. She might forgive his marriage; but she could never forgive his desertion of the obligations he had assumed.

Ten years go quickly and the northland had almost vanished from his thought. One afternoon he found him-



self in a crush caused by some trifling accident to an electric car. As he edged his way through, some one lay hold of his arm. Turning, he looked into the shrewd eyes of Peter Skelton. One of the strange chances of fortune had brought him thus in a throng, elbow to elbow with the one man he feared to meet and had never expected to encounter. Having once found his man, Skelton was not to be eluded, and Herrick dared not try to escape him.

Herrick tried vainly to buy him off; but the old man had always held a suspicion that Herrick had worked a trick on him only to get something to eat, and guessed there were ways in which he could pinch his reluctant son-in-law tighter than by accepting any amount of ransom money. Consequently, he suddenly developed a fine standard of honor and family pride. Maggie had remained faithful in spite of all suitors and paternal suasion, besides there was a son. So the old man would hear of no terms that did not include Herrick's immediate return to his deserted wife.

Herrick knew he could expect no mercy from the old man, should the existence of the woman and three bright children down by beautiful Monterey, become known to him. He was able to keep this knowledge from him and Skelton accepted a liberal sum of bills as the price of his silence, which was reinforced—or more correctly, enforced—by Herrick's declaring he would never go an inch or pay him a cent if in any way their relation was divulged.

When, two days later, *The Sitka* crossed the bar and turned her prow northward. Herrick and Peter Skelton were both on board. Herrick had decided to comply with his father-in-law's wishes, as the only means by which he could save those he loved from the shame he had put upon them. He could better bear to pass out of their lives, still loved and sorrowed over, than remain and lose their esteem. For them, too, he felt it the easier way.

Skelton realized that Herrick was more surely his prisoner than if he were taking him in chains. Peter had no fear of his attempting to escape him again.

Yet he searched for the secret of his return. He knew well that Herrick was aware that his marriage with Maggie would not hold in court. He shrewdly guessed there was some one from whom Herrick was keeping the knowledge of his relation to her at this cost. Being himself unsusceptible to the influence of refined honor, he sought vainly for the bond that held Herrick.

Meanwhile, Allen held himself aloof and silent; pale and worn, he paced the deck. His manner and appearance awed Peter as no outburst could have done. Resignation had imbued him with strength.

They were nearing the end of the voyage, when Peter approached him as he stood at the stern with his arms folded, looking away to the South.

"Think you'll look up mines again?" he asked. "I can show you some good claims a little farther back than you were, Herrick."

Skelton did not understand the smile with which his offer was greeted.

"No," was the reply. "I shall not undertake mining, nor invest in any operations."

Skelton eyed him closely. "You have Maggie and the boy's interest to consider."

"They shall be provided for," Herrick answered dryly, and Skelton was compelled to go on without satisfying his curiosity.

A pack-train met them at Skagway. Herrick moved listlessly about among the men busy loading their animals, watching their preparation without interest. Suddenly an altercation arose over the loading. Herrick heard the course of abusive language, interrupted by a boy's high-keyed young voice. Then the ruffian's rejoinder smote on his ear:

"I'll not have any squaw's brat bossing me!"

Allen faced about to see the tense figure and flashing eyes of a slender boy. In the instant he knew him. One thought burned itself into his heart's center—these words were spoken to his son!

He stepped before the ruffian and



spoke in a quiet, even tone: "I think you are making a mistake."

The man started to make a foul reply, but cowed by the quiet voice and steady eyes, turned away, grumbling his curses. The boy, also, ready to resent the interference of a stranger, held back the hot words.

"Can I help you, my boy?" Herrick asked.

"No, I can manage my own business," the boy replied roughly, but a strange feeling went tingling through his veins. The stranger had struck some till now unknown chord, and something like the thrill of a glad song had come to him. In that brief encounter, spirit had called to spirit, and each had answered back.

### III

Standing at the window, Maggie watched Herrick toiling up toward the cabin. Little Allen's lithe figure came close behind. Their forms showed dimly among the darker shadows of the trees in the heavy twilight. She had been waiting long, for they were late to-day. Her anxious ears had heard the cry of the wolf, and her keen eyes had caught the occasional glimpse of some gray form slipping among the shadows.

Now she hastily opened the door and the red firelight shone far out to welcome them.

Herrick came in, stamping off the snow, a glow on his face and a buoyant light in his eyes which the crisp air and toil had infused into the physical man. Little Allen greeted her gaily, hallooing as he came up the path. He sniffed the odors of the prepared meal with evident delight. Maggie standing aside, the stoical, coarse, heavy figure of a squaw, looked on and was happy.

Herrick placed a round of fat deer on a bench. The boy threw his burden on the floor and with a whoop of excitement brought forth a shining skin. Silken it shone in the firelight as he stroked it. Maggie ran her fingers over it.

"Great luck to-day, Maggie," Herrick

said, touched by the pleasure of his companions.

"You have had all good luck this winter," she replied. "You will be going out of here in the spring?" It was half a question, a thought she wished answered yet feared to ask.

"No, I shall not go farther than to sell the furs and buy what provisions we need."

Maggie, squatting in the firelight, continued to stroke the beautiful fur, but she did not see it. Her mind was working dully with the pain of a disappointed child. She wanted to cry to him to take her away from this dreary solitude to the beautiful southland of sun and flowers, but she dared not speak her wish, and the stoical blood of her race held her silent.

She was roused by Herrick throwing fuel on the fire.

"You have been gathering bark to-day. You've no need to do such work," he spoke in gentle reproof.

She rose and spread her hands in a gesture expressing weariness.

"It's so still here all day alone. I like to be outside," she explained.

He started to chide her for the heaviness of the work, but looking at her square figure, he realized with sudden revulsion of emotion that, to her, this was not hard work.

Full appreciation was meted to the meal spread on the rough table. The physical man thrived in the fresh air and exercise which the long tramps hunting and trapping required.

The table cleared, Herrick lighted a lamp whose clear, white light gave the rude furnishings of the room sharp relief. Books were brought, and the boy and man bent together over them, for the time, absorbed in their contents.

Maggie sat watching the look of affection soften the tense lines of the man's face, and the bright flashes of interest and pleasure that lighted the boy's dusky eyes. The strange figures and signs were cabalistic to her, but she was content to sit thus and watch them. Their presence and their pleasure filled her with a deep joy.

This was Herrick's hour of happiness.



The close companionship of this unspoiled child, the satisfaction of watching the work of the keen young mind, the absorption of the task made him for the time forget all else.

After a while the dark eyes grew drowsy. The pencil slipped from the fingers. With a laugh that was low and happy, Herrick pushed the books aside. The boy flung himself into his father's arms and snuggled his head on his shoulder. Herrick held him close with his cheek on the boy's crisp hair, in his heart holding with him three other fair children.

"Come, son, go to bed before you are asleep," he said, gently shaking himself free. "That was a long tramp to-day, and to-morrow we go up the north trail."

The boy turned at the door and spoke a merry "Good night, Mammy." Then, with the new love alight in his eyes, he said, "Good night, m' Dad."

Herrick turned out the light, drew his great heavy chair before the fire, and dropping his head back, sat looking at the dancing flames.

He never thought of conversing with Maggie. Now, he even forgot her presence.

She was seated on the other edge of the hearth with her face turned from the light, her hands clasped about her knees, watching him with the same loving solicitude with which she had regarded him since his return. She had thought possible financial needs had driven him to come so far away in the solitary life of a trapper. He had been so fortunate that she had looked forward to going at least as far as the coast towns when the winter was past. His positive reply this evening had deepened the wonder in her mind.

When he had come back from his long absence, she had asked no question. Time had brought her stoical Indian nature to dominate any emotional impulses. For the most part, she was silent and inexpressive. Perhaps, also, she was mentally even duller than in her girlhood. His return had been to her much as the coming of the sun after the long darkness. That he was with her was

enough at first, but by little, an unrest, a question grew. He was not happy; he was hiding. Why?

There was always some barrier between them which she could not comprehend. Now it was like the clear cold ice of the winter. She quickly learned he preferred she would not touch him, and never save to offer some aid did he approach her. Yet he was kind, even tender in word and act, never vexed, never impatient—she had never imagined such a man. The men she knew were all abusive on occasion, domineering, demanding to be served. Perhaps, it was because he was more truly a demigod to her than a man, and her love more adoration than passion, that she tolerated his attitude toward her.

Watching his sad, drawn face as the firelight played over it, the feminine suddenly sensed the other woman. For a while, she sat silent—watching. Then, in the stillness, a wail broke from her, the wail of the wild, like the notes of the Indian dirge.

Herrick, startled, grasped the arms of his chair and leaned quickly forward, speaking her name.

"She is making you unhappy! You love her, and she has driven you away to grieve! How could she hurt you?" The words burst from her, for it was clear to her now as a revelation.

At the first outbreak, Herrick was too amazed to find his voice. Mastering himself, he rose, and, taking her hands firmly in his own, he spoke sternly to her:

"Maggie, you do not know what you are saying. There is no one of whom you speak, no one has hurt me. No one has made me unhappy."

"But you are sad. You hurt," and she laid her hand on his breast.

"If I am hurt, I have hurt myself, and no one is to blame but me. You are alone too much. I did not think of that. In the spring, you shall go where you please. There is plenty of money. You must go to bed now."

She went meekly, like a chidden child. Herrick stood for a while before the fire. Maggie's outbreak had left him disturbed. At length, he took off his



heavier garments, and threw himself on his couch.

He had slept long, when he awoke with a feeling akin to alarm. Without moving, he opened his eyes. Maggie sat crouched before the dying fire, her chin resting in her hand. He closed his eyes and lay quietly.

For a long time she sat there, then came and stood beside his bed. He opened his eyes. She looked down quietly at him. No vestige of her emotional outburst of the evening remained. She spoke in dull, heavy tones.

"I see," she said, "it's me keeping you from her. I am breaking your heart, but I didn't know. You must go back."

He closed his eyes to the smarting pain. Never in his noblest mood had he considered her. In the beginning, he had taken thought only for himself, and later all his care had been for the woman he considered truly his wife. Maggie had been an encumbrance.

Her outburst had startled him both with the intensity of her passion and her regard for him. He realized he had always looked on her much as an uncouth, willing animal. Ugly, stupid, dull in mind and expression, this had been a revelation of the unselfish devotion of her heart and of what his love meant to her.

His pity for her and his incrimination of self made this the bitterest night he had yet known.

He soon rose and built a blazing fire, glad to chase away the shadows of the night with its cheering light. Maggie came, dull and stoical as ever to perform her homely tasks. She cooked the savory meat and prepared mush and hot biscuit. The steaming coffee was just to his taste. Herrick found it difficult to believe the experience of the night other than a hallucination. Yet, once when he raised his eyes, he found her looking at him with the look of the suffering dumb brute in her eyes. The food choked in his throat and he felt like crawling to her on his knees.

Little Allen was anxious for the day, and talked eagerly of its prospect, not noting the silence of his companions.

"We're not going out to-day, son,"

Herrick said. Maggie looked up in surprise. "I've been leaving you alone too much, Maggie," he continued, "and you've gotten strange notions into your head, so we're to have a day together. What would you like?"

"We could go with the sledges up the river and shoot," she said, brightening like a child.

"All right, you take the sledge and dogs if you like, Maggie," he consented heartily. "I will go with you on the skees."

They were turning homeward, and Maggie, aglow with the sport, urged her dogs down the slope, making for the ice of the river. A crackling of crust, the sliding of a mass of snow, and dogs and driver went hurtling over the precipice to the ice below.

Herrick placed the poor crumpled body on the sledge and hastened to the cabin, where he gave such first aid as he could. Maggie was far beyond his helping, so they set out for the nearest place where aid could be had.

When they reached the camp it was evident that effort was useless. Old Peter was sent for.

As long as life remained, Herrick fought to save it from going out. He dared not think; he dared not face his own heart. A strange hush seemed to lie on all his faculties, and everything but the present was void.

When the end had come he saw the path lie clear before him. Without hesitating, he turned to what he had to do.

When the last care had been given, he approached Skelton.

"You know where the cabin is?" Skelton nodded. "I've had fine luck. If you care to go up you will find enough to pay for the trouble. You are welcome to all there is."

"And you?" Skelton asked.

"I am going to make my way south as quickly as possible."

"There will be no boats up yet," Skelton reminded him.

"No. I shall probably have to make my way overland as I can."

"And the boy—"



"I take him with me," Herrick said quietly.

## IV

Everywhere the flowers were in the riotous profusion of late spring. In the dooryards, on the lawns, clambering the walls of the meanest as well as the richest of houses. By the roadside, wherever a cranny could be found, a flower blossomed.

It was late afternoon as a friend and confidant of the Herrick family turned up the steps to a terraced lawn, passed a cypress hedge, and on to the wide porch of a handsome cottage. He asked for Mrs. Herrick.

She came to greet him in the sunny parlor where Allen's favorite deep red roses mingled with the pure white of her choice. She had made no change in their way of living.

"I have a special mission to you, Mrs. Herrick," her caller said when they were seated.

"It is word from Allen," she cried impulsively. She had been fighting to be calm, but the tension had become beyond her endurance.

"Good word, I sincerely hope," he said quickly. "He wished me to come to you."

"Then he is returned," she interrupted. "Why did he not come himself?"

"You must be calm," the old doctor replied. "I can not answer your question; but he sent me to tell you he is here, and will see you whenever you wish."

"He is here? Here where I can see him, do you mean? Then, tell him to come."

She had risen to her feet and stood clinging to a chair. He took her hands and spoke sternly.

"Alicia, I know nothing of the explanation which Allen wishes to make. I know nothing of his affairs beyond the business he has put in my hands; but I have reason to believe that what is before you will be a severe test of your strength and courage. You must control yourself."

"I am quiet now. I was startled, but

I am ready now, and I thank you. Will you send Allen in?"

She heard his step on the walk and its firm, unwavering tread quieted her pulses. She stood by one of the long windows across the room from the door he would enter. She was yearning to hasten to meet him, yet poised ready to flee from him.

The first glimpse of his face assured her faith and destroyed her fear. Stronger and finer of form he looked than when he had gone away. His face, deep-lined, had a look of resolution which bore evidence of suffering, but not of shame. A little cry of pain rose to her lips, but did not escape.

Neither spoke, but with eyes looking deep into hers, he crossed the room, and halted a few feet from her, his arms folded on his breast.

"I have come as quickly as I could," he said, in a voice slightly husky, "to place my love and the way of my life in your hands. I will tell you all whenever you wish to hear."

"Why wait?" she cried. "I have waited all these months. Why spend another hour in this suspense? Oh, tell me what it is."

"I fear it will not be easy for you. You have had one shock, perhaps you need rest to prepare you for a greater trial."

"I could not rest," she smiled faintly. "I should be distracted. You will please go on."

So beginning with the storm of the Alaskan winter, he told her the story as it concerned himself and the half-breed girl. He told it almost bluntly, making no plea for himself.

Changing emotions played over her white face. Only once a sound escaped her. When he told her of Maggie's renunciation, she gave a strange gasping moan.

"When it was over," he continued, "I decided to come back and tell you all. Whatever relation shall exist between us, you are to decide. Only I want you to know how I have loved you always, and you only. Strange as it may seem, I have done all I did, because of my love for you. And I swear to you, as



God is my witness, that I have kept untarnished the bond which is between you and me."

"And the boy?" she asked faintly.

"He is with me; but he need not share our home, if you choose we shall have a home; but I can not give him up altogether. Having him to love saved my reason and my faith."

She moved to the door without a word. There, she paused.

"I will send for you when I have thought it out," she said. "You will not go away. Oh, I can't bear that you should go away," she faltered and was almost swept back to him with the sudden rush of emotion. She clasped the door-frame to steady herself. "I must take time and think," she added really to herself.

"I will not leave until you bid me," he assured her.

Morning dawned with the dew on grass and flower, and the breath from the ocean.

Herrick stood out on the terrace. He had spent the night in the garden, watching for the dawn. Now, he was listening to the awakening life around him. He heard a light step and turned, his pulses beating madly.

Clad in a soft dress of dull blue which wonderfully set off her pale face and fair hair, she came toward him. There was no need for words. He opened his arms, and she clung to him. Holding her there, he looked down into eyes that did not waver, and held no trace of pain.

Then, the lover triumphed. He kissed her brow, her eyes, her throat, then her lips, in an abandon of long-restrained passion.

At last she whispered: "And the boy—he is to come to us."

---

## BEYOND THE STARS

*By Ethel Pomeroy*

Until that strange gray dawn when we were parted,  
Our hopes were twinned, and all our joys, our tears  
Were born as one. How eager and child-hearted  
We wandered singing through the golden years!

But now you are where only dreams can find you,  
And only memories our love renew;  
While unforgotten days still serve to bind you  
Close to a heart that hungers to pursue.

Beyond the hills of God for which you left me,  
Beyond the stars whose voices now are mute;  
Do you regret the parting which bereft me,  
Or listen for the sobbing of my lute?

Or is the Heavenly music, white with rapture,  
Unmixed with any strain of Earth regret?  
Singing a song the sad world may not capture,  
Do you remember me? Do you forget?



## THE WRONG WAY

*By Hazel Marjorie Smith*

IT has frequently been said of woman that love constitutes her whole life; of man, that love is just one of several important factors in his existence. However false this may be of some women, it was true of Dolly Ryan. As soon as she was able to reason about such matters, she decided that she belonged to the class of women to whom love is practically everything; or perhaps it would be better to say that she belonged to the class of women who admit that love is everything.

Having made this important discovery as early as her seventeenth year, Dolly candidly proceeded to educate herself for the responsible position which she expected to occupy in the future; namely, that of wife to the man whom she loved. Dolly went about this education in a novel sort of way, but there was novelty in everything that she did. It was a part of her theory that a woman must be "different" to hold a man's love. She did not realize that to the man who loves her, every woman is different.

When discussing the subject, Dolly would say wisely to her chum, Claire Dale, "Most important of all is a woman's physical attractiveness. Talk as you will, Claire, man is essentially physical, and an appeal to his senses is stronger every time than an appeal to his mind; where women are concerned, I mean. The trouble with most women is that they win a man by their looks, and after they get him, allow their looks to slip away from them. Nearly always children are the reason for this backsliding. Unless a woman can make children a secondary consideration, she shouldn't have them at all. When she becomes a mother, she ceases to be a sweetheart, nine times out of ten. For my part," with a glance in the mirror at her graceful reflection (Dolly always managed to be opposite a mirror when there was

one in the room), "I hope I shall never have any children, because to me, love is the one big thing in life, and my sole ambition is to retain my husband's affection—when I get him."

"But suppose you never find him, the man whom you could love," queried Claire.

Said Dolly, "That's a foolish way to talk. There are dozens of men in the world that a girl would love; it's just circumstances, or chance, perhaps, that decides which one it shall be."

So circumstances, or chance, perhaps, decided which one it should be for Dolly. Or it may have been the man himself who decided, for he made up his mind to have Dolly when he had known her less than a month.

His name was Jim Barclay. He had been born in the town where Dolly lived, but had spent the greater part of his life away from home. His father, who owned the largest bank in town and was one of the leading citizens, began to fail in health and sent for Jim to come home and prepare to step into his place in the future. So Jim came home.

Dolly was just past twenty when he returned. There was an informal dance at the country club a few days later, and Dolly, in a clinging green gown, with her cloudy, gold-bronze hair low on her forehead, looked for all the world like a sea-nymph. At least so thought Jim Barclay. He had never seen a girl who was so subtly feminine. Every movement she made suggested round, soft curves; and once, when she paused near him for a moment, his pulse quickened as he noted the satiny texture of her neck and shoulders.

Before the dance was half over, Jim had some one introduce him to her, and he found her even more fascinating to talk to than to look at. She had a wide-eyed, candid way of gazing at a fellow



that was disconcerting, and she was different from most girls. She had none of those silly advanced ideas that so many women have these days. Jim was glad of that.

"I don't quite get this suffrage stuff," he confided to her. "I think a woman's sphere is in the home."

They were sitting out a dance on the balcony.

Dolly nodded acquiescence.

"A home and a man's love. If a woman would only put all her heart and soul and energy into making a success of matrimony, instead of wasting her time on other matters, there would be more real happiness in the world."

She ceased speaking and gazed dreamily into space. Watching her, Jim Barclay told himself that there was more to her than to any girl he had met heretofore. They had four dances together that evening, and three of them were spent in conversation on the balcony.

The seed of desire having been implanted in his mind, he proceeded to fall in love with her by degrees. Thrown together a great deal within the narrow social limits of a small town, they came to know each other as thoroughly as is possible for two people who do not actually live together. Within a month, Jim Barclay had fully decided to ask her to marry him; within a far shorter space of time, Dolly had decided to accept him when he did ask her. Woman-like, she knew his mind long before he knew it himself.

Guided by an unfailing feminine instinct, she hesitated long before accepting. Not that she had the slightest intention of refusing. She wanted to marry. She had reached the marriageable age, and she felt that she would like some one to lavish upon her all the love and adoration of a strong, passionate nature. That she must pay the price for this, as we pay for all that we get in life, did not enter her mind. She only knew that she wanted affection and a home of her own. Jim Barclay offered all these things. He was fairly good looking and clever enough, and he had more to give her in a material way than most young men, so when she was quite sure that he

cared for her, she allowed herself to fall in love with him.

The following December they were married. After a brief honeymoon they came back and settled down in a charming bungalow on the outskirts of the town. Not long after Jim's father died, and Jim stepped into his position at the bank.

So the first year passed by, as it always does, with astonishing revelations of unsuspected twists and turns in the characters of both, and if their respective views on matrimony shifted about more or less, they continued to be as much in love as ever.

Certainly Jim was not disappointed in Dolly. She was as attractive physically as she had ever been. It was a sacred rite with her to care religiously for her body, and keep herself beautiful always. Nor did she neglect her mind. When he was worn out with a trying day at the bank, she was ever ready with diverting chatter and charming little attentions. Diligently reading up on various topics she never failed to discuss intelligently the affairs of the moment. Business did not bore her, and for a woman she evinced a marvelous capacity for grasping an idea, so Jim fell into the habit of talking over the day's work with her, when they were comfortably settled in the cozy living room after dinner. Dolly had an adorable way of cuddling up in his arms when they were alone, and listening to what he said with her whole soul in her wide blue eyes.

"Dolly," he declared one evening, when they had been discussing the tariff question for over half an hour, "You have more sense about business than any woman I ever knew. How the deuce do you do it?"

Dolly just smiled mysteriously. It would have been poor policy to make him understand that her sense consisted of saying as little as possible, and listening attentively.

"Because I'm married and have a house to take care of is no reason why I shouldn't think of anything else. I try not to be narrow, Jim."

"But lots of girls imagine they are doing quite enough if the meals are al-



ways cooked on time, and the house-cleaning done. Now *you* never have any trouble with maids, and the soup is never burned or the dinner cold; and still you always manage to look neat and dainty. I guess I was pretty lucky to get you," and he squeezed her boyishly.

Dolly laughed outright. It is nice to be hugged that way, even if you have been married over a year.

"I'm glad you feel that way about it, Jim," said she, demurely.

As indeed she was.

When, a short time afterward, she made a startling discovery, a horrible feeling of impending calamity overcame her. It suddenly seemed to Dolly that the bottom had dropped clean out of her world. They had been so happy, so content, and now, just when they were happiest, this thing had to come! Somehow, the possibility had never occurred to her; to other women, yes; but to her, Dolly?

"Oh, it's terrible!" she whispered to herself. "Jim and I were so happy together, we didn't need any one else! He doesn't like children any more than I do, he's often said they were a nuisance. What shall I do, oh, what shall I do!"

During the next few days, the shadow that threatened her happiness was so black, that in spite of her efforts to seem her usual, carefree self, she could not prevent Jim's noticing that something was wrong.

He began to question her. "Are you in debt? Has the cook given warning? Or are you worrying about your winter clothes? Out with it, sweetheart," he said, assuming a bantering tone in order to disguise his real anxiety.

Dolly jumped at the excuse he suggested. "It's clothes. Really, Jim, I can't find anything fit to wear in this town. I think I'd like to go to New York and shop this fall. May I?" If she could only get away until she could come to a decision, she might still find a way out of her difficulty, but she could not think clearly while she was in constant danger of Jim's clear eyes discovering what really ailed her.

"Surely. Wait until next week, and

I'll go with you. A change will do us both good," he said cheerfully.

But that did not appeal to Dolly. She wanted to go alone. "You don't know what a serious shopping trip this is going to be, Jim. I'll be so tired out at night that I won't feel like going about with you to the theatres and restaurants. We can go later for a good time. I'll stay with Madge, she's been asking me to visit her for years, and she's lived long enough in New York to be able to take me to all the best shops. Please, let me go alone this time, Jimsey."

Madge, an old school friend, would be the one to go to for advice, if the horrible possibility that threatened her were really true.

Jim good-naturedly gave in. "Have it your own way. When do you want to start?"

"To-morrow." As long as she was going, there was no sense in delaying the trip.

"Seems you're mighty anxious to get away from me. Sure you're not getting tired of your old husband?"

"Oh, Jim!" Dolly's arms about his neck was the answer to that. Tired of him, when it was the dread of losing his love that made her fear maternity.

He stepped into the hall for his overcoat, then came back to kiss her before leaving for the bank. She lifted her smiling face to his. Every trace of worry had vanished from her features, and her eyes had regained their customary sparkle.

"Good-by, kiddie," patting her affectionately on one shoulder. He was relieved to have gotten to the bottom of the trouble so easily. "Pack your bag and be ready to leave on the morning train. I'll bring plenty of cash home with me this evening."

As he slammed the door and walked briskly down the steps, he laughed aloud to himself.

"Aren't women the limit? Imagine her worrying her entire system into a state of nervous collapse over a winter wardrobe!"

And he laughed again, because the idea amused him immensely.

Dolly stayed almost a week in New



York. She came home tired but content, with a trunk filled with her purchases.

In a comparatively short time the household was running as smoothly as ever. Dolly's laughter filled the rooms with their customary cheerfulness, her childishly piquant face was wreathed in constant smiles. Sometimes at night, before dropping off to sleep, she would breathe a fervent thanks that she had escaped an experience which might have wrecked her whole life.

Now and then nature creates a woman in whom the maternal instinct is wholly lacking. It may be that Dolly was just such a woman; or it may be that the instinct was buried so deeply in her soul that the light had never found it.

During the next three or four years Dolly made several trips to New York, but Jim never raised any objection, because it seemed to do her good to get away.

So the years slipped by, one by one, with an unbelievable swiftness. After a while they went about more in society, spending less time together at home. Slowly, but none the less surely, their relations toward each other were undergoing a subtle change. Jim found that it had become rather tiresome to sit about evenings. It made him sleepy and disagreeable. Of late it seemed to him that there was something strangely quiet and unalive about their artistic little home. But if Dolly had come to feel the difference she gave no indication of it, except that a restlessness had taken the place of her former calm. By such slow degrees had the atmosphere of their home life changed, that she had unconsciously drifted with it into a state of mind that was less healthy, less normal.

Thus, after five or six years of matrimony, there crept gradually into Jim's thoughts the realization that something was lacking in his life. Just at first the feeling was uncertain and vague, then it began to assume a more definite form. When the bank closed in the afternoons he no longer hurried home as he had done in the early years of their married life. Sometimes he went to the club, where he lounged around, drinking

moderately, or perhaps got into a friendly game of cards. Sometimes he played golf. But he never went home until the dinner hour drew near.

When she finally realized the change that was coming over him, Dolly was at a loss to understand it. Wherein had she failed? A sickening dread that perhaps she was not going to be a success as a wife, after all, made her weak with the thought of the utter void that the loss of his love would make in her life. Because she was completely wrapped up in loving him, in holding his affection, the roots of her being had twined themselves so strongly about his existence, that to tear them away now would mean that she must droop and wither like a plant deprived of sun and water.

Feverishly she searched her brain for an explanation and remedy.

"I've never gone to breakfast in curl papers or a wrapper," she moaned helplessly. "He can't find any fault with the way our house is run, but he doesn't come home early like he used to and he seems to be thinking all the time he's here of an excuse to get away. I might have known such happiness couldn't last. Men are all alike."

Because she was dazed and worried to such an extent that she lacked the power to reason clearly, Dolly made a fatal mistake; she began to nag. If there is one thing in all the world that a man tries to avoid, it is a nagging woman. Where he had previously stayed away from home for no apparent reason, Jim began now to stay away because it got on his nerves to have her continually reproaching him for his neglect.

"Couldn't you get here a little earlier, Jim? Dinner has been ready half an hour. You never used to be late." A sigh. "Where do you spend all your time? Surely the bank doesn't keep you so long. Where have you been?"

"Club."

"Oh, the club. You seem to be awfully fond of the club lately."

Jim finished his soup and began to glance over the evening paper.

Dolly toyed nervously with a spoon.

"Are you going out to-night?"



"Um-humph?"

Biting her lip in vexation, she tried again.

"There's a rather good show in town. I'd like to see it."

He lifted preoccupied eyes to her hurt gaze.

"What?"

"Oh, nothing! You never pay any attention to what I say, anyhow. Why do you read the paper at the table, Jim? Surely you can find time for it during the day. I never see you now except at dinner, and the least you can do is to try to be agreeable."

Groaning inwardly, Jim put down the paper and tried to begin some sort of conversation. But Dolly's mind was occupied with other matters, so she was unable to converse with any great show of intelligence. Instead, she watched him with a haunted, suspicious expression in her eyes while he talked. It bothered Jim to be watched that way, so with a muttered excuse, he left the house as soon as the meal was over.

Their life went on like this indefinitely. Had Dolly been another sort of woman, by adjusting her views in accordance with the situation, the break in their daily life might have been mended, and things would have gone on as smoothly as before, though on a different basis. It is impossible to drift easily through existence on an equal mental plane. Since ever-changing circumstances alter the mental and moral ideas of our associates, we too must adjust our views from time to time.

Some women, seeing their dream of romance crumbling to the ground, and knowing how futile it is to try to rebuild it, carefully lay away the remains in the most sacred recesses of their hearts, and relinquish it, with a secret sigh of sorrow, forever. Adjusting themselves to life as it is, they centre their interests upon something else. Sometimes they lose their individuality completely in the bearing and raising of children; and they are content. Sometimes they become absorbed in women's clubs or in charities; and again they are content. But sometimes, as with Dolly, they refuse to relinquish their hold upon the golden thread

of romance, and the thread cuts ever deeper into their souls as the years pass by; and they never find peace.

One evening Jim went home to dinner with John Carter, the cashier of the bank. Of about Jim's age, he had been married a year or so before Jim and Dolly. His wife, a plain, comfortable little person, who was seemingly oblivious to the flesh she was putting on of late, bustled about, her face flushed and moist, a straight wisp of hair straying unheeded across her forehead, as she helped the one maid to put the dinner on the table. A boy of five clung to her skirts, impeding her progress at every step. Finally she stopped in despair.

"Johnny," she said reprovingly, "why can't you stay in your place when I put you there?"

She lifted him in her arms and plumped him down in his chair. His fist in his eye, Johnny looked to be on the verge of tears, so she patted his close-cropped head lovingly and gave him a cake from the sideboard.

"He's so bashful," she explained as, very much out of breath, she sat down at the table. "He never lets go of my skirt when we have company."

"He's a fine-looking little fellow," Jim told her.

She flushed, and her eyes sparkled with pleasure.

"Do you think so? But wait till you see the baby. She's only two years old, you know. She's asleep now, but she'll be awake soon."

"Great kid," the baby's father assured him. "Both of them are. I made Helen have Johnny's hair cut last week, and it nearly broke her heart to part with the curls. But one girl in a family's enough; eh, son?"

Looking up shyly, Johnny grinned at his father with perfect understanding.

Jim wondered why he had always considered children a nuisance.

When dinner was half over, lusty cries issued from above, proclaiming the baby to be very much awake. Her mother excused herself and hurried from the room, returning almost immediately with the baby, who crowed with delight while



being settled in her high chair, and began vigorously to hammer the polished wood with a spoon, grasped tightly in her chubby hand.

Dinner over, they went into the sitting room. Carter and Jim smoked and talked business. Mrs. Carter sat under the light and mended, with Johnny and the baby playing on the floor at her feet.

Presently the baby went to sleep, and was taken up to bed. Johnny followed, and Mrs. Carter resumed her mending.

It was with a decided shock of surprise that Jim awoke to the fact that it was past eleven. The evening had gone by more swiftly for him than any evening had for a long time past. He could not help remarking it.

"By Jove, it seems only an hour since dinner. I'll have to be going, Carter, but it's so cozy here I hate to leave."

Mrs. Carter smiled pleasantly when he left, urging him to come again. Carter repeated his wife's invitation, adding, "Bring Mrs. Barclay with you next time."

Jim thanked him and said that he would, but he could not quite imagine Dolly at ease in such a homely atmosphere. It did not suit her at all.

Then, suddenly, it came to him what was lacking in their life. It was children!

"It's queer, I never thought of that," said he to himself on the way home. "I wonder if Dolly has noticed it? Poor Doll, she isn't as much to blame as I am. I've been a cad staying away so much lately, but things might turn out all right yet. There's no denying it, children do brighten a place up a lot, and make it seem *alive*. A fellow has something to go home for, if there's a couple of kids waiting for him, and a woman with that soft, contented look in her eyes that Nell Carter has."

Which reminded him of the haunted expression in Dolly's eyes of late. He made up his mind to speak to her of his discovery. The subject would be a difficult one to broach considering their present attitude toward each other, but Jim was determined in his resolve.

He found the task difficult, indeed.

Dolly looked at him suspiciously when he spoke of it.

"Children? What an odd idea for you to have. We decided over six years ago that we wouldn't be bothered with them."

"I know, but I thought—"

"You don't like children. You've told me time and again that you can't bear them."

"Of course I have told you that. I always thought them a nuisance, but—"

Dolly shrugged her shoulders, replying coldly,

"Then why bring up a subject that was thoroughly discussed so long ago? It's rather unusual, isn't it?"

"Well," Jim told her gently, "that was when we were just married. Most women have children, and they bring them so much pleasure, I thought, perhaps—you wouldn't be so lonely—so—" he floundered, completely at a loss to express himself, dazed at the look of contempt which she gave him. A glint of hardness crept slowly into Dolly's eyes, as a light of understanding dawned upon her. She smiled, and there was bitterness as well as grim determination in her smile. So that was it? He wanted to see her occupied that he might have more time to himself, and he thought to tie her down with children.

"Don't worry about me being lonely. So long as *you* are enjoying yourself, I shouldn't think you need care what becomes of me."

The cutting sarcasm stung him to retort, but he refused to give way to anger.

"Dolly!" he pleaded. "Listen! Let me explain. We seem to be all mixed up, and—"

Cutting him short with a gesture, she disdainfully advised:

"Don't try to explain. Explanations are a useless waste of breath."

She walked out of the room and closed the door.

Of course it was futile to say any more about it. Realizing this, Jim did his best to forget the incident, and so banished it from his mind. Not so Dolly. At last she had something definite to brood over. The more she thought of it, the firmer became her



conviction that he wanted her to have children so that her time would be fully occupied. As the germ of jealousy expanded in her heart, she began to entertain all sorts of groundless suspicions. Perhaps there was another woman? She felt sure there was another woman!

"Who could it be? There is nobody I know of, but that is no proof. Of course there is some one else, and he wants to keep me quiet and thinks that maternity is the surest way!"

A nagging woman is bad enough. A jealous woman is worse. The two combined are impossible.

Spring came and Jim fell into the habit of driving to the country club every afternoon for golf. Often he remained for dinner. Sometimes he sent the car back for Dolly, and they dined at the club in company with other married couples, but he enjoyed himself more when she was absent. Dolly and Claire Dale had become inseparable again as they had been before Dolly's marriage, so he did not feel that he was leaving her alone to any great extent.

It was at this time that Beth Norris came into Jim's life. She was past twenty-five, unmarried, brimming over with energy and the pure joy of being alive. Behind her back, the women said slurring things about her; to her face they were charming. Beth's social position was unquestioned, but in a small town a girl of her age cannot do the things Beth did, and escape unscathed. She went on her way unheeding, however.

She had been traveling abroad for years, and had just come home to spend the summer months. Finding time heavy on her hands, and being athletic, she took up golf as a possible form of amusement. Often she met Jim Barclay on the links, and they got to be very well acquainted. There was no coquetry in Beth's manner toward him. Hers was a friendly attitude, pure and simple, the same as was his own. But they found one another agreeable at a time when each was in need of diversion, so they formed an innocent friendship. Sometimes in the late afternoon, after several strenuous hours on the links, he

drove her home from the club. What could have been more natural? When neither went back to town for the evening, they frequently had dinner together. Many pleasant days passed in this manner.

One afternoon, when Dolly was lounging in her bedroom reading a novel, Claire came up unannounced. She kissed her friend with unusual warmth and perhaps just a shade too much sympathy.

"How pretty you are looking, dear," said Claire. As indeed Dolly was. She was a trifle thinner than of yore, her eyes had lost their youthful brilliance, there was even a tired droop to the corners of her mouth; but her bronze hair was arranged with becoming care, and the pink silk negligee was just the right foil for her sort of beauty.

"Thanks, Claire."

Dolly laid aside her book languidly. There was something on her mind. She had been worried the last few days because the doctor had told her that her system had run down, and that she must be careful of her physical condition or she might easily go into a decline; perhaps—she shivered every time she thought of it—perhaps consumption.

Claire threw off her hat and sat on the edge of the bed.

"You haven't been going out enough, dear, you look pale."

Dolly said she was tired.

Claire looked sympathetic. It seemed inexplicably sad to her that a sweet, lovable woman like Dolly must waste away her life caring for a man who was unworthy to touch the hem of her skirt; a man who spent all of his time chasing after another woman. Every one in town knew of Jim's infatuation for Beth Norris. That is, every one except Dolly. It was with regret that Claire realized wherein her duty lay, but as Dolly's best friend—

"Doll," said she, abruptly. "I don't like to tell you this, but I think you will thank me for it in the end."

Dolly's brows contracted. Pulling nervously at the lace on her negligee, she leaned forward.

"What is it?" she demanded sharply.

"Oh, nothing much," evaded Claire.



She wished suddenly that she had not spoken. Dolly was calm but insistent.

"There is something, Claire. I've noticed it in your manner for several days. I think you'd better tell me."

So Claire told her.

For a long time Dolly lay back in her chair with her eyes closed.

Finally she spoke. "Thank you for telling me, Claire, I know you meant it for the best. And now, we'll say no more about it. Will you have tea?"

Claire breathed a sigh of relief that Dolly had taken the news so calmly. "Yes," she said, and then she began eagerly to talk of impersonal matters.

But after her guest had gone, Dolly dropped her head on her arms and her slender body shook with uncontrollable sobs. It was true! What she was dreading had come. There was another woman. She knew now why Jim had seemed different of late. He was trying to keep her from any suspicion of the truth, and she had thought that he still cared some, after all.

One day, she was caught in a severe rain storm, and before she could get a taxi, she was drenched to the skin and her feet were soaking wet. As soon as she reached the house, she took off her wet things, but it was too late to prevent the cold from settling on her lungs, and in consequence, she was ill for several weeks. When she was finally able to go about again, she suffered from a deadly lassitude, and no amount of doctoring seemed to do her any permanent good.

Inertia so dulled her senses that, although she realized the state of her health, she was unable to interest herself in taking the necessary measures to overcome the danger that threatened her. She felt nothing but the bitterest hatred and jealousy; her horizon had narrowed until it contained only Beth Norris and Jim. There was not even room for herself in her thoughts.

Jim Barclay had given up seeing Beth when he realized the true state of affairs. He devoted more time to Dolly than he had for over a year, trying to be as patient and gentle with her as possible.

The doctor had told him frankly that she was going into consumption, and that only immediate attention would save her. When fall came, with its raw, cutting winds and rainy, unpleasant days, he argued and begged and pleaded with her to go to a sanitarium until the winter months were over. But Dolly was stubbornly obdurate. There was nothing the matter with her. She had a cold, that was all. It was ridiculous to insist upon shutting her up in a sanitarium for a slight cold on her chest.

One day when she could stand it no longer she completely lost control of herself.

"Do you suppose I don't know why you want to put me in a sanitarium?" She laughed hysterically. "You must believe I haven't any eyes. Do you think I don't know about Beth Norris? I know you're in love with her. I know you've been seeing her in public all summer, and I haven't the slightest doubt but what you still see her on the sly. But if you imagine I'm going to waste away my time in a sanitarium so that you'll have a better chance to carry on your disgusting flirtation, you give me credit for being more of a fool than I am!"

Jim glared angrily. "That's a damned lie!" he said.

His indignation was getting the better of his good judgment. "Haven't you any reason left at all? I'm not in love with Beth Norris. Use a little common sense."

"Common sense? That's what I am using. That's why I have at length awakened to what every one else in town knows; that you are chasing around night and day after that"—she choked—"that low, unprincipled—"

Jim interrupted:

"That's enough. Don't pass judgment on some one you don't know. Beth Norris is an admirable, big-hearted woman, and nobody has a right to slander her."

"Admirable? You call it admirable to scheme and plot to get another woman's husband?"

Dolly's face was flushed and her breath was coming in gasps. "And you can stand there and defend another



woman, a wicked, brazen hussy, to me? You think more of that creature than you do of your own wife? My God! What have I done to deserve this punishment? I have lived for you all my life, before you came and since then. I've never been unfaithful to you for a moment, even in my thoughts, and now, you—you—"

Suddenly she broke down, and fell, sobbing, into a chair.

Jim's eyes were the color of steel, and there were tense lines about his mouth. With a barely perceptible shrug of his shoulders, he left the room, silently closing the door on her pitiful, hysterical moaning.

After that day their life together was almost unbearable. For months the storm had been threatening, and when the deluge actually came it left in its wake irreparable damage. It was impossible for their life ever to be the same again.

The weeks that followed were an endless torture to both. Slowly but surely his love for her had been dying, until there remained only pity; and when a love like that which he had felt for her turns to pity it is terrible.

Dolly realized this, and her heart was like lead in her breast. She knew now that she had taken the wrong way. She had brought her misery upon herself; she had tried to circumvent Nature, and Nature had taken her revenge. She had avoided maternity at a fearful cost.

And now, to add to the bitterness of her reflections, she realized that she had defeated her own ends; that Jim had wanted the children she had refused to bear; that contrary to her earlier beliefs, children would have strengthened the bond between husband and wife, not weakened it. As the mother of his son, she might have kept Jim's love, as his wife only, she had lost it.

She began to fail rapidly and by spring her condition was such that she no longer had the strength to resist her doctor's orders, so they took her to a sanitarium.

For a while they hoped that she might recover temporarily, but as the time passed the futility of such a hope was all

too plainly evident. Perhaps if she had cared enough she might have gotten better in time, but there was nothing for which she wanted to live. Her strength was all but gone.

Realizing this, they brought her home at the end of the following summer. So she lingered on, day by day, week by week, a pitiful, transparent shadow of what she had been, waiting wearily for the end. Perhaps then would come the peace which she had failed to find; perhaps it would never come; who can say?

It was late November. Dusk had fallen and elusive flakes of snow were scurrying through the air, fluttering like moths about the newly-lighted street lamps. Two women hurrying by, met underneath the glare of light. One of them was Claire Dale. She was holding a muff against her face, and her eyes looked red and swollen. As she would have gone by, the other stopped her.

"Wait a minute, Claire."

Claire stopped.

"Oh, it's you, Mrs. Neilson? I didn't see your face."

The woman nodded.

"Yes. What's the matter? You look as though something was wrong."

Claire gazed at her dully.

"Haven't you heard?"

Mrs. Neilson shook her head.

"No, what is it?"

Claire shivered and took a deep breath. She said:

"Dolly Barclay's dead."

"Oh!"

"I've just come from there," she went on in a lifeless tone. The tears started to her eyes.

Mrs. Neilson looked away.

"It's too bad," she murmured sympathetically.

The twilight quiet was unbroken. The snow fell softly.

"Consumption, wasn't it?" Mrs. Neilson resumed in a hushed voice.

"Yes, consumption," Claire repeated. "Consumption!"

Her voice trembled. A sob shook her body.

"Oh, Mrs. Neilson, it's terrible! He killed her, that's what he did. He neg-



lected her, and chased around after that common Beth Norris until Dolly worried herself into a decline. Then she just naturally went into this. He didn't even care enough to send her away—until it was too late. Poor Dolly! She adored him, and never had a thought of any one else. I remember, years ago," her voice faltered, "before she met him even, how she used to say her greatest desire was to make some man happy with her love."

Mrs. Neilson looked off into space, repeating:

"It's too bad. She was so young and pretty. It's too bad."

Claire's breath caught in her throat with a gasp, as she pressed her hand wearily against her aching head.

"It's awful," she whispered hoarsely, as though to herself. "Awful!"

There was a silence long and tense. Then:

"God, but men are brutes!" Claire breathed bitterly.

And Mrs. Neilson sadly agreed that they were.

And in his desolate home Jim sat, and mourned, not for the wife he had lost, but for the happiness he had never known.

---

## THE GIRL WHO TRUN ME DOWN

(An appreciation)

By A. W. Davies

Gee, but her tastes were expensive,  
 Diamonds, rubies, and pearls,  
 All of these were the playthings,  
 Of that paragon of girls.  
 Silk her stockings, and silk her skirts,  
 Silk of a kind to rustle,  
 She was sure some queen when she hit the street:  
 And she certainly made me hustle.

Beer? No, she couldn't drink it,  
 Champagne was the only thing.  
 She wanted a set of Mink-skins,  
 And another diamond ring.  
 She wanted a new hat every week,  
 According to Fashion's jump,  
 She was dolled up right, was that girl of mine:  
 And she certainly made me hump.

She wanted more than I gave her,  
 And so she trun me down,  
 I'd have given my life for her favor,  
 But I had to meet her frown.  
 I'm facing a sad and lonesome fate,  
 A fate I fain would shirk;  
 But I'm grateful still to my former love,  
 For she made me get out and *work*.



# ALL THE WORLD LOVES A COCKTAIL

By Nalbro Bartley

SCENE—Ladies' waiting room of popular hotel. Any large city.

TIME—Six o'clock to six-thirty. Any day in the year.

SETTING—Large leather chairs, tête-à-têtes, palms and potted plants, davenport, orchestra tuning up in the main dining room. Ladies' maid keeping an eagle eye on every one as well as taking mental notes on the fashions. Buzz of noise from desk, cigar and news stand and telegraph station, all of which may be seen from the waiting room. Guests waiting for dinner or to meet some one, are seated at various angles throughout the room. General atmosphere of unrest pervades. Large clock ticking away in the corner.

(Blonde manicure and beauty parlor woman, age uncertain, dressed in a full skirt of tango red with hat to match and bewildering coat of many colors thrown back to show a sheer lingerie waist. She is speaking to her "friend," a shiny, fleshy, jovial gentleman who wears his diamonds to give the impression that they are a ten per cent. investment, and whose black and white check suit bears out the idea that any place he hangs his hat is home, sweet home, to him.)

MANICURE: It can't go on any longer, Abe. I have found you out.

ABE: You're not yourself to-night, Meta. That's what's ailin'. What have I done? Didn't I send you the wire from Utica that I promised? I've got some business to look after.

META: Certainly you sent me the wire—it was only a stall.

ABE: Well, I'm here, ain't I? Even if I am a day late. Who bought the new electric machine for the wrinkled dames—I bet there ain't another parlor in the state that's got one of them. You was glad enough to get it, wasn't you?

META (looking at herself in the mirror concealed in her vanity case): You needn't think you're the only man that can set a poor girl up in business and give her a little friendly help. Gawd knows I'm going to pay it all back. There's plenty of other men that would jump at the chance, Abe Bumbleheim. And the way you've spied on me about how much business I've done is a disgrace to your whole race.

ABE (coolly taking out a cigar): Mind if I smoke?

META (infuriated): Oh, smoke all you please. That's the man of it—when he's made some one suffer and don't want to feel the least bit nervous about it. It shows you're guilty.

ABE (solicitously): What have I done? Ain't I here? I let two orders go by to make the train. How many men would do that—suppose the firm was wise? Come on, kid, drop the weeps and tell me all the news. How does the new machine work—do they fall for it? I got it at wholesale through Herman.

META: I cannot talk business when I am heart-broken, Abe.

ABE (puffing furiously): Heart-broken about what? Say, what moving picture show have you been going to now? Ever since they got East Lynne in four reels, there's a lot of unhappy men. Nothing like East Lynne to get the ladies started.

META (a little quiver in her voice as she opens and shuts the vanity case slowly): Abe, ever since you and me was friends and I started my little beauty parlor, I certainly have been true to you. My Gawd, Marie Marble could tell you how true I've been to you. There never has been an unloyal thought. Never. And here you are chasing yourself all over the country with a day a month spent here, asking



me how my new electric wrinkle remover is working. Just because you advanced the money for it. Don't you know that a woman wants love, Abe? Don't you know she wants something else besides shop talk? How do I know where you've been the last month or who you have been taking out to eat? There's a different look in your face, Abe, you can't look me straight in the eye like you used to!

ABE (*relapsing comfortably, having assured himself no serious details were known*): That kind of stuff is getting stale, Meta. Switch. You're some kid in that suit. I wouldn't trade you for a two-year-old. Paper, boy. (*Buys last sporting edition of an evening journal.*) Just a minute, sweetheart, till I find out what to-morrow's entries are. I lost sixty beans on Father Ketchum at Pimlico. Some loss! (*Buries himself in paper. Meta takes revenge by smiling broadcast at the passing men.*)

(*Enter eloping couple—aged twenty and twenty-one. Very nervous. The bridegroom is still blushing from having had to sign the register. Bride is small and light-haired, dressed in pale gray and swathed in veils. She sinks into nearest chair and tries not to cry. The bridegroom, not much taller and with a tooth-pick mustache raised for the occasion of having to face the irate father-in-law, sits down beside her in masculine hysterics.*)

B. G.: Darling, don't cry. You belong to me now. No one in the world can ever take you from me.

BRIDE: Bertie, I can't feel right about it—it's like a terrible, black nightmare. Oh, Bertie, papa will be so angry. Suppose he should send me away to—a convent?

BERTIE (*a trifle injured*): Edith, my wife, do you think I am an utter coward?

EDITH (*raising veils slightly*): Of course not, dearest, but you know papa's temper. Bertie, do you think he will keep you as shipping clerk now? We must be very practical, you know.

BERTIE (*calm and masterful*): I would be a failure as a man if I could not support my darling little wife. Brave little girl to be mine. Oh, Edith,

dearest, don't you think you better write your mother just a line? You know she was always kind to me.

EDITH (*gulping back a tidal wave*): Perhaps I will. Anyway, everything in my room belongs to me. Papa couldn't hold those things back—and all my clothes, too. I only had time to fill one suitcase.

BERTIE: We will get a lawyer if he refuses.

EDITH (*hysterical again*): Oh, no, I can't stand any publicity, Bertie. It would kill mother. Oh, do you think these people are detectives sitting around here? I feel as if everyone was watching me. Bertie, I am afraid it was a terrible mistake. Oh, Bertie, do you think you will always love me?

BERTIE (*knowing this to be a home run*): Always—until the grave and afterward.

EDITH (*mollified*): Bertie dear, I think you better send mamma a telegram. Tell her we are married and ask her forgiveness. Sign it your loving son and daughter, Bertie and Edith. Mamma always liked you, she told papa so. And, Bertie, send it collect—mamma will understand.

BERTIE (*preparing to vanish*): Don't be lonely until I come back, dear.

EDITH (*holding his hand*): You won't let anything happen to you, will you, Bertie?

BERTIE: Not a thing—we'll have a nice, quiet dinner when I come back, dearest. (*Exit Bertie.*)

(*Short, plump club woman dressed in English mixture tailor suit, stiff collar and shirtwaist and gauntlet gloves which she flaps mannishly across her knee and a Beaver hat with a green Alpine feather.*)

CLUB WOMAN: Selina, there's no reason in the world why you shouldn't bag a good office in 1916. You girls ought to have some recognition for all you've done.

SELINA (*gray-haired woman of fifty with a badge, "Votes for Women," on her dress, smiles patronizingly and answers the club-woman*): Thanks, dear, but you ought to look out for yourself first. You've been worn to the bone get-



ting that penny school luncheon fund floated. Personally, I'm sure of making the school board. How those dogs of men do snarl when they think their sun is setting. Have you heard that little Helen Dodgers is married?

CLUB WOMAN: Fool!

SELINA: Poor, misguided, short-sighted little creature! Odd how they will stray from the path, isn't it? And some one with a perverted sense of humor put firecrackers under the soap box that Mrs. Flitters was standing on in her last corner speech.

CLUB WOMAN: Tough luck! How are the rural leagues coming on?

SELINA: Fairly well. But the Women's Aid Societies hate to give up the making garments for the polite poor and we haven't anything along that line for them to do, unless they want to start making kitchen aprons for their husbands. Poor old dears, they'll need them by and by. *(Laughter.)*

CLUB WOMAN: You know I think I'll drop active club work and go in for the heavies.

SELINA: You mean suffrage? This is a windfall. You can do stump speeches and some of the press stuff, can't you?

CLUB WOMAN: I'm a judge at the eugenic baby show next month and I'll plant some literature in every go-cart so that the mothers will have to read it whether they want to or not. How would it be to put a button, 'Votes for Women' on every baby's bonnet?

SELINA: Wise Woman of Endor!

CLUB WOMAN: There have been thirty more members enrolled in the anti-marriage league and thirteen married women have added their names to the petition to Congress about having a man take a woman's name when he is married rather than letting his own stay before the world's eye.

SELINA: You're a wizard. Shall we take dinner here and be ready for the meeting of the Anti-Kissing Society? It meets in the red room.

CLUB WOMAN: Great idea; too bad we can't have a cigarette before dinner. Beastly provincial, these hotels!

*(Married lady inclined to embopoint*

*and last year's styles remodeled with a pitiful effort to keep up to next year's is sitting on a sofa, her foot tapping impatiently. There is a firm, repressed expression on her lips and she twists her two-and-a-half-inch-wide wedding ring about with savage twirls. Enter her husband whose tartan plaid suit and hat, made with a rakish air, show off his gray hair to advantage. His face is happily flushed and he chivalrously throws away a cigar butt as soon as he sits down beside her.)*

HE: Well, Jane, how goes it?

JANE: Haven't you any more shame than to keep me waiting an hour and ten minutes in the public lobby of a hotel? To have you paged three times and a miserable little bell-hop laugh at me and say, "Your friend has not come!" I never gave him a penny for that impudence. John Henry, you treat me as if I were anything but your wife.

JOHN HENRY: You are quite mistaken. I—

JANE: I suppose you treat all other people differently—is that my mistake? Never mind rubbing it in. I have sat here and watched people come and go and that clock move along until I saw you dead on the car tracks or under an automobile or held up and gagged. I've been worrying myself sick. I don't want any dinner. I haven't any appetite left. This is the last time I'll ever leave my comfortable home in Rodney's Corners with my own ice chest full of food that I know how it's made and what's in it and come with you on a business trip so's you won't be lonesome! Have you any mail from the children? I'm worried to death about Agnes, she was coughing when I left, and Albert had that sore foot from stepping on a rusty nail. I was just reading in a paper some one left beside me about a man that had lockjaw and died from a rusty nail wound. Why don't you answer me? Shall I pack our things? I hope we leave to-night. How much business have you done to-day? Why don't some of the business men's wives come down to meet me? I remember that you have gone out to their houses for dinner when you've been on other trips; at least, that is what you've



written me. Why don't you say something instead of sitting there and looking at that shameless blonde huzzy in red talking to a Jew! I am never coming on any trip again and make an unthanked martyr of myself for a man who doesn't care—hasn't it in him to care. You look like a comedian coming in, in that plaid suit. I saw the maid laugh at you. Or perhaps she was smiling? you may have known her before—I'm in agony in these French heels you wanted me to wear. I haven't worn them for over eighteen years and they don't seem to fit any more. I was young and foolish then. I want a good, broad soft kid shoe that laces. Never mind style. Well, where have you been? Haven't you a word to say?

JOHN HENRY (*meekly*): Jane, I certainly am sorry to have kept you waiting a minute. I met a man in the grill room and we had some important business and—

JANE: And some important drinks. That's what it was. And you charged them to your firm. I'd like to get out and buy some things and have them charged to the firm, too. The first two days we came here, it rained and I stayed in my room all day and let you go splashing around, dropping in about three minutes to six with a great tale of woe. The second day, you sent me out to the art gallery and I got a sick headache from the cars. The last two days I've been right in my room trying to cure it up. I'm too homesick to move. Now I want to know—

JOHN HENRY: Jane, I don't think you understand business. A man has to play off young these days or he's not in it. I'd like nothing better than to settle down in Painted Post or Rodney's Corners and take a life interest in the garden. But I love you too much to bury you in such a hole. I've just made arrangements now to go to the coast for the firm—a three months' trip taking in Kansas City, Lincoln, Denver, Salt Lake, Seattle, Portland, Frisco and Los Angeles. I am looking forward to the trip.

JANE (*in a cold, doomed voice*): And what about me, John Henry?

JOHN HENRY: I couldn't ask you to share the hardships of such a trip, my

dear. I wouldn't ask you to separate yourself from your children. It will be tough enough to go away alone but don't think me an utterly selfish husband.

JANE (*struggling for the last time*): John Henry, I want to see the president of the firm before we leave this town. If I tell him my health is delicate, he may order me to the coast with you!

JOHN HENRY (*seeing stars*): . . .!  
(*Old man mutton, dressed as spring lamb, in evening clothes with gardenia in buttonhole and hair brushed carefully over thin places, is taking all dimensions of a young girl in white.*)

HE: You don't mind taking dinner with me, do you, Dora?

DORA: I don't know—maybe I shouldn't—but I'd like to.

HE: And you know I'd like to have you, don't you?

DORA: Yes.

HE: You like me better than any of the young boys who don't know how to appreciate you, don't you, dear little girl?

DORA: Sometimes I do.

HE (*much agitated*): Now, Dora, that won't do—you must lift those pretty velvety eyes to me and tell me you are sure about it for all time. Can't let you slip away that easy.

DORA (*dimpling*): I do, Mr. Abernathy.

MR. ABERNATHY: That is what I love to hear. Why, I've been looking forward all day to this little dinner. I've wanted to shove the clock ahead a dozen times just because I thought of a certain little Dora who would be waiting for me, a little comrade who understands more than any one I've ever met in all my life. Dora dear, haven't you a little bracelet for that white arm? I think I know just the sort that would look well on there.

DORA (*retreating but determined*): Oh, Mr. Abernathy.

MR. ABERNATHY: Don't forbid me to get it—those trifles are the greatest pleasure I have in my life. Dora, I am a misunderstood man. I have always been misunderstood and wrongly estimated. What is money or success when you are misunderstood? My wife does not understand me; she is cold, unapproachable.



Until you came into the office, Dora, dear, I never felt as if I could go to any one and tell them what was really in my heart. I'm just a boy in years, little girl, but I have a man's wisdom.

DORA: I think you're grand.

MR. ABERNATHY: What kind of a bracelet would you like?

DORA (*evidently has thought along the same lines before*): Chased with a monogram in old English and my birthstone, an emerald sunk in the middle. Of course I can't let you give me things like that, Mr. Abernathy.

MR. ABERNATHY (*indignant*): Why not, my child? Who will prevent? What is wrong about a token of deep friendship? There is no reason in the world unless (with the playfulness of an elephant) you do not like me.

DORA (*in rapt tones*): Oh, you certainly are one grand man!

MR. ABERNATHY: You shall have the bracelet, little snowdrop!

(*Callow youth with sliding Adam's apple and weak blue eyes is addressing old wren dressed in mustard-colored poplin made futurist fashion. Heavy mustard colored veil covers up the wren's moulting feathers.*)

YOUTH: If I have hurt or offended you in any way, Carmela, I certainly shall never forgive myself. Never! Won't you please speak to me and tell me what I have done?

CARMELA: Oh, I couldn't, Hurlburt.

HURLBURT: Why not? I haven't worked all day for thinking about it. You mean more to me than anything else—

CARMELA (*hurt little laugh*): Please, Hurlburt, you know I understand.

HURLBURT (*rapid gymnastics on the part of the Adam's apple*): Carmela, there must be an understanding between us to-night. I cannot rest until there is.

CARMELA (*very pensive*): Your family does not like me.

HURLBURT (*very brave*): What does a little thing like that matter? My sister is jealous of you—that is all.

CARMELA: I don't know whether it is proper for me to meet you here.

HURLBURT (*very important*): Carmela, can't you trust yourself with me?

CARMELA (*looking through her veil into dining room to watch when the head waiter arrives*): But I'm only a slip of a girl, Hurlburt, and you are a man of the world—

HURLBURT (*enraptured*): Carmela, all the more reason why I understand and know what is best for you. Carmela, won't you accept the loan of that money? I cannot bear to think of your aunt alone and sick in the Canadian northwest. You brave, noble girl to work so hard to help her.

CARMELA (*very pensive*): I have gone positively shabby, Hurlburt, and been proud to do so—but I have always been misunderstood—always. Never, until I trusted myself with you, have I known what true friendship means. But I cannot accept such a loan—your family would misjudge me.

HURLBURT (*very desperate*): But they will never know. Carmela, you will make me utterly miserable unless you let me have that honor. Please, Carmela—please—

CARMELA (*figuring out what kind of furs she can get*): If you really insist, Hurlburt—I—I will accept it!

HURLBURT (*radiant*): Darling!

(*Two working girls are waiting for two traveling men. The powder puff has been working overtime and rhinestone buckles have recently been pinned on their slippers for the last detail of elegance in their dinner costumes. The buckles are detachable—sometimes worn in hair or on front of waists.*)

MABEL: And I quit cold. I says to the linen mistress, "No more for me. What do you think I am?" Would you believe it, Vera, she would have had me on my hands and knees scrubbing that floor! Me. Mr. Levington would have a fit if he knew it.

VERA: Well, you should worry! Some nerve. Believe me, Mabel, it's all right to make yourself black and blue doing the lame duck, but don't ever scrub no floors. Some philosophy, as the high-brows say. Gawd, but I'm hungry! I didn't buy no lunch to-day—I was counting on to-night's jubilee.

MABEL: What did you buy with the money?



VERA: An eyebrow pencil. Say, Mabel, I read in the paper this morning that an actress had eyebrows sewn in and it cost her five hundred bucks. Some sewing.

MABEL: Don't believe it. You know what newspapers are. Why, when I was friends with Dick McQuaid of *The Evening Swirl*, he used to tell me all the bull he shot into the city editor. You gotta be onto all that stuff these times, Vera.

VERA: Why ain't you friends with him no more? He used to give you passes for the beach.

MABEL: Too jealous. I gotta have the whiphand, Vera. It's my nature—I guess I'm too intense.

VERA: Me, too. Remember that bookmaker, Dodie Schwartz? He certainly was grand to me, but, oh, jealousy—he had it written across his heart, I do believe. He was that jealous of me, he didn't want me to go to the track because he couldn't watch me every minute himself. He give me some elegant things, too.

MABEL: You can't stand them when they're jealous. I ain't ever going to be monopolized by any guy.

VERA: Do you like these fellows that are coming to-night?

MABEL: No, they're both paste jewels but their eats is good. Life certainly is one grand burnt pill.

VERA: It certainly is. I think I see them coming now—My Gawd, look at Bernie's scarf pin!

(Enter Bernie and Randolph, the two traveling men, ready for the fray.)

BERNIE: Hello, girls, hungry?

MABEL and VERA: Try us.

RANDOLPH: Some poultry! Here's the head waiter—every one in line.

(Orchestra strikes up "I'm a Bear" as head waiter appears bowing patronizingly and other waiters and bus boys hurry about. General move in.)

ABE TO META THE MANICURE: Come on, have a good stiff Martini with an olive and you'll forget your grouch. (They leave for dining room.)

ELOPING BRIDEGROOM BERTIE TO HISTERICAL BRIDE: Dearest, dinner is ready

and I am going to positively insist upon a Manhattan cocktail with a nice cherry in it—it really is just the same as medicine—we'll toast each other and our future life, sweetheart (adjourn to dining room).

CLUB WOMAN TO SELINA THE SUFRAGIST: Come on, girlie, let's put a Clover Club cocktail under our belt and we'll be candidates for sheriff—there's nothing like independence in women. (Selina agrees—exit.)

JOHN HENRY, THE GAY HUSBAND, TO JANE, THE MARTYRED WIFE: Old girl, I propose a nice, mild vermouth cocktail at dinner. It'll straighten out that headache more than a pound of pills. Say yes and I'll pass up my usual church window of Three Feather. (Jane nods stiffly as they leave room.)

MR. ABERNATHY TO DORA SNOWDROP: We'll pledge our friendship in a champagne cocktail, Dora, harmless as crystal water, beneficial as Ponce de Leon's lost fountain of youth. What do you say?

DORA: If you say so, it'll be swell. (Dora finds the way to dining room.)

CALLOW YOUTH TO HIS MUSTARDCOLORED FRIEND, CARMELA: Carmela, tonight we'll have two Daisy cocktails—nice and mild, just the thing for a young girl to drink—please, it'll pick you right up.

CARMELA: Please, I never drink publicly, Hurlburt, but if you're very sure they are mild—

HURLBURT: Positively, I'll order two and you can just take a sip. (Carmela reluctantly forgoes her Scotch and selzer and follows him into the dining room.)

BERNIE AND RANDOLPH TO VERA AND MABEL: Girls, what'll the drinks be?

GIRLS: Two old-fashioned whisky cocktails and tell the orchestra to play "The Puppy Snuggle."

BAR KEEPER (swamped with orders): There's gotta be another helper on here by to-morrow or I quit. Two Martinis, two Manhattans, two vermouths, two Daisies, two champagne, four old-fashioned—not a whisky straight in the layout. Some dinner party!



## A VERACIOUS ACCOUNT

By *Ralph E. Mooney*

IT began on a street car. According to my Saturday afternoon habit I went to the town of Kirkwood, intending to strike out from there for a long walk—thinking that I might note something worth recording among the various clay and rock strata which abound in the district. Well, the person of whom I wish to tell you sat back of me and coughed. It was a disagreeable hacking cough, that was ill bred and annoyed me. At each explosion he sent a gust of air upon the back of my neck—air that was redolent of onions and tobacco consumed in a pipe. I shifted about to show my displeasure and he took to coughing in his hand, which saved me to some extent.

On our arrival at Kirkwood, I left the car and started out for the country. To my surprise the man whom I had observed on the trolley, suddenly appeared at my side and addressed me.

"I'm up against it, Doc," he said, without preliminary greeting. "I'm stone broke, and because I'm broke I'm losing a chance to make some money. That's tough, ain't it?"

"Quite—ah—tough!"

"It's raw!"

"And excessively underdone!" I supplemented, adapting myself to his conversation. I observed that he employed a strange, degenerate, yet not ineffective English. It interested me.

"Here's the proposition, Doc. I'm Kayo McCarty—and fer fear you ain't received my Tuesday reception cards—I'll explain that I'm McCarty the champion middle-weight prizefighter,—which decree as you calls it, is easy to get in this here country but hard to hold. I've had a run of hard luck. I lost three fights and the public got sore on me and the sport writers tied the can to me. Now, honest and on the level, Doc, every one of them fights was square! I broke

me hand in one and slipped in another—and lost both. Then in the third—I don't know—but losing twice and living fast and such—I lost it too. Well, talk all you please—after losing to three second-raters—the paper boys began to holler I was crooked and yellow! Me, yellow! Think of that, Doc!"

"It's preposterous!" I assured him. "Any one can see that you are white."

"Thanks—you got wonderful eyes, Doc. And you are some wise. Well, anyhow, since a year ago I've been a starvin'. I've got a wife and two kids—and we're living in tenements. I couldn't get a fight. All my money—that my manager hadn't stole—I'd blown in! And there I was!"

"Ah—out of work and out of money?" I asked.

"Yep, and with a wife and two kids! It's all right, Doc—take your hand out o' your pocket—this ain't a panhandle story! Last week, glory be, I gets a date to fight—and with a good man. Now, Doc, I've cut out booze—I've been livin' straight—and I've had a rest. I ought to go in there and clean up that guy, and if I do my rep 'll come back—and I'll get plenty of fights—and this time I'll save my money."

"Then why are you—ah—up against it?"

"Because, Doc, I've got the chance and I can't take it up. You see, it's this way, Doc. I've got that fight on a cut-throat contract. If I win, I win enough to put me in clover for a year. If I lose I get nothing. But you can't win a fight without training, Doc, and there's where I'm up against it. You need a trainer to put you in shape—especially as old as I am—and you can't do it yourself—I ought to have a sparring partner—and most of all, Doc, I ought to have food. A man can't win on the grub I been getting lately. I need thick steaks—and eggs—



and good bread—and God knows, I can't afford 'em. At home we been havin'—well, anyhow, I'm beaf in that fight already—because I can't get the right training."

He looked away from me so hopelessly that I myself was on the verge of tears.

"It's my rep, Doc! The I-told-you-so bunch will be there. They called me the 'cheese champion' after Golden City! What'll they say now? And not one of them dogs—and many of 'em was my own brother once, to hear them tell it then—not one of them will lend me so much as a five spot! Y'ought to understand, Doc—maybe you've worked at one thing fer years and given your time to it—now suppose you got a raw deal and was tip-canned fer it? That's me—that's what I'm going to get."

I am over-impulsive. When I saw his expression and thought of my own struggles to master geology so that I might—well, at any rate I asked him:

"How much money will you need?"

"This ain't a graft! Ferget it!"

"I'll lend you the money, and you may pay it back after you have won your fight."

"Go on! Why you don't know me—and it'll be near three hundred dollars."

The amount shocked me—but something urged me not to withdraw the offer.

"I'll lend you the money," I repeated.

He looked at me—a big, rather worn man—his eyes squinting, his lips trembling. He called aloud and took my hand in a fearful grip.

"Doc, I'll take you. Don't ever let anybody call you a rag-chewer or a piker. You're a clean sport and I'm for you, Doc, I'm for you!"

I was taken aback at his fervor.

"Bless me!" I cried. "Bless me!"

"No—I won't bless you—or kiss you either; but, say, Doc, you just trail around with me—and I'll show you how to knock a man clear out of the ring in a couple of weeks."

"I thought that prizefighting was no longer allowed in the city," I remarked.

"Aw, this ain't to be a real fight, Doc. Purely a contest of skill—with a prize for the pugilist who shows the greater activ-

ity—with a wink, Doc. With a wink! Get the wink?"

To shorten my story—we returned to the city and I secured the money for him. He insisted upon my going about with him and seeing how it was spent. He established training quarters in a hotel in Kirkwood, and hired two negroes to come there and rub him after his various forms of exercise were completed. He next engaged the services of a man whose name was "Lefty" Joe. This was a cross-eyed person who boxed with him. I conversed with "Lefty" for half an hour one day, after which he drew McCartney to one side and I heard him say in a loud whisper that I was a most "amazin' man." This gratified me. They then spoke of some private matter between them, Joe asking McCartney "where did he get it?" and McCartney replying that he "caught it on a country road."

I assume "it" referred to a slight strain in my protégé's arm.

I spent considerable time with McCartney in the next few weeks, and watched him do a terrific amount of work. He ran, quite as our football candidates run; he boxed, ever so much more rapidly than our physical instructor does in the gymnasium; he danced about, fighting with his shadow; he tossed a medicine ball and took long walks with me. He was not the least interested in clay strata—but persisted in calling *talus* mud! His wife and the two children came to the hotel to live with him, and I found her a pretty little woman who had once sold certain necessary articles of men's apparel in a department store. She said she had loved McCartney at once because he was the first man who blushed when he asked her to wait on him. Mrs. Lillie—that was her name—was fond of Kirkwood and soon discovered a little house in a big yard, which she said was an ideal home. She would stand before it for hours and sigh, just like a child at a shop window.

"I hope you win this time, Mac!" she exclaimed. "If you do, there's where we live!"

"Sure, I'll win!" he told her and they both looked at me in a way that caused uneasiness to predominate among my



emotions. They were so extremely, unnecessarily grateful.

How McCartney changed! He took off weight at one place, but it was an improvement—and his face filled out. His skin altered from a glassy pink and white to a smooth evenly distributed ruddiness—then to a weatherbeaten tan. His lips curled up where they had curled down, and the wrinkles and hollows about his eyes disappeared. "Lefty" Joe came to the point where, instead of being merely knocked off his balance during the boxing, he would crash down and lie still for several minutes. When he would awaken, he would yell with approval and declare that he was going to "quit his job." But he never did.

As my new friends became more and more happy, something occurred which caused me considerable mental perturbation, occasioning a most natural depression of spirits. One day when I was returning to the university from Kirkwood, Mrs. Lillie came in on the car with me. When we reached the junction where one changes from the country to the city car, we both descended, I to walk to the university, she to continue to town. I chatted with her until her car arrived, assisted her in boarding it, raised my hat while calling a cheerful good-by to the brave little woman—and turned to look squarely into the sarcastic eyes of Miss Nettie!

Now, my friendship for Miss Nettie has endured through several years. She is in every way a superior woman. Her management of the girls' dormitory supports that statement. We have attended many of the university functions together and at certain times—while calling at the dormitory parlor—our relations have been extremely cordial. Once or twice when the parlor was empty of others, I have summoned my courage and made certain leading remarks which, while not flirtatious, were intended to be construed as giving evidence of the real affection which I entertain for her. Once I fondled her hand for a very short time while we were chaperoning a dance in the gymnasium. At all such times she has been fretful, changing from cheerfulness to petulance and sharp remarks.

At the junction I at once detected

something in her manner which caused my heart to beat unaccountably. I am afraid I stammered.

"Good evening, Professor Curtis," she smiled—with *such* a menacing sweetness—and pushed past me to board the car. I proceeded to my room much cast down, for I perceived that she was incensed with me.

The next day was Saturday, and I debated whether, for the sake of appearances, I had not best remain at the college. However, I learned that Miss Nettie had gone to a *matinée* with Professor Harris, of the Mathematics chair, who is an elderly and, if you will pardon the remark, over-educated fool. So I went to the car, resolved to visit my cheerful friend. I had boarded it and was seated at a window reading, when I heard some one walking upon the gravel of the platform outside. It was Miss Nettie and Professor Harris—of course that parsimonious individual would never have wasted money upon a *matinée* performance when the day was half warm enough for walking! We all smiled cheerfully and waved to one another.

Dating from this incident commenced a period when I was at a loss to conduct myself in a way which would please Miss Nettie. When I called upon her, a maid would constantly interrupt us to inform her that Professor Harris wished to speak to her upon the telephone. I took her to a theatre presenting a highly diverting farce which concerned a young man in love with a most jealous woman, and she told me that she considered such performances improper and of a low moral level! I chaperoned a dance with her and when I gave way to the importunities of some of the co-eds and engaged in a tango or foxtrot, she declared with a cutting distinctness that made the co-eds giggle, that I never used to be so much of a social lion—nor had I ever proposed dancing with her. I promptly suggested that she become my partner for the next dance, which appeared but to increase her resentment.

I consulted my savings book, thinking that if there was a sufficient balance in the bank I might end this unfortunate state of affairs by asking her to marry



me. To my disappointment, I was forced to acknowledge that even with the three hundred dollars returned I had far too little money for such a venture. Miss Nettie continued unreasonable and the time came when I was most happy while smoking my pipe in McCartney's training quarters—or while cycling beside him as he trotted over the roads. Consequently I went more often to Kirkwood after classes and would not return to the campus until late at night. Miss Nettie—and you would never think this of so intellectual a woman—deliberately threw herself at Harris. If I spoke to her, she replied in a sharp way that made me uneasy.

A day or so before the fight, McCartney relaxed, and I could not be with him. It left me with two evenings on my hands. The first I spent with Miss Nettie and it was most uncomfortable. She had an accusing way of looking at me that was disconcerting. When I thought to make up for my seeming neglect of her and became in my demeanor a trifle more—ah—I will say affectionate, though that is scarcely the proper term, she became very angry indeed and told me not to make an example of myself before the co-eds and their callers, and to please sit across the table from her.

Harris was calling upon her the next night so I dropped in at the parlors to see Miss Gilfillan, assistant in the historical department, whom I have ever found to be entertaining if rather "light." We got along famously and as Miss Gilfillan was popular with the co-eds, I had a time indeed to entertain her and the little group that clung about her. I succeeded rather well, I flatter myself, by repeating naïve philosophy in the curious slang of McCartney and "Lefty" Joe. Harris, who is lost without a piece of chalk and a theorem to demonstrate, said nothing all evening, so the other couple sat at the far end of the parlor and listened to our laughter throughout the entire time.

When it grew late, Miss Nettie came over to us and she looked at our little group so sharply that I feared she had lost control of her temper.

"It's ten o'clock!" she exclaimed. "The evening is over."

As I was going out she caught my arm.

"Can you chaperon a dance with me tomorrow night?" she asked. "Sigma Alpha Phi—at the Gymnasium?"

Now the next night was the night of the fight and McCartney had made me promise on my heart and honor to be present and watch his victory. I knew he would feel it deeply if I failed to be present. Yet the thought of refusing startled me and I felt embarrassed as I made my excuse to Miss Nettie.

"Ah, really!" I told her; "I have another engagement."

"Oh, I'm sorry!"

There was something cutting, something ominous, and something withal so poignant in Miss Nettie's voice, that tears all but came to my eyes.

"Too bad!" I remarked. "Another time!"

"Another time?" she questioned, and the question of it was, I may say, extremely evident in her tone!

Next day she met me on the campus after classes.

"Where are you going to-night?" she demanded.

This was what I had been trying to avoid. To tell her was to tell the whole faculty and the students as well that I—a professor in geology and thirty-five years old—was going to a prizefight. For they could never distinguish between a mere contest of skill and a prizefight. Never!

"Really," I hesitated.

"Really, it's none of my business," she affirmed bitterly.

"Ah, perhaps so!" Now, I uttered these words before I thought. I would have given a medal of the French Academy to have called them back!

"Perhaps so! It is so, Professor Curtis! And let me tell you that if you keep your engagement to-night you can make no more with me. If you go, I'll never speak to you again!"

She left me then, dumfounded.

How I spent the afternoon concerns only myself. But suffice it to say that after supper I had regained a more cheerful frame of mind and had told myself that I too might be lucky. Perhaps some



day when I was buying a pair of—of—unmentionables, and should blush as I always do, some faithful, friendly girl might—but at any rate, I was fairly cheerful. I discovered an old English book on prizefighting and in it saw what clothes were necessary for such a function. Full evening dress was shown in all the pictures—not even dinner coats—boxing evidently being a gala event in sporting circles.

So I donned my evening clothes, took my silk hat and set out. The night air was bracing, the stars were sparkling on a clear-cut evening in early autumn, so I felt more good-natured than in a long while. I even hummed snatches of the Blue Danube waltz as I made my way from the faculty dormitory along the cinder path which led past the gymnasium and on to the car line. I received a shock when some one near the gymnasium cried heartily:

"So cheerful, Curtis!"

For it was Harris, of course, with Miss Nettie.

The bustle at the Coliseum revived my spirits. I went to McCartney's dressing room and found him nervous and depressed. His wife was with him, patting him on the back and laughing in spite of tears in her eyes. He was cross and told her to stop that baby-acting and to get outside where she belonged.

"What did he weigh?" he asked Joe, in a husky tone.

Joe's answer displeased him for he immediately cried out:

"Five pounds more than me! Didn't that contract say he was not to exceed three?"

The manager of the institution was there.

"Aw, what're you kicking about?" he growled. "Gettin' scared already?"

Joe kept silent after that and his lips curled up again. He saw me.

"What're you all dressed up like a pall-bearer for?" he said nastily. "There ain't going to be no funeral."

"I came to wish you well," I returned, conceding much to his nervousness. I shook his hand and proceeded to the seat he had reserved for me.

My clothes I found were out of place.

I possessed none that would have been in keeping, for I would die rather than own to such green vests, diamond studs, flaming neckties. And I would die under torture rather than go about as some of the spectators did without a collar and with uncleanly linen. I quickly decided that I would keep my coat on and would eschew the new white kid gloves I had procured for the occasion. My hat created considerable excitement. One person, a youth of about sixteen, stole it from under my seat and horrified me by asking an official to take it out and fill it with a dime's worth of beer! Luckily the man refused to do so.

Added to my discomfort was a feeling of concern for my friend McCartney. All about me men were saying that McCartney couldn't return to championship—no one ever did—and they speculated freely as to whether he would be beaten in the third round or the fifth. One man risked money that the contest would not last ten rounds. Another, who smelled of whisky, and who loudly informed us that he represented McGinnis Three Star Distillery, offered to bet me twenty to one upon "Memphis" O'Neill, who was to fight McCartney. I gathered that twenty to one meant that if McCartney should accomplish his purpose I would be paid twenty dollars for every one which I risked. I had twenty dollars with me, and, catching the exciting atmosphere, I wagered it. I was soon sorry that I had done so, for I gathered from others, that "Memphis" had longer arms, greater weight and was younger than McCartney.

A man stepped into the square platform where the contest was to take place and made a short speech. He told the audience that the champion of Hoboken was about to encounter the New Orleans Baby in a select three-round contest. He seemed to be joking for he winked at us quite often and the audience received his words with a roar of laughter. Following this a negro and a white boy got in the ring and proceeded to batter each other. The men about me howled with laughter all the time and told the white man to kick the other in the shins. As this would have been unfair under the rules the white man, sportsman-like, re-



frained from doing so. He won the fight anyhow, according to a sort of umpire or judge who danced about the ring with them.

There were two more such encounters and a pause. Then a big uproar began. I saw a powerful stranger climbing into the ring. It was "Memphis." My heart sank as I realized that here was the opponent of the nervous and irritable man I had just seen in the dressing room. Never was a more confident, square-jawed rough-looking engine of brute force. I asked the man of the whisky breath if he would not retract the bet, whereat every one about me laughed. The man refused to do so.

Some one brushed past me—for I sat on the aisle—and I saw McCartney. But he was not dispirited as in the dressing room—he was smiling. And when he had gained the floor amid a few faint cheers I saw that he did not compare unfavorably with "Memphis." He glanced my way and I noted that his eyes were snapping—and his lips were so lightly poised in their smile as to make his jaws fully as square as those of the other man.

In a moment or so they were fighting. I had become quite sick at times during the other contests, but now I felt thrilled. This was to be the compensation, perhaps for my own lost happiness; and as for McCartney, his whole future hung upon it. And it was not so brutal as the others. There was more technique, more finish to this performance.

McCartney was shifty and steady. The other man seemed more deft and speedy in his way of boxing. "Memphis" got a round of applause after a fast passage. I saw McCartney's head flip back once but could not tell how it was done. It caused another outbreak. The man of the whisky breath began to pound my back.

The evening passed rapidly. I was busy watching each period of fighting but during the periods of rest I felt it necessary to defend my friend in the angry arguments which beat about me. "Memphis" seemed from the first to have an advantage for he hurried about and struck viciously time after time. Mc-

Cartny stood steadfast weathering each storm of blows and only replying occasionally. I noticed that when he did so his arm moved quickly as a snake's tongue—and his fist struck with a resounding impact.

After three periods, McCartney was quite battered. His body had red spots upon it, his chin, jaw and forehead were badly contused to judge from the flushed appearance. Blood ran from his nose and mouth and he came to look like a torn old cat which I once possessed.

In spite of it he kept on and for all I could see was just as steady as ever in his maneuvering. His opponent was little hurt. Only a few marks upon his body showed where McCartney's blows had gone home. "Memphis'" face was untouched, pink and leering always. He was refreshed quite frequently from a bottle.

In the fifth period of fighting McCartney dropped quickly to the floor. He arose slowly and I saw it was an effort for him to do so. But he got on his feet and went on fighting steadily.

"He's a beggar for punishment, old 'Kayo,'" shouted the man with whom I had wagered.

"Is that so?" I asked. "Well he is not a beggar—he's only a little embarrassed and if you really think he will be punished, I will say that this affair is entirely within the law."

The whisky man swore!

In the next period, McCartney was pushed over against the ropes and seemed dazed and unable to save himself from a fury of punches "Memphis" was delivering.

"Knock him out, 'Memphis!'" the whisky man roared. "Knock him out!"

"Why," I asked sarcastically, "do you want that? If he does they can not fight any longer."

The whisky man groaned as though injured and slid down in his seat.

"I wish you'd go home!" he told me. "You're spoiling my whole evening."

My mind was called to the ring at this time by a sudden yell of excitement from "Lefty" Joe. I saw that "Memphis" was staggering back across the ring and McCartney was in pursuit. Mouth open,



I watched them, wondering what had caused this sudden change in affairs. I learned later that McCartney had, while apparently dazed, craftily lunged at his opponent and placed a severe blow on his stomach.

The next few periods were thrilling in the extreme.

At the very opening of the ninth period, McCartney delivered one of those fearfully heavy punches. "Memphis" maneuvered coyly to avoid it, but while his head was jerked out of the way, the fist struck upon his neck and—actually tore open the skin. The blood spurted out and I cheered wildly, believing our moment of victory had come.

It did come too in the next period, when after a furious passage, "Memphis" reeled back from McCartney, stood limp for a moment and then slowly collapsed to the floor. I learned this was the result of those stomach blows of McCartney's. "Memphis" arose, painfully, but was immediately knocked down again and this time stayed down. After a brief period the referee, umpire or judge, took McCartney's right hand and held it above his head and the crowd cheered. They told me I had seen history in the making, which was an error, due I suppose to unfamiliarity with standard reference works, for certainly none of them give attention to this sport.

I was sitting smiling happily when the cheering had died. Of a sudden an uproar broke out near me. I looked about. Half a dozen men held the whisky gentleman and were dragging him toward me.

"Here you are, sport!" they yelled. "He was trying to do a sneak from us!"

He paid me four hundred dollars, gave smaller amounts to others and swore he'd have us all arrested.

We were not arrested, however.

McCartney came up then and shook my hand effusively. He had tears in his eyes—very peculiar they looked in the black one—and he was absolutely unable to express himself.

"Damn it, Doc—Damn it, Doc, I don't know how to—why doggone it you four-eyed old fool—say if it hadn't been for—well now say, Doc—if ever you—might

have a fight of your own some time and want me to train you—that is—Doc, why darn it—I'm much obliged!"

And he later paid me an astounding sum of money. I may hint that it ran into the thousands.

"You see, Doc, I bet my purse if I won, and three hundred dollars of that purse is yours. So I bet your three hundred—at ten, fifteen and twenty to one."

He insisted on my taking it. I left after Mrs. Lillie had kissed me. On the way home I felt gloomy. I carried enough in my pockets to push my savings bank balance far above what was needful to—but then Miss Nettie had told me never to speak to her again.

As I passed the young ladies' dormitory that night I saw a light in the parlor and knew she was sitting up until all of the girls were home from the dance. It was her custom. I glanced in the window and discovered her alone in the parlor—and she was crying. I thought possibly Harris had hurt her feelings in some way—so I went in to see about it. When I spoke I was afraid of what might happen, but I hoped she might have forgiven me. She looked up, her eyes burning with anger. I felt my whole system groan. There I was with the necessary money, but in getting the money I had lost the young woman of my choice. I suddenly saw, too, that Miss Nettie was the only young lady of my choice—no matter how many of them should see me blush while ordering under-garments.

Weak, overpowered, I turned to go but she called me. She was smiling. Tearful, but smiling. Then she sprang to her feet. I walked—ah, that is—ran toward her.

It is quite true about that group of ceds coming in half an hour later. They did find us—ah—well in a close embrace.

That is all there is to the story. What? The curious psychological phenomenon which occurred in my own consciousness? Oh, yes! Why—uh the fact is, I have discovered since that evening—upon a careful reflection—that the thing known as a prizefight has a real attraction to a man. I recall that it thrilled me. It actually gave me pleasure!



## THE BEAT

By Harriet Lummis Smith

IT was the noisiest hour of the noisy twenty-four; within, the throbbing of the presses, outside, the shouting and whistling of waiting news boys. Alicia seated at her typewriter tried vainly to recall what she had wished to say. She had been assigned to report a union missionary meeting at one of the local churches, and was now in process of compressing her painstaking notes into five newspaper lines. She had been accustomed all her life to country quiet. Sometimes she seemed to herself drowning in an ocean of incongruous sounds, sinking in spite of her efforts to keep afloat.

As she stared vacantly at the typewriter keys, the inevitable question came to add to the confusion of her thoughts. Was she on the right path or the wrong? As to her goal, Alicia never doubted. All her misgivings had to do with method. But when to a literary ambition is added the necessity of earning a livelihood, the sum is journalism nine times out of ten. Dully Alicia wondered how her work of the afternoon was to help her in the realization of her dream. What was there in this existence of turmoil and haste, of confused thought and trivial work, to serve as a training school for embodying in words and phrases the passionate, pulsing splendid thing she called life? She looked at her notes on the missionary meeting with sudden loathing.

Miss Byrd came into the room with a copy of the evening edition in her hand, so fresh from the press that the ink smudged as she turned the sheet. She was a thin, middle-aged woman, who had left her ambitions so far behind that she had almost forgotten them. But as the comfort of life is not in proportion to its ambition, but rather the reverse, Miss Byrd found the existence of a

newspaper hack far from intolerable. Her superiors knew her value, for at a pinch she could take the place of the dramatic critic, fill up the columns of the book reviews, pass judgment on the exhibit of the local artists' club, or on the Woman's Page, pose as an authority on fashions and give advice to mothers on the care of teething infants. A useful woman was Miss Byrd, and not the least valuable of her activities was the assistance she gave to bewildered beginners, struggling, like Alicia, to find themselves.

For all her undeniable competency, Miss Byrd represented to Alicia all she most dreaded to become, gray-haired and always a little disheveled, complacently content, increasingly narrow. "Shall I ever be like that?" was in Alicia's thoughts as she looked up, and then she forgot the question in a surprise that possessed an element of pleasure, for on the damp page of the paper, just off the press, was a face she knew.

"Why, that's Sue Kirby!" Alicia leaned forward for a closer inspection. Miss Byrd smiled, the smile of untold superiority.

"Guess again, my child. This lady is Mrs. Penrose Pickering and one of the most talked-of women in the city. You don't mean that you haven't read—"

Excitement betrayed Alicia into the impropriety of interrupting the oracle. "Mrs. Penrose Pickering! Why, of course. I remember now, she married a Pickering, but I never think of her as anything but Sue Kirby." She came back with a start to Miss Byrd's unfinished question. "To be sure I've read about her. I just didn't realize she was Sue."

The face of the veteran changed oddly. She came nearer, extending the sheet from which the pictured face smiled un-



abashed on all the world. "You really think—"

"Why, certainly I know her. Before she was married she was Sue Kirby. She was a neighbor of ours up in the country. She's a little older than I am, but I've known her all my life." Alicia's tone betrayed exasperation. Miss Byrd knew more than she did about newspaper reporting. She was willing to admit that. But as far as Sue Kirby was concerned, she would not give an inch.

"And are you two friendly?"

The eagerness in Miss Byrd's voice meant something. But the necessity of replying gave Alicia no time to solve the puzzle.

"Why, she was a great friend of my older sister when they were children. And the last time Sue was home—that must be almost four years ago—she begged me to make her a visit. But I never did. And afterward we heard—or, anyway, people said—"

"I see, I see." The fingers of the older woman closed tightly on Alicia's arm. "Do you think she would see you now?"

"Sue Kirby? Why, of course."

"My dear, is it possible you don't get on to the importance of this? Of course, you remember the circumstances of Sanfield's suicide? Bernard Sanfield, you know, the big wheat speculator. Why, the papers were full of it."

"Yes, I remember—at least I think I do. So many people kill themselves."

Miss Byrd drew a long breath suggestive of a prayer for patience.

"This was an extraordinary case. He was only a little over forty and rich and his wife didn't interfere with his enjoyments. She's a meek little thing. I believe she didn't know about his acquaintance with Mrs. Pickering, and refused to believe there was any harm in it, even when the whole story came out after his death. She lived in the country and brought up the children, and he went up to see her now and then. There was no earthly reason why he should kill himself, as far as his wife and his friends know—unless Mrs. Pickering was in the secret."

"But hadn't he lost a son? It seems to me I remember—"

"My dear child! Yes, his son was drowned about six months before the father's suicide, but you can't suppose that was the explanation. Men don't kill themselves for that sort of thing. And, besides, there were other children, and as I said, he ran up and spent Sunday with his family once in two weeks or so, and that was all he saw of them. No, there was another reason. And the chances are that Mrs. Penrose Pickering knows it."

Alicia made no comment. But the vagueness of her mood had passed. She listened breathlessly.

"You know she's shut herself up in the house since he died, and lives like a nun. Nobody's admitted, newspaper people least of all. But if an old friend should get access to her, she might talk. If you could manage it, it would be the making of you." A sudden harshness sounded in her voice. "Oh, if I'd had such a chance when I was your age!"

"You think it's really a chance?"

"If you've got imagination and insight and the other necessary things, that story will show it. You can't use your imagination on stuff like that." She tapped the notes of the missionary meeting with contemptuous fingers. "And by the time your chance comes, you've lost what the gods gave you, and all that's left is to go on grinding out copy to the end of your days." She looked into the girl's eyes, an unwonted gleam in her own. "If you believe in prayer, pray that she'll see you, and that she'll talk. If you make a failure after that, you deserve to fail."

"Oh, thank you," breathed Alicia, with less irrelevance than appears. She was in reality giving thanks for this glimpse into the heart of her fellow worker, and for the implication, all the more splendid because of its vagueness, that success might be within reach. Her virile young fingers pressed her adviser's hand. "When shall I try it?"

"To-morrow. I'll talk with Mr. Hall, and we'll decide on the best way of getting her to open up. Of course, you may never get inside the door. But for two months she hasn't seen a soul, and I've a hunch that she'll be glad of a glimpse of a familiar face. Oh, it's fairly ridiculous



that such a piece of luck should have come to a kid like you!"

In spite of the frank envy of one who hitherto had been rather unpleasantly superior, Alicia's sensations the next afternoon were those of an impostor. She was not to inform Mrs. Pickering that she was now a fellow townsman, but was to give her the impression that she had come down from the country for a few days of shopping and sight-seeing. She was to tell the news from home and talk about old times till her hostess gave signs of waxing confidential. And then she was to wait for the story.

"You can have all the time you need," Miss Byrd had said, as she and Hall had outlined the plan of campaign. "If you don't get it out of her before you have to leave, get an invitation to come again. She may ask you to stay with her, and if she does, accept—unless you know it all already."

The house occupied by Mrs. Penrose Pickering stood in a locality given over to apartment buildings, and the mere fact of its occupying an individual lot, gave it an air of opulence. Its shuttered windows were forbidding. It looked unoccupied. Alicia recognized the possibility that the newspapers were wrong, and that Mrs. Pickering was away, and turned sick with foreboding. Her very dreams of the previous night had been irradiated by dazzling possibilities. The dejection which had been growing on her for weeks, the almost certainty that she had taken the wrong turning were dissipated as by a miracle. A start was all she wanted, and a start was what Sue Kirby could give her. From that she saw the way straight to her goal.

The servant who opened Mrs. Pickering's door was as forbidding as the shuttered windows. In answer to her timid question, he replied in a tone of finality that Mrs. Pickering was seeing no one.

"I think she will see me." Her year of newspaper work had developed Alicia's effrontery to the extent of standing her ground. "I'm an old friend, a girlhood friend. Tell Mrs. Pickering that Alicia Kent is here."

Her positiveness had its effect. The man admitted her, though sulkily, showed

her to the drawing-room and left her. Alicia looked curiously upon the elegance suggested rather than seen in the dim light, and remembered Sue Kirby borrowing a piece of black court-plaster to cover a hole in the toe of her shoe. And she had laughed, too, as she had stuck it in place, every tooth in her head showing. Something in the incongruous recollection brought the tears stinging to Alicia's eyes.

The servant returned with an air of increased respect which told her, even before he spoke, that she had won.

"Mrs. Pickering will see you upstairs. If you'll come this way, Miss." All his insolence had vanished, replaced by the servile deference of the man who knows on which side his bread is buttered.

The occupant of the luxurious boudoir, lifting heavy eyes at Alicia's approach, was strangely unlike the Sue Kirby she had known, and still less did she suggest the insolent beauty who had swept Sanfield off his feet. Two months of passionate grieving had left their trace. More significant than all else, her hair showed brown at the roots. The hurt was deep enough to have rendered her indifferent to her appearance, which with a woman of her calibre is the final word in wretchedness.

Her dull gaze appraised her caller before a word was said. Then she spoke wearily: "It's little Alicia. I didn't want to see you or anybody else, but I couldn't turn away a visitor from home. Sit down, Alicia. You've grown pretty, and you've got a sort of style about you. You don't look like a country girl." And then as Alicia's color flamed she added indifferently, "Except when you blush."

"I'm afraid you're not well, Sue," Alicia said timidly. There was something terrifying in the aspect of this sullen, suffering creature. She was like a wounded tigress, the girl thought, and found the comparison inadequate. For, after all, the brute could only know the pang of physical pain.

"Me? No, I'm sick unto death." The dignified phrase was strange upon her lips. "You've heard about it, haven't you?"

"Heard about what?"



To Alicia's own ears her tone was far from convincing. But Mrs. Pickering answered with a laugh, a sound curiously harsh and rasping.

"Of course you haven't or you wouldn't be here. Queer little burg, Glen Falls. You folks up there are sort of fenced off from the world. You might as well live on—what d'ye call it?—Mars, for all you know about what's happening. How is everybody?"

Alicia began a detailed answer to the question. Her letters from home and a copy of the weekly newspaper kept her well posted. Occasionally her listener interrupted.

"What, Sandy McNeal living yet? Lord! I supposed the old man had cashed in ages ago." Then after a minute: "And so Marie *did* get married at last. Well, they say if you try long enough and hard enough, you'll win out in the end." She spoke unsmilingly, a sombre fire in the depths of her tragic eyes.

Alicia, true to her rôle of girlish simplicity, was describing the rummage sale given at the Methodist church, when Sue interrupted: "Listen, Alicia, can't you stay to dinner with me?"

She made a pretense of reflection. "Why, I suppose—if you're sure it wouldn't be inconvenient."

"Hardly! I haven't spoken to a soul but these infernal scared, sneaking servants for two months now. You're refreshing. You're like spring water. Wasn't there some guy in the Bible who wanted water from the well where he used to drink when he was a boy?"

"I suppose you mean David." Alicia allowed a note of shocked reproof to creep into her voice.

"Well, I guess that was one thing that ailed me." Sue took a cigarette from a case on the table near her and lighted it. "You don't mind, do you?" she asked between the puffs.

"No-o. But do you think it's good for you, Sue, when you're so nervous?" Alicia felt that she was realizing the histrionic possibilities of her rôle of guileless country maid in a most gratifying fashion.

"It may not be good for me. I should

go mad without it, but I'm not sure that madness isn't the best way out."

"Oh, Sue."

"You're only a kid, Alicia, a country kid at that, and you don't know what you're talking about." The impulse to confidence which the astute Miss Byrd had foreseen, had come upon her. "I lost a friend two months ago, my best friend, my only friend."

"Oh," hesitated Alicia. "You mean—"

"He—he died."

"Oh, Sue, your husband?"

Mrs. Pickering blew a ring of cigarette smoke toward the ceiling and watched it break before she replied.

"My husband is probably kicking around the world somewhere. I don't know whether he's dead or alive and I don't care."

"Oh, Sue!" Alicia's recoil was not assumed. Again she felt that curious, irrational fear.

"*This* was my friend. Look!" She drew from her bosom a locket suspended by a slender gold chain, and pressing the spring, held the miniature toward Alicia. The girl was breathing fast, as she leaned forward to examine the pictured face.

"He's—oh, he's very handsome, Sue, but—"

She broke off her intended homily. Sue's face, looking down on the miniature, changed beyond belief, softened miraculously, took on the pitiful beauty of a Madonna Dolorosa. Tears trembled in her eyes. She put the painted face against her cheek, and sat motionless for a long moment, while Alicia looked away. Her own eyes were brimming.

"We were so happy. We loved each other so! He was different from other men—so different. Most of them are half brute—when they're not all brute. But Bernard and I—" She broke off abruptly. "Oh, God!" she said, and rising, began to pace the floor. Alicia watched with dilated eyes.

Some minutes passed before Sue spoke again, and then she whispered. "He killed himself," she said.

Alicia's start was not assumed. The details of the tragedy, as Miss Byrd had reviewed them for her benefit, had passed from her mind. This bleeding, quivering



anguish seemed infinitely removed from the cheap notoriety of the newspaper account.

"Oh, poor Sue!" she sobbed, and almost hated herself for her tears.

"Yes, he killed himself. Some people thought he and I had quarreled. Fools! We never quarreled. I would have torn my heart out of my body for him, if he'd said the word. There was nothing I wouldn't have done. Of course, he didn't love me like that—no man ever does. He wouldn't even ask his wife to divorce him, though I begged for that. He didn't want to hurt her. But he was Heavenly kind, always. The very last time he came—no, I can't tell you about that. I can't." She wept, wringing her hands. And Alicia wept too—and waited.

"Then he went home and saw his wife and family. He was married to a wee little house-cat of a woman. She adored him in her way, the tabby-cat way. Always purred when he stroked her, and then when he went away, curled up in a ball and went to sleep. That kind. But he was fond of her and he worshipped his children."

Alicia catching sight of her own intent face in one of the numerous mirrors, saw it deadly pale. The blended odors of the cigarette smoke and of some heavy perfume closed in upon her suffocatingly. The white face in the glass blurred grotesquely.

"I mustn't faint," thought the girl. "She's coming to it. I mustn't faint." She steadied herself with a supreme effort. Sue's voice reached her, distinct but seemingly distant.

"Then he went hunting, as they thought, and he was found in the lodge dead, the second morning. It was poison. People would hardly believe it at first, the people who knew him, I mean. He loved life so. Nine-tenths of the men you see go to their business looking as if they'd just been sentenced to a term in Sing Sing. Bernard went as if it were a game, always smiling and sure. Even when he lost, he laughed. And after he knew me— Oh!" cried the poor creature, her voice breaking. "We were so happy."

"Perhaps," suggested Alicia with dry lips, "he took it by mistake."

"Mistake! Oh, no. It was deliberate." She put her hand to her forehead, a little confusedly. "I haven't told you yet about the boy."

Alicia said nothing.

"He was the oldest one, you know, named for him. We used to talk about him a great deal. He was as bright as a dollar. They'd always had tutors for him, and at the rate he was forging ahead he'd have been ready for college at seventeen. He was only fourteen when he—he died."

Hand gripping hand till the fingers left purple dents in the flesh, Alicia listened.

"Somehow he got on to the fact of his father's acquaintance with me. Bernard thought afterward that perhaps he had sent him to his desk for some papers, and he'd come across a note from me. It doesn't seem as if anybody could have told a child a thing like that. He must have found it out himself, some way."

She seemed to be asking Alicia's opinion. "I—I suppose so," the girl said in a strained voice.

"Anyway, he had the address all right and he came here. His father was with me, you understand. We'd finished luncheon and come up to this room, and my man—I discharged him the next day—brought up word that a boy was at the door with a message for Mr. Sanfield. We took it for granted that it was a messenger boy. They had to know where to find him, you see, when the market was up and down, and Bernard said to send the boy upstairs. I saw him first, and I knew him, though I'd never set eyes on him before. He was a handsome little fellow, but he looked older than fourteen. Because he'd read so much, I suppose."

She was talking rapidly and monotonously. It was plain that the confidence was proving an enormous relief. It was not necessary to bait the hook. The fish leaped at it bare.

"He just stood there looking, his eyes big and round, and his face white. His father had his back toward him, and after a minute he said rather sharp, 'Well, boy?' And then he turned around.



My God! I can see his face now. He got up, trying to be angry. 'What does this mean, sir?' he said, but it was all put on. He was frightened like a bad boy in school, called up to the master's desk. And that was what frightened me, the look of fear on his face."

She was silent a little, as if she did in truth see the face of her dead lover transformed by fear and shame.

"The boy spoke out at last. He had a little boy's voice, you know, all treble. It didn't seem to fit with that dreadfully wise look on his face. 'You'll have to excuse me, Father,' he said. 'I had to come to see if it was really so.' And with that he walked out of the room. Bernard started to follow him, and he stopped. He felt he couldn't face him again. He didn't tell me, but I knew that was it. Oh, that look! That look! Do you suppose we go on remembering millions and millions of years? I'd hate to think it." She caught her breath in a long, sobbing sigh. "That was the last time he ever saw the little fellow alive."

Alicia was by now oblivious to everything but the development of the tragedy. "Oh, no," she whispered protestingly.

"He was drowned three days later," said Mrs. Pickering, hardening her voice. "It looked like an accident. He went swimming with a lot of boys, and swam on and on, and went under finally, in water fifteen feet deep. There wasn't a thing to show he had planned it, except the letter he wrote to his father. He posted it on the way to the lake. All it said was, 'I don't think I can bear to live any longer.' The news of the drowning came before the letter, of course. Bernard might have borne it if he'd only suspected. But after the letter came, he knew, and no man could live, knowing that. He waited six months to get things into shape. He wanted to arrange everything for me so I'd be provided for without any scandal, but he *couldn't* live, you know, not with that before him night and day. It was just what the boy had felt, only more so."

She had paced the floor during most of the recital. Now she came and stood beside Alicia, looking down on her white, tear-wet face with sympathetic under-

standing. She herself had changed for the better since the girl's entrance. Already her confidences had eased the strain.

"You poor kid! I don't know what I've been thinking of. And you fresh from the country. You want to go home and forget it, Alicia, forget that such things happen." Her arm slipped about the girl's tense body, drawing her close. "But it's been good to talk to somebody from home."

It was nine in the evening when Alicia stepped into the limousine and gave the number of her boarding house to the driver. She had dined amid unwonted magnificence. She had told the latest news regarding the majority of the inhabitants of Glen Falls. When she was ready to go, Mrs. Pickering followed her into the hall.

"Sure you haven't time to come out to see me again?"

"I'm afraid not, Sue."

"Well, it's been good to have this glimpse of you." She put her white jeweled hands on Alicia's shoulders. "You don't mind?" she asked before she kissed her. And then: "It's been good, so good, to talk to somebody from home."

At half-past nine the limousine deposited Alicia at her own door, and glided away. Alicia, who had made a pretense of fumbling for her latch-key, only waited for it to turn the corner, and then shot down the steps and to the nearest car line. In strange revulsion from her earlier mood of sympathetic horror she was wildly exultant. What a story she had, throbbing with life, the red blood pulsing through it from beginning to end. She had solved the mystery that had puzzled the great city and had thwarted the bloodhounds of the press. It was all luck, but it meant the saving of years out of her life. Miss Byrd was right. In the mechanical, monotonous work of the average reporter one withered and dried up. Thanks to generous fortune, she would make her mark at the very beginning of her career, and henceforth would be trusted to undertake work needing a finer touch. As she boarded the car, she stifled a hysterical impulse to laugh aloud.



Suddenly she seemed to feel Sue Kirby's hands on her shoulders and hear Sue's voice saying: "It's been good, so good, to talk to somebody from home." To Sue she would seem a Judas. The woman had poured out her heart, not to Alicia Kent, but to an abstraction that stood for friendliness and old times and home. And Alicia Kent, profiting thereby, had transformed that confidence into coin. Something concerning thirty pieces of silver came vaguely to her thoughts.

"Look here," said Alicia to herself, "I've got to be sensible." She summoned to her aid her store of worldly wisdom, chiefly accumulated during her few months in the great city. "It's not exactly a nice thing to do, but in this world you can't be too particular. I can't give up my chances for the future in order to spare the feelings of Sue Kirby."

"Fare, please," shouted the conductor in the angry tone of one whose appeals have been disregarded. Alicia gave him a quarter and allowed him to force the change into her passive hand.

Sue Kirby would look upon her as a traitor. No one else would know. And it was unlikely that she would ever see Sue Kirby again. It was fantastic to contemplate such a thing as the possible sacrifice of her life's success for the sake

of a woman, the self-confessed mistress of a suicide. She had no right to expect anything from anybody. Such people forfeit consideration, Alicia thought virtuously.

"It's been good, so good, to talk to somebody from home." It was strange how those words haunted her. Mrs. Penrose Pickering, in spite of her mode of life, had some illusions left. She still believed in the home folks, in their honor and good faith. After to-morrow that would be in ruins along with the rest—her dreams of love and happiness, her girlhood innocence.

"Why!" gasped Alicia suddenly, white to the lips. "She never even asked me not to tell."

She had passed the newspaper office by a block. She rang the bell, alighted, and plodded back in the face of a sharp wind. The odor of printer's ink met her on the sidewalk. Within she heard the familiar roar and clicking. Hurrying men passed her, some going, some coming, some nodding greetings, others rushing past absorbed in their errand.

Miss Byrd, seated at the typewriter, started to her feet as Alicia entered. Her bright eyes scanned the girl's face uncertainly. "Well, what did you get out of her?"

"Nothing," said Alicia.

---

## BLUE IN THE SKY

By O. C. A. Child

Blue in the sky! I used to long for it,  
 Watch for it, care for it, scarce knowing why;  
 Ah, days go by, now I've no song for it.  
 What does it matter now, blue in the sky?

Breeze from the sea! How once I yearned for it,  
 Blowing so sweet from the waves o'er the lea;  
 Cool to my soul, once how I burned for it.  
 What does it matter now, breeze from the sea?

Blue in the sky—Oh! I'm too old for it;  
 Cloud-cast or rain-swept is all one to me!  
 Clear blows the breeze, but I'm too cold for it.  
 What does it matter now, breeze from the sea?



## ONLY A HUSBAND

By Carrie Louisa Shaw

(This tale points no moral, unless it be: Hire a careful chauffeur!)

**L**IKE innumerable beetles, the cars on Fifth avenue crawled along, halted with maddening frequency by the stop signs of traffic policemen. Within a limousine Edward Madigan, rising power in things theatrical, sat in tense impatience.

At last he snapped through the tube: "Turn over to Broadway, Frank, and get out of this—" and in obeying these instructions the overly-eager Frank, rounding a corner abruptly, grazed the gown of a girl who was crossing the street with absent eyes on the ground. Frightened, she jumped, stumbled and fell. Madigan pushed his way through the crowd that had instantly collected and began apologies. But the girl, already upon her feet, laughed nervously and brushed her shabby skirt.

"Oh, it's nothing; I'm not hurt," she protested, and started away.

But Madigan detained her. "Please let me take you to wherever you're going," he said, and, hesitating a moment, the girl followed him, accepting the most speedy means of leaving the curious crowd behind.

As they glided away he looked at her more closely, though his practiced eye had instantly appraised her as beautiful. Now he decided that her loveliness was chiefly in expression, a look of sweet and womanly tenderness. Just the sort of girl, he told himself, who loved all children and cried over abused animals.

"I am Edward Madigan," he quickly recalled himself, wondering if the name would mean anything to her.

"Oh, really?" was the radiant response. "Why, I've been trying to see your director all week. About an engagement," she explained. "I want to go on the stage, and I heard you were putting on a new musical piece."

"I'm on my way to a rehearsal now. Come with me and I'll put you with the show," he offered impulsively.

The "thank you" of the girl's soft eyes was a reward.

For two months Claire Witchie, the girl, danced with six chosen beauties in the chorus of "The Pink Stocking." Then one morning at an understudy rehearsal, she showed signs of dramatic ability and Madigan surprised everyone by assigning her to one of the lesser rôles in the company. He engaged a famous director to work with her each day to aid in smoothing off rough edges, and her progress was encouraging.

A few weeks later she attained a part next in importance to the star's, due to an actress' altercation with the management. They were patient with her first nervous performances and soon she rewarded them by "making good" in a far greater degree than her predecessor. Madigan began taking her out to restaurants and Broadway munched its latest tidbit of scandal.

Claire grew quite bold. She called him "Eddie" and "old dear" at rehearsals, and she joined the "Seventy" club and appeared in imported gowns. Her professional associates accorded her the respect that the tenderloin offers to ladies who conduct their affairs in high circles; for the leading lady of "The Pink Stocking" company would have ordered her removal instantly had Claire remained in the chorus, and flaunted a vulgar flirtation with the property man!

However, it proved more than a skyrocket love affair, for one day the *Morning Telegraph* printed in big type the romance of their wedding. Later it was announced that Mrs. Madigan would rest while a "suitable vehicle" was



being found for her, and Claire lounged in the sumptuous apartment of her manager-husband while he searched diligently for said vehicle. Claire was still her sweet tender self, and Madigan grew more enamored as time passed, until his smile, as he regarded her, seemed almost fatuous. And she apparently returned his affection. At night they read together any hopeful manuscripts, but each held radically divergent ideas of what constituted a desirable play.

Madigan wanted a combination of good show and "fat" stellar rôle. But Claire was on the outlook for nothing but "situations" in which she might shine.

The final result was that she coaxed her husband into launching a spectacular musical piece that cost a fortune to produce, but whose book was trite and whose tunes were tuneless. He downed his fears and hoped for the best; and the show received commendation at its opening in Syracuse. But at its Broadway *première* the critics sat like solemn owls throughout the "comedy," then next day blazoned its deficiencies to the world through their respective papers. Yet all devoted paragraphs of laudation to the star, Claire Witchie. There was no denying the girl's talent, and Madigan was balanced between pleasure at his wife's triumph and depression because of the crash. For crash it was. His own rise had been meteoric, his professional reputation—and money—were gained by one successful production. So that he had staked practically everything on the ruinous play that made Claire a star.

The show was rewritten in spots, scenes added and cut, but it grew worse and it was necessary to close it two weeks after the opening. But Claire, with a good press agent, was kept constantly in the public eye, and Madigan found that as time passed and her fame increased, his identity somehow became submerged in hers. He began to hear himself spoken of as "Claire Witchie's husband."

There was enough left from the wreck to "make a front," of course, but his wife's extravagance was becoming a serious factor to reckon with. He steeled himself to explain his financial status and

asked her coöperation in a half-ashamed way. She was astonished and a little hurt.

"Why, Edward, I had no idea you were so poor!" she said in a sweet, aggrieved way.

After all, poverty is relative. Once, a very short time back, she had looked upon her little seventy-five-dollar savings account as real wealth. Now she paid that infinitesimal sum for a negligee.

Offers from other managers came to her, but Madigan, too proud to acknowledge final failure, urged her to wait, and she had observed his wishes with martyr-like grace. He began pottering in smaller things, but a stubbornly malignant Fate turned everything to ashes in his hands, and soon he was identified with so many small failures that his superstitious profession closed its doors to him. He had not been at the top long enough to have obtained a real hold, nor inspired staunch followers.

His wife was very gentle, very patient with him. Secretly she wondered if she had "wasted" herself in marrying him. He had given her the Big Chance, of course; but who was it said that about "if you do anything better than your fellowmen, the world will beat a path to your door, even if it be in the wilderness"? Of course, not taking into consideration that the theatre is possibly the one exception where Opportunity is the fairy godmother. Claire Witchie might have been a chorus girl till the end, if Madigan had not hit her with his machine. His absent eye might never have singled her out from his other choristers, even had she been chosen by the stage director, who did "the picking" of girls, which is not at all likely. Claire in the beginning was too raw, too awkward to appeal to a seasoned director. No, say what you will, crossing the street with eyes to the ground had been her psychological moment.

When he could hold on no longer, he advised Claire to accept an offer, the contract for which she had signed two days before. She was vastly relieved that this made any awkward news-breaking unnecessary on her part.

"Perhaps I can get you in as the busi-



ness manager. In fact, I'm *sure* I can," she told him kindly.

"No, thanks; don't bother," he had returned with grim politeness.

There followed weeks of rehearsals, then a week out of town for Claire. Madigan accompanied her, and watched and criticized her every performance. In the past she had always been eager and grateful for his suggestions. But now she seemed resentful of anything he said, unless it was praise of her work. At the New York debut he sat far back in the gallery, unwilling to occupy the box Claire had reserved and so be a cynosure for those who would point him out as the star's husband. Before the second act was over he knew that the show had "caught on." He hurried back stage after the final curtain. He was to take Claire out to supper, and for the moment depression fled, and he was palpitating with joy at her success and anticipation of the pleasure they would find in talking of it.

But in her dressing room Claire faced him with a guilty little smile.

"Oh, Eddie, bad news!" she said. "I've got to go out with Allison and some of his tribe. I dread it, but I don't see how I can escape very well, do you? They didn't say anything about your coming along, and I hated to—"

"Of course," he cut her off, hoping the terrible hurt did not show in his eyes, "it wouldn't be good policy to refuse; and anyway, I'm tired to-night."

He went on to tell her something of his pleasure in what seemed her assured success, but she appeared indifferent, and several times interrupted with instructions to the maid.

He left her and returned to the apartment to wait for her. Things were clearly figured out in his mind before she entered three hours later.

"Claire," he began, scarcely giving her time to remove her hat, "can you see that we've reached a crisis?"

She considered a minute.

"Yes, I can," was her frank answer.

"I'm about down and out," he continued, "and you're soaring to the top.

We don't make a congruous team, do we?"

"I knew you would look at things like that, and I think you're a foolish boy," she scoffed, but her tone was not convincing.

"I won't live on your salary," he stated bluntly.

"I suppose there's no use arguing if you're going to take that stand." There was genuine relief in her voice. "Frankly, Eddie, I admire you for your pride, even while I want you to share with me. But I don't want to kill your self-respect by urging you to stay on here."

Madigan was a little startled. In his somewhat vague plans for independence he had not thought of leaving the apartment that had been his home for four years.

"Don't you want the car, too?" he inquired with dry humor.

"Why, yes, I'll borrow it for a time, anyway. At least until you're on your feet," she said seriously.

"That will put me on my feet," he punned. Then: "You're tired now, so we'll talk over everything in the morning."

But when morning came he tip-toed about and packed very quietly, and was established in a cheap Forty-seventh street hotel three hours before she called for her chocolate.

About noon he strolled up a cross street in search of a reasonable restaurant, reaching Fifth avenue with no success. The swarming cars made crossing look impossible, but Madigan, not waiting for an official halting of the line, dodged dexterously among them. He had nearly reached the other side in safety when a long gray car bumped him gently from behind.

He turned wrathfully as it slid silently by. Within, and sweetly unconscious of his ignominy, sat Claire Witchie, his wife.

Suddenly he began laughing so heartily that people turned to stare at him. Much he had lost, but out of the wreck he had saved his sense of humor.



any rate," said Mrs. Van Camp. "And I will provide you with *carte blanche*."

And she patted Bertie's lily-white fingers with her own diamond-encrusted ones.

The motor stopped. They were before a handsome residence on the Upper West Side. The footman opened the door of the car, and Bertie got out and assisted Queen Victoria to alight. She took his arm and gave it a squeeze. He tingled all over, and felt like screaming aloud—for joy, of course.

The footman had rung the door bell, and another footman had opened the door. Bertie and Mrs. Van Camp entered the house. It was stuffy and frumpy. Everything was very old-fashioned and appropriately "early Victorian." But an atmosphere of affluence pervaded the whole abode.

"This is the drawing-room," said Mrs. Van Camp, showing Bertie the apartment. "And this is the dining-room. And now let us go upstairs."

A maid relieved her of the ermine cloak and the purple bonnet. Bertie was afraid she would also be relieved of her Titian wig, for it became entangled in the hat.

Mrs. Van Camp led the way to the upper floor.

"This is the living-room," said the old lady. "And this is my boudoir. As you see, the whole house needs going over. I have realized this for some time past, but have let things wait—till now. Somehow, as I passed 'The Minty Shop' today, I finally made up my mind. Something impelled me. I am very psychic. I have intuitions. And they are never wrong. I have had an intuition about you, too. And I am sure we are going to be congenial and sympathetic."

"I hope so," said Bertie. "I hope so—with all my heart."

They talked for a while about intuitions and chairs, premonitions and tables, personalities and bric-a-brac. And at last Bertie tore himself away. But the next day he returned. And the next. And the next.

In fact, after that he paid daily visits to Mrs. Van Camp. And then nightly visits as well. He took samples of bro-

cade and specimens of wood. He was heart and soul in the work of decorating Mrs. Van Camp's house and of making a hit with the old lady herself.

There was to be a black and white drawing-room, to please Mr. McGillicuddy, and a green and blue dining-room, to please Mr. Fitzhuskinson, and a pale pink boudoir to please Mrs. Van Camp. Bertie confined his own preferences to the guestroom, which was to be gold and purple.

Slowly but surely the interior of the old lady's dwelling changed its appearance. Mr. McGillicuddy gushed over the black and white drawing-room. Mr. Fitzhuskinson gurgled over the green and blue dining-room. Mrs. Van Camp gloated over the pale pink boudoir. And Bertie clasped his hands and rolled his eyes over the gold and purple guest-room.

"Oh, to sit in those gold and purple chairs," piped Bertie. "And, oh, to sleep in that gold and purple bedstead!"

"Well," said Mrs. Van Camp. "Why not?"

"Dearest lady," cried Bertie, "what-ever do you mean?"

"I have told you that I am lonely, and you have told me that you are lonely," said Mrs. Van Camp. "Two negatives make an affirmative. Why not come here and live?"

"My Gawd!" cried Bertie. "Am I awake or asleep?"

"Awake—I hope," said the old lady.

So Bertie moved out of his hall bedroom in a cheap boarding house, and moved into the gold and purple guest-chamber in Mrs. Van Camp's mansion on the Upper West Side. And, at the same time, he resigned from his position at "The Minty Shop." He had become "private secretary" to Mrs. Van Camp.

And then one day he reappeared amid the brass candlesticks and copper bowls. He wore a brown suit and a brown overcoat, a brown necktie and a brown hat. He was in fact a brown study.

"Girls," said Bertie, "I have come to pay my bill."

"Your bill?" cried Gertrude. "What bill?"



bookcase painted. He had waited on a woman who wanted a sofa upholstered, and he had waited on a woman who wanted a bed canopied.

None of these customers and none of these commissions had interested him in the least. Indeed, he had repeatedly lifted his lily-white fingers to his rosy-red lips, in futile efforts to conceal terrific yawns. With one hand on his hip and one hand on his chest he had manifested every evidence of boredom.

But then, all of a sudden, a great commotion occurred in the æsthetic sales-room.

"Mercy!" piped Mr. McGillicuddy, "a motor has drawn up at the curb!"

"True!" breathed Mr. Fitzhuskinson. "And Queen Victoria is alighting!"

And, as a matter of fact, the old lady who stepped out of the car and walked into the shop was not at all unlike King George's grandmother in personal appearance, if not in sartorial embellishment.

She was short and stout, but over her hair she had drawn a red wig, and around her portly figure she had draped an ermine cloak. In her ears were diamond pendants, and on her fingers were diamond rings.

Mr. McGillicuddy minced forward.

"Good day, Madam!" said Gertrude. The old lady ignored him entirely.

Mr. Fitzhuskinson slid along.

"What can I do for you, Madam?" said Eva.

The old lady looked straight through him.

Bertie willowed into view.

"At your service, Madam!" said Bertie.

"Ah!" said the old lady, "I want you to wait on me!"

Bertie smiled his sweetest, but Gertrude and Eva frowned their deadliest, and with arched eyebrows and pursed lips, moved away, leaving Bertie to the old lady and the old lady to Bertie.

"Is that ermine," whispered Gertrude, "or rabbit skin?"

"And are those diamonds," whispered Eva, "or cracked ice?"

"I want my whole house redecorated," said the old lady, "and I want you to

offer suggestions. My automobile is waiting outside. Can you come home with me now and have a look around?"

"I have an appointment in half an hour with the Princess Pompom," said Bertie, "but perhaps it can be postponed. I will inquire and see."

He wriggled away and went over to where the manager and the assistant manager were dishing dirt and knocking everybody.

"She wants me to go home with her," gasped Bertie. "I am to decorate her house from cellar to garret. Can I go?"

"Of course," said Mr. McGillicuddy.

"What luck!" said Mr. Fitzhuskinson.

So Bertie put on his soft gray hat and his loose blue coat and his clean white gloves and swept out of "The Minty Shop" with Queen Victoria. The footman opened the door of the automobile and the strange pair stepped inside.

"My name is Mrs. Van Camp," said the old lady.

"And mine is Bertram Le Drag," said Bertie.

"How old are you?" said Mrs. Van Camp.

"Just twenty," said Bertie.

"Young enough to be my son," said Mrs. Van Camp.

"Oh, I don't think so. Really?" said Bertie, who had expected her to say "grandson" instead.

"I live a very lonely life," said Mrs. Van Camp.

"So do I," said Bertie.

"I have no family of my own," said Mrs. Van Camp.

"My case exactly," said Bertie.

"No one to love and to cherish," said Mrs. Van Camp. "No one to provide for and leave my money to."

"Ah, what a difference," said Bertie. "I work so hard for a living. Matching colors, choosin' r stuffs, basting hems, and hammerin' jacks. I, who love books and pictures and music and life. I should have plenty of wealth at my command, because I adore beauty and refinement, culture and magnificence. But, since I cannot possess these glorious things myself, it consoles me to put them into the homes of others."

"You must put them into my home, at



## BEAUTIFUL BERTIE

### HIS START AND HIS FINISH

*By Harold Susman*

**B**ERTIE had been a beautiful baby and a beautiful boy before becoming a beautiful youth. His cheeks had always been very pink and his eyes had always been very blue, his hair had always been very yellow and his lips had always been very red. And he had always been a perfect sissy.

As a child, the other children had thrown sticks and stones at him, and as a lad the other lads had hurled insulting remarks at him. He had been nicknamed many things, including Gladys and Beatrice. But the name that stuck the steadiest was Beautiful Bertie.

When he was sixteen he left school and got a job. The girls told him that he was too pretty to work. And he agreed with them entirely. But he had to be self-supporting. He started in at a soda fountain. He learned how to make egg phosphates and nut sundaes.

Later on he worked for a milliner. He learned how to wire shapes and stitch trimming. And at last he got a position as salesman with a firm of interior decorators.

This final employment proved to be the most congenial of all. At the soda fountain the other fellows had splashed him with syrup and made fun of his walk. At the milliner's the girls had jabbed him with needles and mimicked his talk. But at the interior decorator's nobody annoyed him in any way at all.

People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. And the manager, Mr. McGillicuddy, had long been known as Gertrude, while the assistant manager, Mr. Fitzhuskinson, had long been known as Eva. The first-named used much face-powder, and the last-named used much perfume.

It was as good as a show to enter "The

Minty Shop." It was filled with chairs and tables and sofas and beds upholstered in black and white or green and blue. Black and white was Mr. McGillicuddy's favorite scheme, and green and blue was Mr. Fitzhuskinson's.

There were wicker cages containing stuffed parrots, and velvet cushions embroidered with spangles. There were silks and satins, and brass candlesticks and copper bowls. There were mirrored screens and tripod incense-burners. And last but not least there were Gertrude, Eva and Beautiful Bertie.

"My dear!" Mr. McGillicuddy would lisp, "isn't this silk simply superb?"

"Without a doubt," Mr. Fitzhuskinson would gasp. "But isn't this satin perfectly delicious?"

"My Gawd!" Bertie would gurgle. "Isn't this velvet absolutely distracting?"

And while the manager would throw the silken scarf over his arm and while the assistant manager would drape the satin strip over his shoulder, the salesman would trail the velvet curtain along the ground.

Many people went into "The Minty Shop" merely to make fun of the individuals in charge. But many more went there to make purchases and to give commissions, because sissies or no sissies, the establishment did very artistic work, if a bit fantastic and bizarre.

Mrs. Noel Gallaway, the society woman, had Mr. McGillicuddy decorate her drawing-room in black and white. Bobbette Palmyre, the emotional actress, had Mr. Fitzhuskinson decorate her boudoir in green and blue. And at last Bertie met a person who offered the longed-for opportunity.

Bertie had waited on a woman who wanted a footstool covered, and Bertie had waited on a woman who wanted a



"For the furnishing and decorating of my house," said Bertie.

"Your house?" cried Eva. "What house?"

"Well, I suppose I should have said *our* house," said Bertie. "My wife's and mine. Mrs. Van Camp and I were married this morning. Here is her check. It is, as you will observe, made out under her new name, Arabella Le Drag."

"Nanine, I swoon!" cried Gertrude.

"Clarice, my smelling salts!" cried Eva.

"*Au 'voir*, my dears," said Bertie. "Come to Buckingham Palace sometime and call on us. Queen Victoria and I will be pleased to grant an audience."

Mr. McGillicuddy and Mr. Fitzhinson were both speechless.

Bertie swept out of "The Minty Shop" in an impressive manner.

But the office boy chirped, "Hoops, my dear!"

---

## PRIMAVERA

*By Charles Divine*

The syllables of Arcady,  
 You hear? The song that plays:  
 In Arcady . . . In Arcady!  
 The land of holidays,  
 Where railroad rates are high in Spring,  
 And luggage is excess,  
 For shepherds who have time to sing  
 Are radicals in dress.  
 A thought of grass and hillside fair—  
 I planned it all, my sweet,  
 Prodigious leagues from any square  
 Or Forty-second street.

But visioned hills are measured wrong  
 Unless your lips agree  
 To beckon footsteps with a song  
 And lure the heart of me.  
 Since I have kissed you on the mouth—  
 Surprising thing to do!—  
 I find that Broadway, north or south,  
 Is Arcady with you.



## HER HOME TOWN

By Barbara Sawtelle

NO one was more surprised than Paul Benton, the banker and art lover, when he found himself motoring with his friend Darrow, to Faverly Farms, Connecticut, to attend the wedding of a girl whom he had never seen.

Curiosity played a latent, though important part in his decision to accompany Darrow also, for his friend had made the cryptic remark "that it was pretty white in Thorley Venner to marry Amy Collamore," and Benton had a desire to see a woman that was black enough to make Thorley Venner look white by contrast.

Arriving at the Collamore house, Benton was quite relieved to find Darrow greeted as an old family friend, while his own base intrusion, as he chose to call it, was lost in the welcome of Mrs. Collamore herself.

Benton found Amy Collamore charming, not because she was a bride in becoming attire, but because she towered mentally so high above Venner himself in every act and word. Even in the short conversation with her at the reception, he could not fail to admire her evenly-pitched voice, her select choice of words, the tender, pleading, brown eyes and sensitive mouth.

Mrs. Collamore beamed upon her child serenely. There was an unusual expression of satisfaction upon her face which bespoke relief. Benton accounted for this contentment when, in passing two ladies returning from the dining-room, he heard one whisper to the other: "It will be three months before Dick Balsh will get the news, way out in India. I wonder what he will say?"

"He will be very much relieved, you may depend upon it."

Then Benton wondered in a vague sort of way just why Dick Balsh should

be relieved, why he went to India, who he was, anyway, and if his name bore any relation to Venner's being termed "white."

While meditating thus, it occurred to him that Darrow had also mentioned that the girl was from one of the best families in the state. It seemed incredible that a fellow with Venner's reputation, evident lack of education as well as family, should be able to marry a girl like that, and he spoke of it to Darrow.

"Oh, Thorley's all right," remarked Darrow. "He is like the woman who could not afford an orchid at the hothouse, so picked one from the gutter. It was an orchid, after all, and she didn't care who had worn it before, so long as it became her."

Benton frowned. "Girl been married before?"

"Hardly," Darrow answered, shrugged his shoulders and, smiling knowingly, lighted a cigarette.

The one and only reason why Benton had accepted Darrow's invitation to the wedding was because he had said this much and no more. If there was one thing Benton deplored more than another, it was the unnecessary airing of one's private affairs, and there was evidently some reason for the shrug, the smile and the silence in regard to Venner's lady.

After the wedding Thorley Venner took his wife to New York, and after a time Darrow and Benton followed.

In the course of a few months they called, at Venner's request, and Benton asked permission to "look around."

The living-room of the Venners might have been spoken of as mentally at variance. Though the couch with its deep red pillows, the table with its magazines and cigarettes spoke of ease and comfort, the straw, standard work-



basket beside it spoke of thrift and industry. Though the languorous eyes of a Neapolitan girl gleamed from a canvas, framed in rich bronze, they did not dim the earnestness of the photograph of Aunt Annie Hallet, as it reposed, prim and virtuous, in an embroidered linen frame upon a white enameled table. A quaint shelf contained an array of rare ivories and *cloisonné*, above which hung a water-color of apple blossoms against an insipid, blue sky.

Benton later came to laugh at this room. It bore out Amy's moods so well, and he had remarked to Darrow and Venner many times that he could not flatter the room by calling it artistic, but he was compelled to admit that as far as furnishings went, it stood in a class that might be called "unique."

Toward the end of the second year Darrow and Benton arrived early one evening for dinner to find Amy in excellent spirits, cooking the meal herself, as usual, and singing at her work. With accustomed freedom, Darrow hung his coat upon the rack and proceeded to follow her into the kitchen. "Kind of happy to-night, aren't you? What's new?"

Amy reached for Benton's coat and hat and insisted upon hanging them up herself. "Oh, the most delightful thing happened to-day! A girl from my own home town, my best friend, Edith Teller, has married and settled down out at Carsdale. She has been here a year now, and I met her to-day for the first time when I was out shopping."

"Glad to see her, weren't you?" Benton was listening to Venner's latch key.

"I should say I was! She invited Thorley and me to come out Saturday for a week-end. She has some wonderful friends, she says—people I have longed to meet, too."

"Who's that, Amy?" Venner's voice as he entered sounded strangely discordant, cutting its way through Amy's softer tones.

"Why, Edith Teller. I met her to-day. She is married to a lawyer named Matterson. They have a wonderful house out in Carsdale, and she invited us out for a week-end."

"Had on your new furs, didn't you,

and that smart military hat?" Venner sneered.

"Why, of course, but how can that matter?" laughed Amy.

"Your name is Amy Venner now, not Amy Collamore. You know, in spite of your having a-plenty of this world's goods before I married you, there was a year or so when she didn't speak to you, didn't come to your wedding even. I hope you haven't forgotten that!"

"Indeed I have, Thorley!"

For some inexplicable reason Benton felt obliged to interrupt. "Just a girl's quarrel, I suppose. They melt away like dew."

Venner sneered. "This was no girl's quarrel. This was Simon-pure meanness on Edith Teller's part—snobbishness, you might call it."

"She has some wonderful friends, Thorley." Amy stood flushing and biting her lips, her eyes cast down upon her work.

"Well, haven't I? Look at Darrow and Benton. Aren't they good enough?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. But I meant women. Edith says she knows scores of opera singers, authors, artists, and all of that kind of people will be delightfully new to me!"

"Well, we don't have to meet them through Edith Teller Matterson!" Venner swung his dining-chair into place. "Come on, boys," he added, "sit down."

The same old subjects were discussed during dinner, the same old discontent of Venner and Darrow rehearsed. The United States was overcrowded, too many foreigners, everybody cutting in and working for nothing just to get another's job away. The only country where a man might have a chance was Mexico. What if there was rebellion there? Wasn't it everywhere in some form or another? What those people really needed was American pioneers to come down and show them how to live in peace. So the talk ran on.

"You can't go, of course, Benton. Your business keeps you here," explained Venner.

"You seem to have decided upon going," remarked Benton coolly.

"Not quite, but why hang around here



for two hundred dollars when there's two thousand waiting for a fellow there?"

"It will take some capital to start," ventured Benton.

"Oh, well, that's easy." Venner tossed the matter aside with a wave of his hand. "Amy's my capital, and that makes me think, if we do go, there's the solution to the 'Edith proposition,' Paul. You can take Amy out there as often as she is forgiving enough to want to go. Personally," he added, striking a match, "I resent the way she treated Amy in Faverly Farms for a while, but you two go in for art and artists, so go on," he winked toward Darrow, "when we have gone to Mexico."

But Amy visited Edith Matterson long before Venner visited Mexico.

There was a musicale at the Carsdale home and Venner persuaded Benton to take Amy, promising to join them later in the evening.

Edith Matterson had collected around her just such a set as Amy and Benton represented when announced as Mrs. Venner and Mr. Benton. There was Signor Patrici and Mrs. Drake, Mr. Fulton and Madam Ranoul, John Morvalle and Mrs. Holden, never a Mr. and Mrs. of the same name.

Amy wondered at this and laughingly spoke of it in private to Edith.

"There aren't any Mr. and Mrs. Smiths or Joneses in New York, are there? Shall you ever forget how inseparable those married people were in Connecticut?"

"I certainly hope to forget it," replied Edith sharply, "and I also hope you do not attempt to launch those old-fashioned ideas upon my guests. You were far from a prude, Amy, in our home town!" Amy's face flushed. "I did not mean that exactly. Marriage in New York makes every Connecticut custom seem—quite different."

"You mean," suggested Edith, as she led the way from the room, "that marriage in New York makes everything possible and plausible. It has also a gratifying fashion of obliterating the past, the fashion being regulated, of

course, by one's popularity and bank account."

Amy took the statement as if it had been flung at her intentionally, whether in the form of advice or a challenge, she was unable to tell. Perhaps, with Edith's following it would not be a bad idea to copy her, to swing herself, by means of her bank account, into that New York popularity that obliterated the past. The idea was inspiring and lent brilliancy to her eyes. She felt a keen desire for conquest that, in view of her failure in Connecticut, was pitifully pardonable.

There was no end of hilarity during the evening, daring bits of acting from the love scenes of the operas, secret *tête-à-têtes* and moments stolen, even though publicly. Later there followed the supper, where there seemed an abundance of wine, a circle of cheeks flushed, lips moist, eyes bright and waves of perfume surging up from scented bodies warm from dancing, while floating through the scene like a veil was the thin haze of cigarettes.

Twice as she listened to the chime of the hall clock she found Benton's eyes fixed upon her. "I think Thorley should be here, don't you?" She looked puzzled as her glance traveled from Edith to Benton, and still more puzzled at Edith's reply.

"It is unconventional and unpopular," laughed Edith, "to worry about one's husband. Pray, do not be so New England!"

That night as Amy and Benton drove home alone in the machine a peculiar silence for friends to maintain, settled upon them.

At length Benton spoke. "You do not fit into that crowd for a minute, Amy. You were honestly worried about Thorley, and not one of them would have believed it!"

"It does not seem so New England to me, as natural, for a wife to wonder why her husband does not keep his word. The way Edith took my anxiety made me rather ashamed of having been decent."

Benton laughed. "That is the shame you will have to learn to cover up if you



try to keep up with people of that class."

"I may not keep up with them, Paul, but I am going to cultivate them. Did you hear that rich Mr. Morvalle say he would take the whole party down to Faverly this summer? That is where Edith and I were born, you know—you've been there."

Benton replied petulantly. "I do not see any especial need of introducing that noisy, rather coarse, crowd to the simple, easy-going New England natives. People down there might misjudge you."

"No more than they do at present. I want them all coming back to me as Edith Matterson came back," confessed Amy frankly. "The friendship of prominent people will make them do it. When they see famous people, clever people, courting me," she added childishly, "they will be only too glad to do the same."

Benton compressed his lips. "You are Venner's wife and so I can have nothing to say, but if I were in your husband's place I would insist that you let the opinion of those Faverly people remain as it is. You are all right as you are—to-day."

He tried to choke the last word but it escaped him. "Why to-day?" Amy's hand lightly touched Benton's arm. "You know then, don't you?"

"I know nothing except that you are a good woman, and I see no reason why you should be so anxious to enlarge your circle of friends at the expense of your reputation."

"Those friends of Edith's are brilliant, Paul."

"Excuse me, Amy, they are contemptible."

The car grated upon the edge of the curb and came to a stop.

Benton opened the door and took Amy's hand. "Tell Venner that I said you needed a chaperon. Good-night."

Amy's good-night was hardly audible, and her feet dragged a little wearily as she entered her own apartment.

She wondered if Thorley were home and if he had worried about her and why he had not come for her. Why had she allowed her mother to marry her to this man and why had this man wanted her?

For the hundredth time she felt the sting of having been married by her mother to one man, to cover the scandal caused by relations to another. Hot upon the heels of this humiliating alliance came the realization that Thorley Venner's people were stations innumerable below her own. The Venners had never associated with such people as the Collamores of Connecticut. Her family name as well as her money had helped to place Thorley where he was to-day—in a wholesale importing house. She bit her lips as she recalled that only that day there had arrived a consignment of rugs from India. She wondered if Dick Balsh had anything to do with her husband's firm, and if he ever had taken the trouble to inquire how she had come out after his sudden departure.

It had only been a case of fancied love between them. They had been thrown together for a week at a gay house party, where excitement had gone to her head like wine, and had blinded her to all but a lover's passionate insistence. A few months later, with pale lips and frightened eyes, she had told Dick Balsh her fears. Reckless, thoughtless and brutal, he had left town and gone to India.

A little later, she too, went away with her mother for a six months' stay, and then—

In spite of her efforts the past continued to recur to her. Probably, it was the sight of Edith Teller again or the suggestion that in her home town she had been "anything but a prude." That left a feeling of foreboding. There was nothing to conceal from her husband. Thorley Venner had known all about her mysterious absence from Faverly Farms those fatal six months, known of the slights of her former friends, Edith Teller among them, and known why. She had been the orchid in the gutter which he could not afford to purchase at the greenhouse, while he had been to her the one escape from ostracism, the one refuge under a new name.

Now, more than ever before, she longed to go back to Faverly in company with a talented party who petted and admired her. To do this she must be a good fellow, joke with these people,



laugh, dance, sing, even drink with them! At Faverly, she dreamed, she would give a concert in the town hall for the benefit of the church. She herself would act as accompanist. She would be Faverly's benefactor, who had brought these artists to her home town.

The following morning Venner began closing up his business and holding long conversations with Darrow about the agricultural, financial and political prospects in Mexico. Later they began the study of Spanish, and seeing that the call of conquest was upon them, Amy volunteered the money rather than humiliate her husband by allowing him to ask for it. "How much will you need, Thorley?" she inquired as she drew her check book from the drawer.

"A couple of thousand to start, dear. I know you won't kick, you're no piker!"

Amy wrote the check and passed it to him. "I do not forget, Thorley," she ventured meekly.

"Well, you can if you want to. Nobody thinks of all that yarn now. Amy Collamore is dead. You are Mrs. Thorley Venner. Edith has probably forgotten it also, even forgotten she ever snubbed you. Give the devil his due!"

"I do not think Edith forgets," remarked Amy thoughtfully. "The question is whether I can make myself of such value to her friends that no skeleton can frighten them with tales of me. It's my personality of to-day against my reputation of yesterday."

The next party that Edith Matterson gave Amy persuaded her husband to attend. He seemed terribly ill at ease and clung to Benton for protection. "For Heaven's sake, Paul, what do you and Amy see in this crowd? The police raid places far more respectable than this! That Drake woman hasn't clothes enough on to make a pen-wiper and the husband of that woman with John Morvalle doesn't make enough money to buy her hairpins! Gee, it's a riddle to me! Suppose they are happy?"

"No, they are crazy, unnatural," replied Benton. "They are not fit to look at Amy!"

Venner veered suddenly. "She's set on cultivating them, though. Why, I

don't know, but if she wants to, I'm game. I owe a good deal to Amy."

"You owe her protection more than anything," replied Benton angrily.

Whether the remark went home or not Benton never knew. Venner had an exasperating way of believing that he could do no wrong after having done the magnificent thing of bestowing his name upon a woman.

In disgust at him, Benton turned and went in search of Amy. She was, as usual, surrounded. John Morvalle and his female satellites were arranging for a theater party, a luncheon and a tea the following week. As he passed them he overheard their plans for the coming summer in a place, they joyfully agreed, where no one would know them and they would not need to care what they did.

They were looking, then, for a land of unrestrained liberty, and had strangely picked a little town in an old blue law state for their stamping ground. Benton wondered as he watched them just how much more liberty it would be possible for them to take than that in which they reveled now.

The tiresome evening for Venner was at last over. His mind had not been with the guests, but down in Mexico, where, as he termed it, "a man had a chance."

All during the ride home Venner expatiated over the freedom of living in the open, where, he quoted bromidically, "There ain't no ten commandments." It seemed to Amy every one was longing for just such a spot on earth. She wondered if it were a sign that the world was growing worse because of this desire or better because the demands of decency were growing more restraining.

The fact that Venner too was cramped in the land of restraint was proven when, early in February, he started for Mexico in company with Darrow. At his request Benton came with Amy to the pier, but he could not fail to notice that Venner's anxiety about Amy's social and moral welfare was far exceeded by his anxiety over the tardiness of sailing.

At last the gang plank was pulled in and he was waving good-by to his wife and friend. Long before Amy thought



of leaving the pier, Venner and Darrow had moved out of sight to the other side of the boat.

"It is going to be different now," began Benton as they retraced their steps to the street. "I cannot run up as I used to unless you keep a maid or companion. Why you have persisted in doing your own work I do not know."

"To keep my mind occupied, I guess. I do not like to think too much."

"You ought to have an older woman with you," suggested Benton. "I know of one. She would not only take the care off your hands, which will not be so much with Venner away, but she will be company for you."

"I will be lonely, won't I, but then Mrs. Drake and Mrs. Holden have promised to run in often."

Benton ignored that. "Let me send the woman up, will you—a Mrs. Gerry? She will be like a mother to you—some one to go back to after you have been out with your firefly friends."

"All right, send her up."

So it was decided, and the following evening Mrs. Gerry appeared.

She was a motherly soul, who never seemed to be idle but rather always looking for some new service to perform.

One evening, at the close of Mrs. Gerry's first week, she came hurrying in to Amy's room. "A lady with a lovely voice is calling you on the telephone. I've been wondering why some of your girl friends haven't been coming around, knowing as they do, that you are alone."

At the telephone Mrs. Holden's voice came cooing over the wire.

"Is that you, Amy dear? Well, this is Blanche Holden. John Morvalle and I want to come up and see you for a while. We knew you would be lonely, and we are just tired to death of being stared at by people who do not understand us. May we come?"

Here was sincere comradeship with one whom society dare not scorn. Here was one who not only appreciated her loneliness, but trusted her with her secrets. Of course they must come! Was not this the beginning of her achievement, this trust of Blanche Holden? Would she not in case of any stalking

skeleton in her own life be in her debt for this secret meeting and expect her silence?

It was not more than a half hour after their arrival, however, that Amy found herself being eliminated from the conversation and later her very presence becoming ignored. In a semi-conscious way she realized that her training must have been narrow, that a clandestine love scene such as was being enacted in word and tone before her eyes, was the privilege of the accepted in society.

Suddenly the trio were startled by the ringing of the telephone. Amy laid down her book to answer the call. A faint feeling stole over her as she took down the receiver. A fear that some one might call who would not, could not, approve, made the whole situation appear ghastly and unhealthy. The voice came clear over the wire.

"This is Mr. Holden speaking. Is Blanche there?" Amy's hand quickly covered the transmitter. "It is your husband, Blanche, what shall I say?"

"Tell him I'm not here, goosie, but that you expect me later. Then, if he chooses to call, why, Johnnie will be gone, see?"

Amy removed her hand and weighed the lie for the fraction of a second. "Mrs. Holden has not arrived yet. She promised to come up some time, and I am expecting her."

"That is all right then," came the reply. "She was not home for dinner nor at the Matterns. I just wondered if she could be with you. Good-night."

Nervously Amy clicked the receiver back upon the hook. As she turned, Morvalle's arms were around Blanche Holden.

"I think Mr. Holden wanted to be sure that you were safe," said Amy coldly. "He trusts you—he loves you!"

"Poor Tom!" sighed Blanche Holden flippantly. "I suppose he does. That is the pity, he loves and never understands!"

There seemed to be a shade of excuse if not propriety in the remark, and Amy attempted to store it away upon the shelves of her limited experience. Long after her guests had left she sat and



pondered over the difference between real and imaginary sin.

In the week that followed, Benton came but once and that time for dinner. Amy was strangely quiet. At length she mentioned having read something to the effect that one had better be forever on the outside of public approval than to climb up to it by a muddy path, and asked Benton what he thought of it.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "Are you beginning to be disgusted with your new friends?"

"Oh, no, not at all. Blanche Holden was here the other evening."

"With Morvalle, I imagine."

"Why, yes, he did come with her."

Benton pushed his plate a trifle aside and leaned over the table. "Of course I know they asked to come, but you will never return the call with me. I hardly think you expect to, but I want you to remember I am playing fair with Thorley Venner. I should never come here now unless Mrs. Gerry were here. You know that, don't you?"

The question was unanswered because of the entrance of Mrs. Gerry bearing a letter. Excusing herself, Amy broke the seal. It was from Ada Drake. She read it through carefully, then looked up with a flushed face from the monogrammed sheet.

"It is from Ada Drake," she began timidly, "and I am afraid I shall have to ask you to go. I would not like her to misunderstand—to think—" Amy floundered. "I will read you the letter."

"Blanche has been telling me what a perfect little brick you were the other night. I am so anxious to have Signor Patrici sing for me alone. Of course, he cannot do this at my home with my husband and ten-year-old son to watch him, so I am throwing myself upon your mercy this evening."

"I would have given you more notice only this is Patrici's last night before the opening. When I found by telephone that you were out this morning, I simply had to send this by messenger. We will arrive around eight-thirty."

"Your unhappy

"ADA DRAKE."

Benton waited a moment after she had finished reading before he could control his voice to speak. Then he rose and brought his hand firmly down upon the back of Amy's chair. "When will you stop turning your home into a rendezvous for disreputable women? What, in Heaven's name, do you hope to gain?"

"I mean to gain those Connecticut friends of mine all back. Ada is good-hearted and—well, anyway, it is too late to disappoint a friend." Amy's head drooped and her voice was scarcely audible. "I suppose Edith has told her in a casual way that she could trust her secrets with me, that my lips were sealed."

"No woman's lips are sealed who demands decent people around her! I suppose you refer to that groundless little scandal in your home town years ago. Are you going to permit it to be a spectre of perpetual blackmail?"

For a moment a shadow crossed Amy's face. It was like a cool, restful shade in the heat of a weary day, a shade of the confidence her one best friend reposed in her, but he was a friend who must not be deceived. Lifting her eyes, she spoke quite fearlessly. "That was not a groundless scandal, Paul; that was the truth. That is my reason for demanding that my friends of Faverly shall come back to me!"

Benton had never quite believed in that horrible story that had come to him in suggestive bits, but now it flashed truthfully, even defiantly at him. Now he understood what Darrow meant when he had stated that "it was pretty white in Thorley Venner to marry her." Again the remark long since forgotten sprang into whispered sound.

"What do you suppose Dick Balsh will say when he hears the news?"

Surprise was followed instantly by defense. "True or not, Amy, whatever it was, you did not walk deliberately into it. Such an act isn't in the blood of descendants of such women as this!"

He took up the photograph of Aunt Annie Hallet and looked at it admiringly. "Do not allow such women as this one coming up to-night to influence any part of your life."

He put the picture back upon the table



and with a short good-night took his hat and coat and left the room.

When Ada Drake and Patrici entered the apartment they were astonished at the pallor upon Amy's face. "Why, honey child," cried Ada, "you look frightened. Has any one been scolding you?" Without a reply she stepped to the telephone. "Now give me that handsome Paul Benton's number and we will have him here right away. He can make you smile again, I know."

As she passed the little white table so out of harmony with the rest of the "unique" room she paused and took up the one photograph that reposed serene in its embroidered linen frame.

"Merciful Heaven, Amy!" she ejaculated as she gazed at the staunch supporter of Connecticut's blue laws. "Do you save all your patent medicine advertisements?"

"That is no advertisement," replied Amy, a trifle indignantly. "That is a picture of a darling old aunt of mine. I love her!"

"Oh, well, of course." Ada Drake's tone was conciliatory. "One must love one's relatives, but let us call Benton up, anyhow."

"I do not want to see him."

"Oh, very well." Ada laughed lightly. "Just as you like. As for myself, I have an evening off. Rodney Drake does not expect to be home before two o'clock, thank goodness. Gone to a club somewhere. I can have Tony singing all to myself here until one—I hope they aren't fussy in these apartments," she interpolated. "As for you, I know you do not mind. Edith said so."

The evening rapidly developed into one strikingly similar to the one Blanche Holden had originated the week before.

Soon Amy again found herself eliminated, quite unconsciously relegated to the little reading room adjoining her "parlor," as she called it with New England dignity. Though deep in the mysteries of a book, there floated now and then to her the amorous tones of Patrici, speaking to Ada Drake in song.

Finally, Amy's mind began a thoughtful analysis of the situations as they were weekly developing in her home.

Why had Ada Drake and Blanche Holden singled her out from all their friends and former acquaintances? It gradually became a fact as well as a fear that in some way, by some person, she had been spoken of as probably condoning these visits.

The more she thought of the innocent part she was playing in the secret meetings of her friends the more she detested herself for having permitted them. What if her own marriage had been one of convenience! Once in it she had played the game fairly and it gave her a sense of delight when she realized that the man who would see that she had done so was none other than Benton, who was undoubtedly alluded to as her lover.

The long evening came to a close and she found herself being embraced by Ada Drake while Patrici was foolishly kissing her hand and promising to send her boxes for all the operas.

After the departure of her guests, Amy began to contemplate the coming summer. Surely these people would not carry their indiscretions to Faverly Farms, her home town! What she had decided for them to take was their popularity, their talents, their love and, more than all, their approval of *her*.

It was during a luncheon at Edith Matterson's the following day that Amy abruptly demanded why these new friends used her house as a meeting place. Leaning back against the cushions of the couch in Edith's drawing-room, she asked: "Do Ada Drake or Blanche Holden ever take their men friends alone to the home of any one else?"

"Gracious, no; they would not dare!" Edith sat bolt upright. "Any one else might talk."

"Then why might not I?"

Edith flushed, bit her lips and coughed slightly. "You will pardon me, dear, if I say you would not dare."

"And why?" Amy felt impelled to demand a reply.

"Oh, because of—of Benton."

"You are evading, Edith. You know Paul Benton and I are nothing to one another. You refer to a time long before Benton. Answer me!"



Edith hesitated, then rose and extended her hand. "Come on, dear, come on out to luncheon."

"I want your answer."

"Very well, then—yes."

"One always pays a penalty then, even among strangers," remarked Amy sadly. "Discovered sin is like the proverbial sword, isn't it—suspended above one's head by a hair. Some one is always ready to cut it loose and let it fall."

Edith shrugged her shoulders in defense. "The sword usually does that by its own weight. But let's forget it," she added, brightening. "We are going to Faverly, all of us. You will have a wonderful array of clothes," she declared inquiringly, "you always do. Clothes in a country town are so like charity, they cover such a multitude of sins!"

Edith's remarks had their effect, but they did not deter Amy from her purpose in forcing Faverly to acknowledge her as they must acknowledge her friends. The next few weeks were devoted to preparation. A mass of soft silks and muslins, sent home at the last moment from the dressmaker's, lay upon the chairs and couches in every room.

Amy surveyed them critically. A latent thought suggested that they would do for Mexico in the fall, should Thorley send for her.

Mexico would be new, even though Thorley, her husband, would be old—old in knowledge of her as Amy Collamore and tactless in reminding her that his name made an even balance for her money. If only education or good breeding were back of that name, some recompense for having bought her reputation!

Somewhere she had read of a man who tried to crawl up to the light from the depths of a forgotten well by means of decayed roots and twigs that protruded from the rocks, and would have sunk had he not gained a foothold in a cleft. She could not tell why the old story came so vividly before her to-day, but at the sound of the bell it faded from her mind.

Benton was calling to say good-by before going to Europe. His call meant a storm, the kind that she feared, yet craved. He would continue to denounce

her friends, but his very denunciation bore the delight of protection of her.

He came in with his usual greeting of "How's everybody," and surveyed the room. "What is this?" he asked as his eyes rested upon numberless gowns and hats. "Wardrobe for the Faverly production?"

"That is just it. I am going the day after to-morrow."

Benton removed his hat and gloves and drew a chair beside the little white table. "Expect to see Aunt Annie?"

Amy faltered. "Why, yes, I suppose so. She lives there."

"Stop and think, Amy." Benton's face was determined. "Are you going to introduce your friends to that dear, sensible, God-fearing woman?" He reached for the photograph and looked tenderly at it.

"I suppose so."

"Do you expect her to like them?"

Amy rose indignantly. "That is neither your affair nor hers! How am I to know whether she will like them or not? What does it matter anyway? I am not anxious for Aunt Annie's opinion. She is a dear, of course, but behind the times!"

"Then if you want to be beloved by the people of your home town, you want to keep right where Aunt Annie is now,—behind the times. The very worst thing you can do to reinstate yourself is through such people as the Drake and Holden women."

"They are my friends!"

"Pardon me, they are your enemies. They have not an atom of love for you, yourself! You are merely an agreeable landlady who presides without charge over an establishment where crime may have some semblance of respectability. Up to this minute, I believe you have been ignorant of your offence, but if you go to Faverly and carry out your intention of playing popular favorite, you are going to invite disgust, not admiration!"

His argument was convincing but she replied in calm defense.

"But think, Paul, think of the cause that prompts it?"

"You are merely adding fuel to the fire of years ago. You cannot radiate



forgetfulness by flaunting wealthy, showy immorality! I tell you, Amy, I am going to put my foot down in this matter! Thorley is in Mexico and whether there is love between you or not, there is a certain amount of respect due him and under the conditions as I know them, he would forbid you to go with this crowd and open your mother's house for their private meetings! Moreover," he added, compressing his lips, "I am going to forbid it myself in Thorley's stead!"

"You do not dare! Supposing for one moment Edith has inadvertently let slip any gossip of the past, can't you see how any act of mine that did not coincide with theirs would blazon it?"

"At last you half imagine the duplicity of Mrs. Matterson, then?" Benton seized her hands and drew her roughly to his side. "You do, don't you? Then why are you running a race with it? I tell you, you cannot demand the respect of people,—you must earn it!"

Amy wrested her hands from him. "I wish you would go," she said calmly. "My mind is fully made up."

The bell rang sharply, startling them. "If that is any of Mrs. Matterson's friends," began Benton, "I am going to settle with them myself and let them put any estimate upon my authority they wish. The worst they may imagine of me is not as full of danger to you as what is ahead!"

Mrs. Gerry was hurrying down the hall to the door.

"Remember, Amy," continued Benton, "if you are going to become a human paradox and throw away your reputation for the purpose of regaining it, the time has come when I should take Thorley's place!"

A yellow envelope was thrust into Mrs. Gerry's hand and then passed to Amy. With an inexplicable terror, she tore the end and drawing out the half sheet, read. Noting her pallor, Benton signed the book and reached for the message. It seemed to jump into numberless lines instead of one.

"Venner killed in a street riot. Letter following.

"DARROW."

Benton lifted his eyes to see Mrs. Gerry run to Amy as she lay crumpled up in a chair the back of which was covered with a profusion of summer finery.

He reached for a decanter of brandy, and pouring some into a glass held it to her lips. She swallowed it mechanically, her eyes staring straight ahead. "He was a good man," she murmured. "He gave me more than I gave him. There are some things that money cannot buy."

Mrs. Gerry wept as a mother might for a stricken child, not comprehending, though she heard.

"Thorley had to save you, Amy, perhaps this was the only way!" Benton's voice choked as he recorded what seemed to him a miracle. It gave him a little comfort to know that as conscienceless as her friends were, they would be obliged to respect her period of mourning and during that time Amy would see their shallowness. With careful instruction to Mrs. Gerry to care for Amy, Benton went out and telegraphed for Mrs. Collamore. Amy would be safe under the protection of her mother. The following day Mrs. Collamore arrived and a week later Darrow came from Mexico with Venner's body.

Whether real or fancied, Amy's grief made no difference to the friends who left as they had planned for Faverly. Ada Drake, in a perfunctory manner, bewailed the loss but more especially the inability of Amy to wear her summer finery. Edith Matterson very logically and very naturally dropped into the vernacular of New England and stated, "It wasn't as though Amy was left without money."

The real attitude of the party, however, was voiced by Blanche Holden when she remarked after admiring the Connecticut town:

"Isn't it a shame that all this had to happen to Amy just at this particular time? She made a perfect Heaven of her New York home for us, and every time I pass that Collamore estate, with its verandas, nooks and vine-covered corners, I have to repeat it,—what a shame!"

Benton had gone to Europe directly after Venner's burial. His absence



seemed only natural to Amy. He was, she reasoned, merely a friend. He rarely wrote and even then, guardedly. The loss of her opportunity to shine in Faverly, surrounded by her new-found friends, sprang into the light of a blessing to Amy Venner upon the receipt of each separate letter from Aunt Annie Hallet. At first, the party that had descended upon the quiet town had awed, then shocked and finally disgusted the natives. "Edith Matterson has grown too broad," wrote Aunt Annie Hallet. "She has acquired a new religion, valueless, of course, because not Orthodox,—that portended sin was unreal,—in fact did not exist, hence the abandon of her friends."

At length the summer season came to an end, and the party were returning from Faverly. Edith was the first to call. While Amy was serving tea, Edith found courage to remark, "I don't see any reason why you should not begin to go out a little now. It isn't as if you had really cared for Mr. Venner, you know."

Amy shivered. "It was all a terrible mistake—an injustice to both of us. We should have waited and borne our separate difficulties alone, not inflicted them upon one another—without love."

Edith laughed musically. "For goodness' sake, Amy, you do not believe in those Connecticut notions that marriages should be made for love alone, do you?"

"I do. Out of justice to Thorley, I should have waited until I loved him before I married him."

"And he, I suppose, should have waited until he had made money himself or fallen heir to it. Absurd! You were quite right, both of you. It was an excellent opportunity for you and for him. Ada Drake thinks you were a clever little sinner!"

"Ada Drake is heartless!" Amy's voice trembled.

"Ada Drake is worth a half million dollars!" ventured Edith calmly.

"You speak as if dollars covered deceit and lies were permissible to millionaires."

"Do not get so excited, Amy. We all deceive and lie a little. Now you,—you, yourself, for example!"

Amy's eyes shone with a light Edith did not recognize in view of the fear that had always before lurked within them. "Then if I lie I am going to stop it from now on. I am not going to turn my house into a *rendezvous* for women of her class and Mrs. Holden's. Why should I when, had my own reputation been clean, they never would have noticed me? Why did they choose me and my home for their clandestine meetings? What did I ever show them but the strictest loyalty to Thorley when he was alive?"

"You forget two things, dear." Edith was exasperatingly calm. "You forget Benton and you forget your past."

For a moment Amy winced. It was a fight to the death now.

"Benton's name is quite out of the question," she argued. "We never had a secret look, word or meeting apart from Thorley. As for my past," she added bravely, "I wish to live away from it, not up to it. You should have realized that when you told them about me!"

Edith was fastening her glove, an amused smile upon her face. "You can never say, Amy, that I did not give you an opportunity to meet clever people. Do I understand," she said, rising, "that you do not care to visit me any more?"

"Visiting you, Edith, brings me into complications which I can only explain by humiliation and lies, and I will not lie for such women as Blanche Holden and Ada Drake."

"Or me, please add," remarked Edith coldly, as she walked toward the door. "You will pardon me," she added irritably, "if I say I fancy this attitude is assumed for Paul Benton."

Without the formality of a good-by, Edith Matterson left the room. As Amy heard the door close, she realized with a certain degree of happiness that no matter why she had taken this stand, Benton would be pleased.

It was late in October when he returned from Europe. It was the day following when he called and stood surveying Amy a moment before speaking. "It



isn't the gown that has changed you—what is it?"

Amy smiled a trifle. "Loneliness, maybe. I do not see any one scarcely these days."

Somehow Benton recognized an expression of submission rather than sorrow upon Amy's face, and he became curious to know the cause.

"I wish you knew," he began, "had always known, how infinitely superior you are to those women who call upon you. Are you always going to cultivate them—or worse, may be, receive them?"

Amy shook her head. For some reason, now that the desired reply was ready, she found it difficult to give it.

"Has that Drake woman been here lately?" Benton reached across and took Amy's hand. "I see by the papers that her husband is suing for divorce."

"None of them come, Paul, any more. Not once since last summer."

"Do you miss them?"

"Not at all. I requested them, through Edith Matterson, to remain away."

Benton rose and crossed the room to Amy's side. "You did that for me, didn't you, dear?"

"Partly, although if I had never seen you again, I should have done it just the same. I had to do it for myself."

Benton's hand held Amy's closely. "I knew you would do that finally," he said gratefully, "just as I knew when I left Europe that I should return there to live permanently."

With an impulsive cry Amy held her free hand to her throat.

"Don't leave me, Paul—not yet!"

Raising her gently from the chair, he held her to him. "I have no intention of doing so. I am going to take you with me—I want you to marry me. I want you to marry for love this time."

She smiled a wonderfully happy smile and then lowered her eyes.

"You want me to say something more, dear, what is it?" he asked.

She did not speak and Benton stood thinking, mutely asking himself one question after another until finally the words she desired came freely, joyfully to his lips.

"I want you to marry me, Amy, because I love you—because I know you are a good woman!"

Her arms clung around his neck while she sobbed as one acquitted of a crime, all the pent-up emotion and struggles of the past giving way in the bliss of his assurance and vindication.

"We won't take a thing from here," he said as he led her around her "unique" room. "We will sell it or give it to Mrs. Gerry."

They were standing in front of the little white table when Benton picked up the photograph of Aunt Annie Hallet. "Except this, dearest. It occupied the smallest space in this funny old room, but," he added as he looked admiringly at it, "I have known from the first that the old blue laws it stood for formed the biggest part of you!"





## AT TWILIGHT

*By Helen Coale Crew*

**J**OE ADAMS was not overburdened with worldly goods. Save for his modest wardrobe, the horse he rode, and a tiny house back there on the edge of civilization, he had nothing he could call his own, unless you will except such intangible possessions as youth and courage and a light heart. And of these he seemed to have left the last behind him as he rode down over the Pass into Twilight one September afternoon, for his forehead was wrinkled into a great frown, and he rode slowly, deep in thought. And indeed he was out upon a momentous errand, whereof he was already questioning the wisdom.

Like the bachelor of Mother Goose fame, though he put his bread and cheese upon the shelf he yet could not outwit the rats and mice, and must needs go to get himself a wife.

"But hang it all," he said to himself, "what on earth could I do with her between meals?" By which it becomes evident that the little winged lad of bows and arrows had nothing to do with his faring forth on this particular afternoon. A year ago he had been able to count on the fingers of one hand—barring the thumb—the girls whom he believed he had the courage to ask, and at Twilight was Bess Ashby, the last on the list.

Twilight is as well named as any town in Colorado, since it has been in its death throes so long that it has even forgotten its former glory. Were it not for Mrs. Ashby, who runs the postoffice-grocery combination, it would have been dead and buried long since. But Mrs. Ashby is a capable woman, managing not only Uncle Sam's mail and the store and her own household, but also the town and its inhabitants. Most joyfully would she also have run the railroad which winds up from Salida, stops a brief moment at Twilight, and then plunges into

the canyon beyond with reverberating roars, to climb heavenward over the Pass. But even the greatest of dictators has his limitations, and Mrs. Ashby is wise enough to know hers.

When Joe Adams fastened his horse to the hitching-post at the postoffice door, he felt that he was about to cast his last die. Kate Kennedy, up at Gunnison, where he had bossed a construction gang the winter before, had accepted him at first and jilted him afterward, greatly to his relief. Ruth Patterson, over on the Cochietopa hills, where a tunnel was being cut, had refused him point blank, much to his bewilderment. And down at Saguache, where he spent some weeks helping to turn what was left of the Saguache river into irrigation ditches—so that now on the map it no longer "empties" anywhere—pretty Spanish Nita Vasco had mourned openly because she was already engaged when he proposed to her; and Joe, discovering that her lover had a jealous eye and a long knife, had beat a hasty retreat. Now he must either win Bess Ashby or return a disconsolate bachelor to his shack in the hills at Mears Junction.

Pa Ashby lifted his rheumatic joints out of a chair on the narrow porch and moved forward to meet Joe.

"Howdy, Joe, howdy," he quavered, reaching out a trembling hand. Before Joe could answer Mrs. Ashby came out, tossed a mail-bag into a waiting cart with muscular arm, then turned to Joe.

"How do, Joe. You haven't honored Twilight for some time. Down on business?" She glanced the young man over, noting the neat suit, the white collar, and the purple bee-flower in his buttonhole.

Joe blushed prodigiously and kept an uneasy silence. Pa Ashby glanced up,



and a thrill of recollection stirred his old blood. "Courtin', Joe?" he cackled.

"Let him alone, Pa," said his daughter, but the old man had found a congenial subject and could not drop it at once. "Takes a lot o' nerve, Joe," he went on, "a powerful lot o' nerve; but you'll land her. Who be she?" But here Mrs. Ashby interfered and, followed by Joe, led the way to the little parlor back of the store.

"Sit down, Joe," she said cordially, and settled her own big frame in a creaking rocker. "How do you like running the station up there at the Junction?"

"First rate," replied Joe, wiping his hot forehead. "Mears Junction'll be a town before you know it. There's three houses there now. Got a new house myself."

"Got a new house, have you?"

"Yes, she's a dandy. Three rooms, and right across from the station."

"Furnished?" asked Mrs. Ashby.

Joe slapped his breast pocket. "I'll let my wife do that," he said. "I wouldn't know how."

Mrs. Ashby laughed a big, warm laugh. "'Fess up, Joe," she said, "is it my Bess?"

"Yes," said Joe, and wondered why he didn't feel happier. Mrs. Ashby, noting the lack of enthusiasm in his voice, gazed at him keenly. "Don't make a mistake, Joe," she warned him.

"No, no; I—I won't," said Joe, and really thought he meant it.

Mrs. Ashby called Bess from the kitchen, and the girl came in flushed from her work about the stove, a youthful image of her mother, rosy and alert.

Mrs. Ashby stepped out into the store. In the pause that followed the first greeting, while Bess rolled down the sleeves over her sturdy young arms, and Joe cleared his throat huskily, they could hear her mother speaking to the old man, and presently his voice floated in to where they stood.

"He'll land her! He'll land her!" he said shrilly, with a knowing laugh. "I landed the very fust gal I axed. But it takes nerve!" Then the door slammed.

Bess's clear eyes softened and the rosy

color deepened in her cheeks as she looked at the young man who stood before her. During the half year he had been at Mears Junction, she had met him frequently enough to compare his abundant energy favorably with the more or less slouching attitude of the Twilight youths; and to more than admire his straight figure, sturdy strength, and honest eyes. Now she yearned for his love, yet she knew that it was not hers.

"Joe," she said, "don't beat about the bush. You don't really want *me*, you just want a housekeeper. Isn't that so?" She paled a little as she spoke.

"Bess," said Joe, "you've hit it. But honestly, there's not another girl in the world I like half as well as you, and I'd be an awfully proud man if you'd marry me."

Bess nodded, smiled, and shook a tear from her eye. Joe took her hands in his and kissed her gently.

"I can love enough for two—for a while," said Bess, "but you'll have to take a turn at it, Joe."

"I will, I will!" he exclaimed. And then they sat down to talk over the furnishing of the new house.

Presently, however, he took his departure, for he had to be back at the Junction for the down train, and relieve his companion there, a green hand at the telegraph instrument. Leaving the town behind, he climbed the hill that led away from the valley to the heights beyond. The sun was nearing its setting, and the broad, green valley, cut lengthwise by the yellow waters of the Arkansas, was flooded by the level rays. Joe turned his back upon the splendor, and his face to the sombre hills, pine-clad, silent, terrible in their remote serenity. His horse's hoofs clattered over a little bridge and slowed down to steady climbing.

"Well," said Joe, and sighed, "that's settled."

And just then, at the turning of the road, where a crimson splash of sumach glowed against the dark hemlocks, Fate intervened. Down the road, driving two cows before her, came a girl, a slender creature scarcely on the verge of womanhood. The scant skirt of her faded blue dress reached only to the tops of the



dusty little shoes. Her flower-like face was purely pale in the shadow of her dark hair. She carried an armful of goldenrod; and as Joe approached her she raised great questioning eyes to his, as a child would. Her cheeks were tear-stained.

"God in Heaven!" said Joe below his breath. He reined in his horse sharply, and the girl, terrified by the sudden movement, dropped her flowers. Joe leaped down quickly, and stooping, gathered up the stalks of goldenrod.

"I'm sorry I frightened you," he began; and then, gazing steadily into the little timid face, "Will you tell me your name?"

"My name is Cynthia Marsh."

"Do you live in Twilight? I never saw you there."

"I live with old Granny Kelly, down yonder on the Cedar Trail a mile or two."

"I thought she had no kin."

"She took me from the asylum to work for her," said the girl simply, "and I come up every day to get Mrs. Ashby's cow and take it to pasture along with ours."

A pause, and then Joe went on gently: "You have been crying."

A faint color crept into the pale cheeks. "I was lonely," she said.

"Isn't Mrs. Kelly kind to you?"

"Oh, yes."

Another pause. The tinkle of the cow-bells came faintly; the horse pawed impatiently in the dusty road. The dusk deepened. A cold wind blew and the shadows grew alien, menacing. Joe had the girl's gaze with his. "I'm Joe Adams," he said slowly, "and I'd give the whole world if I had met you an hour ago." Then, before the girl's astonished eyes he mounted his horse and was gone.

It is uphill all the way to the Junction, and had Joe's thoughts not been so tumultuous, he would have found time for reflection. For so clear-eyed a chap he rode rather blindly, overwhelmed by what had so suddenly and unexpectedly befallen him. Could he indeed be the man who had ridden forth so nonchalantly but a few hours ago in search of a wife? The red west over the roofs of

Twilight caught his eye, and he thought of Bess and groaned. The silver moon rising above the hills smote his heart with its pale beauty. "Cynthia!" he murmured, "Cynthia!"

Arrived at the station he called roughly to Little Bob Cresson to come out double-quick and get his horse. Little Bob, a six-foot giant, came out upon the platform grinning.

"Another turn-down, Joe?"

"No, you fool!"

Joe kicked the mail-bag down over the edge of the steps into unknown depths in the canyon below. "I'd like to kick the whole damned universe!" he growled savagely.

Nowhere does the year die so gloriously as in the uplifted hills, for while the lower reaches are aflame with red and gold, the heavenward peaks are already white with snow. But for Joe Adams the splendor of October passed unnoticed. Twice a week, leaving Little Bob in charge of the Junction, he rode down between trains to Twilight, ostensibly to see Bess Ashby, in reality to catch a glimpse, at least, of Cynthia Marsh. Sitting in the little parlor, making plans for the future with rosy-cheeked Bess, he was arranging to time his departure so as to meet Cynthia as she drove home the cows from pasture. And while he was outwardly loyal to Bess, planning the new home with her, and purchasing at Salida the pieces of furniture she expressed a desire for, his heart was yearning for the wistful face and wide eyes that flashed so eagerly at his approach. He never had more than a few words with Cynthia, and then rode on up the hill, angry with himself and furious with all his world besides.

November came at last, red at sunrise and saffron at sunset, but with the days between sunless, yet clear, like pearls upon a string.

Joe had been sorely tried of late. Bess had made a visit to the Junction and had gone over the little house, transforming its awkward arrangements with deft touches, and putting linens and blankets into place. Why could he not love Bess, he asked himself, or at least



be satisfied with her love for him? Had he not wanted a housekeeper? Would she not make a good one, warm-hearted, capable, and entirely to be depended upon? What more could a fellow want, anyway? Ah, Cynthia! Cynthia!

One afternoon, just at dusk, fresh from the irritation of a visit to poor Bess, Joe came upon Cynthia on the little bridge over Twilight Water, beyond the turn of the road. She was wrapped in a little red cloak, and she leaned upon the railing, watching the swirling mountain stream below her. The air was full of fine white flakes of snow which fell lightly upon her head and shoulders. Her figure drooped disconsolately, and she was so wrapped in her thoughts that she did not hear him coming. Joe dismounted and approached softly.

"Cynthia!" The girl turned. Tears had fallen upon her cheeks. Before she could brush them away, Joe's arms were about her.

"Dearest girl, what is the matter?"

"I was afraid you didn't love me," she said simply.

Who can stem a mountain torrent? Who can stop the progress of a storm? Not these two; and for a space the steady hills might have reeled about them for all they knew or cared. Presently Cynthia spoke.

"I have only you in all the world, Joe."

Her words broke the spell. Joe's arms dropped to his sides. He wondered if she knew. "Cynthia, I can't—" he paused abruptly. The girl took his hand in both of hers and held it against her cheek.

"I have no father and no mother," she went on. "I can't even remember them. I have wanted somebody to love all my life. Bess has a lover, too, I think; she looks so happy. But I'm sure he can't compare with mine."

Joe took her face in his hands. The twilight had deepened, and he could just see her glad eyes uplifted to his. "Cynthia, you must meet me here to-morrow at this time. I shall have something to tell you."

"Tell me now," she suggested.

"No—no, not to-night! To-night is

ours!" Then a last passionate embrace and he was gone.

Cynthia wrapped her cloak about her and went swiftly toward Twilight. Bess was so kind; she would tell Bess the happy news. At the house she found Mrs. Ashby sorting mail in the office and Pa reading the morning paper. Cynthia went out into the kitchen, carefully closing the two intervening doors behind her. Bess was getting supper. She paused in her operations with the frying pan and looked up. Instead of the pale face and listless figure she had been accustomed to see, here before her stood a veritable young goddess, with glowing cheeks and great eyes lit by an inner flame. She gazed in wonderment at the transfigured girl.

"What has happened to you, Cynthia?" she asked kindly. She turned the frying meat with dexterous wrist.

Cynthia took hold of the sleeve of Bess's gown. "Bess," she said softly, "I have a lover."

"A lover? Some one here in Twilight? Why, Cynthia, who can it be?" Bess's mind ran rapidly over the few young men in the little town who, by grace of youth or circumstances, might be eligible as lovers.

"I have loved him ever since I have been here," went on Cynthia, "but I only knew to-night that he loved me. He lives up at the Junction." She held back the name as a last sweet morsel.

"At the Junction? Oh, it's Bob Cresson, then. A nice boy, Cynthia."

"No, Bess, his name is Joe Adams."

The spoon fell from Bess's hand and clattered upon the floor. Her warm cheeks paled and her blue eyes narrowed. She seized Cynthia's shoulders.

"Has Joe Adams told you that he loved you?" she demanded.

Cynthia's voice came in a frightened gasp. "Yes," she said, "yes. Why shouldn't he?"

"Because he's mine!" said Bess. "You have stolen him! You are a thief! Do you hear? A thief!" She shook the slender shoulders fiercely. Her voice rose shrilly.

Cynthia moaned. "Oh, Bess!" she said. "Oh, Bess!"



The door opened and Mrs. Ashby, followed by Pa, came hurriedly in. Bess paid no heed. She was panting, and her hands trembled, but still she shook the frightened younger girl. "You knew!" she screamed. "You knew he was mine!"

Then at last Cynthia asserted herself. "No," she said, "I did not know. I am not a thief nor a liar. But now that I *do* know, I shall never speak to him again." Wrenching herself free from Bess's grasp, she stepped quickly to the back door and opened it. A soft swirl of snow entered. Cynthia drew herself erect.

"Keep your lover. I don't want him." Then she went out into the night.

Pa rubbed his knotted hands together. "Couldn't keep your beau, could ye, Bess?" he chuckled. "Let the little gal steal him from ye, didn't ye, Bess? In my day—"

A firm hand was laid across his mouth. "Pa," said Mrs. Ashby, "you be quiet! Bess, you go upstairs and cool down."

Bess looked at her mother. The hot, angry eyes wavered before the cool and steady ones. The girl turned and went upstairs. Pa made one more effort.

"Couldn't keep—"

"Pa, you jes' shut right up!"

Upstairs, Bess, upon her bed, wept long and bitterly. Below, her mother sat by the window looking out into the dark and the fast-falling snow. Pa fell asleep. The kitchen fire died down and went out. Supper was forgotten. The little clock on the shelf ticked out sixty minutes, and then another sixty, and then there came a knock at the office door. Mrs. Ashby, stiff with cold, opened the door, and Joe Adams came in. His face was haggard.

"Mrs. Ashby," he said, "I want to see Bess."

"I think," said Mrs. Ashby, "that you had better see me first." Her eyes were hard.

"See you first?"

"And explain about Cynthia."

Joe brushed an arm across his eyes as though to clear away a mist. "Does Bess know?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I came to ask Bess if she would marry me to-morrow."

Mrs. Ashby loved her daughter, but she also loved fair play. "Joe," she said, "you made a mistake once, in spite of my warning. Are you going to make another now?"

"I'm going to do my duty," said Joe doggedly. "Mistake or no mistake, it's all a fellow can do. Please call Bess."

Mrs. Ashby sighed. One can be wiser at fifty than at twenty-five, but one can never be quite so determined. Followed by Joe, she went to the kitchen and called up the stairway to her daughter. After a few minutes Bess came down. Her eyes were heavy with weeping, but she held her head high.

"Bess, I want you to marry me to-morrow."

Bess looked at him steadily. Her mother, watching her, recognized in her child a kindred spirit.

"It is now or never, Bess," said the young man.

"It is never," said Bess.

At this point Pa, who had been sleeping heavily in his chair, roused up and blinked sleepily. He gazed at the three intent figures. Then he blinked knowingly. "Throwed ye over, hasn't she, Joe? And Cynthia's gone. Guess ye're left high and dry, Joe, high and dry!"

Joe turned instantly to the old man. "Where has Cynthia gone?"

"Bess there turned her out. You've got yourself in trouble, Joe, courtin' two gals to oncet." He rose stiffly from his chair and peered out the window. "Kind o' bad night to be out in, too."

Joe flashed upon Bess with angry eyes. "How long has she been gone?" he demanded.

"Since supper time," replied the girl dully.

"And you," turning to Mrs. Ashby, "you let that child go out into a night like this one, and alone, hours ago?"

"They called the little gal a thief. I heard 'em," insisted Pa.

With a groan Joe hurled himself out the door and slammed it behind him.

Utter peace reigned without. The snow had ceased falling and lay in soft



swirls and eddies. The heavens were bright, although a cloud-wrack hid the moon. In the clear spaces of the sky hung the steady stars. Far away up could be heard the roar of a train entering a rocky tunnel. Joe galloped his horse down the narrow, rocky pathway of Cedar Trail, and reaching Mrs. Kelly's desolate shack, beat loudly upon the door.

"She ain't home," said Mrs. Kelly querulously, in response to his eager question. "I guess you'd maybe find her up at Ashby's, though the Lord knows what I took her out of the 'sylum' for, to be traipesin' Lord knows where when I need her—"

Joe waited to hear no more, but, with sinking heart, hastened back to Twilight. He inquired at each of the few houses in the little town, but Cynthia had been to none of them. He paused uncertainly, then turned up the road toward the Junction. A wild hope had arisen in his heart that Cynthia might be searching for him. At the bridge he paused again, looking darkly and with a shudder at the turbulent water. A clatter of hoofs behind him, and Bess Ashby rode up.

"I will search with you," she said.

Without a word they turned their horses up the hill. Silently they rode. The snow had hid all traces which passing feet might have made an hour earlier. In the dim light the pines threw faint shadows across the white road. Here and there a branch creaked softly. Two miles up they came upon a little red cape, which Joe buttoned inside his coat. Whether it had been there as he came down he could not tell, so intent had he been upon the thing he had in hand to do. A few turns more and they found the snow beaten down beneath a huge tree at the roadside, where she must have seated herself to rest. On and up before them wound the still white miles. They rode slowly, peering everywhere. Just once Joe spoke.

"Bess, didn't you remember that she had no father, no mother—no one?"

"She had *you*," said Bess bitterly.

When they reached the last stretch, the lights of the Junction gleamed out from the little grove of aspens that enclosed the clearing about the station. With a sudden impulse they reined in their horses, and from behind a dark mass of cloud rose the moon, pouring down a white radiance. Bess strained her eyes up to where Joe's house—her house—stood across from the station, but Joe, with a sudden cry, leaped to the ground and knelt beside a little huddled form by the road. For a moment Bess reeled dizzily in her saddle, but when Joe called, "Go get Little Bob!" she drew herself together and obeyed.

They carried Cynthia to Joe's house and laid her upon the blue-covered couch which Bess had selected in Salida with such loving care and such tender hopes. Little Bob built a roaring fire, and Bess, with strange, cold heart and strange, numb fingers, went into the bedroom and drew the blankets—her blankets—from the bed to wrap about the unconscious girl. When at last she opened piteous eyes upon them, Joe and Bob softly withdrew. Outside the door Bob seized Joe by the arm, and shaking him roughly, dragged him into the station.

"What kind of a fool are you, anyway, Joe Adams?"

"I'm all kinds," replied Joe with conviction.

"Want to kick the universe?"

"No, want to kick myself almighty good and hard!"

"Say the word and I'll help," said Bob.

An hour later Bess entered the station. "Cynthia wants you," she said briefly to Joe. When he had gone she turned sharply to Bob. "Send a telegram to Salida for me right away," she said. "Tell Dr. Williams to get a marriage license for Joseph Adams and Cynthia Marsh, and take the eleven-forty train to-night to Mears Junction without fail."

She stood quietly by while the little instrument ticked off its knell to her happiness. Little Bob rose to his feet, admiration shining in his eyes.

"Miss Ashby," he said, "you're the finest girl I ever met. By Jove, you are! I'm proud to know you!"



The gray dawn crept over the eastern hills and slipped down into Twilight. Pa spread his hands out over the kitchen stove, where the fire crackled cheerfully, and the coffee pot simmered fragrantly. "There," he said presently, "I hear the down train."

Mrs. Ashby opened the draughts and pulled the coffee pot forward. She had not slept. There were more lines in her face than had been there yesterday. When at last the door opened and Bess came in, she said nothing, but quietly moved about preparing a meal. Bess took off her coat and sat down wearily, leaning her head against the dresser shelves. From beneath her closed lids the tears fell slowly. It is so much easier to be heroic under the stars than in the kitchen. It is so vastly easier to be heroic for a moment upon impulse than

of set purpose through the long, slow years. The mother asked no questions, but finally the girl spoke.

"Joe and Cynthia are married."

Pa, who had not dared to break the silence, but had waited for an opening, took immediate advantage.

"Got him away from you, did she? Little slip of a gal, too, not half o' your heft. Ain't ye got no sperrit, Bess?"

A warning nudge deprived him of his breath and his balance, and he sat back suddenly and involuntarily upon the wood-box, where his wife's angry eye held him. Then she turned to Bess. The keen face softened, the determined lips trembled, and the sharp eyes grew misty with mother-love.

"My lamb!" she murmured. "My lamb!" and gathered the weeping girl to her bosom.

---

## CORA

*By Harold Susman*

Cora, you are captured,  
Prisoner, I vow!  
I am so enraptured,  
You must kiss me now!

O, you need not struggle,  
No, you need not fight!  
In my arms just snuggle,  
See, I hold you tight!

What is this, my dearest?  
Did I make you cry?  
Truly then, the merest  
Cad and cur am I!

I won't kiss you, honey,  
There, I set you free!  
Goodness, girls are funny!—  
Now *you're* kissing me!



## YIELDING TO TEMPTATION

*By Louise Winter*

IT was half an hour before the time appointed to meet Bob for lunch, when Florence found herself staring into the windows of the Hat Shop, attracted by the tempting display set out to catch the feminine fancy. She lingered, longing in her eyes, envy in her heart. She could not afford a new hat at present, although she had been the only woman on the train that morning in a straw hat.

And Bob was going away, back to the Canal Zone, to finish his work there, and he was going without having spoken the words that Florence had passionately longed to hear from him.

They had grown up together, neighbors in the suburban town in which their respective parents had elected to settle; they had been unacknowledged sweethearts before this last contract had taken him to Panama. He had been away three years, and he had come home a month ago for a brief vacation, and though apparently he had been very glad to see her again, Florence had missed the lover-like quality that she had secretly expected to find in his manner toward her. She could not help feeling that she had disappointed him. He had come up on the steamer with some New York girls, "classy girls" he had described them, and several times he had declined invitations to affairs in the suburban home town, because he had been asked to some party in New York.

Florence knew that she could not compete with "classy New York girls." Her people were in moderate circumstances, and at present, owing to general business depression, her father had informed her sadly that he would have to cut her dress allowance in half until things took a turn for the better. Under these circumstances a new hat was out of the question. She had indulged in new white gloves, she had had her suit pressed

and her pumps shined, but all these things were discounted by the straw hat, decidedly shabby after having done excellent service for four months.

It would not have mattered so much if Bob were not so observant of all the little details that went to make up a well-groomed woman's toilet, but he had a keen eye for accessories, and Florence almost wished that she had not accepted the belated invitation to lunch at the Waldorf, though he had flattered her by insisting that he wanted a farewell party with her. She had hesitated, and then, because he was the one man she had ever cared for, she had put her pride aside and had told him that nothing would give her greater pleasure than a tête-à-tête meal with him.

Now she stood and gazed, and then, telling herself it was merely to pass away the time, she stepped boldly into the Hat Shop. It did not entail any obligation to look at the tempting wares displayed.

The shop was crowded. There was a sale in progress, and women came in from both the avenue entrance and the one on the side street.

Saleswomen flew from one customer to another, frequently attending to half a dozen at one time.

A showy blonde approached Florence. "Just look around and I'll be with you presently. That woman in front of the mirror has tried on every hat in the place; she's got to decide on something soon," she explained, with a sigh, as she contemplated the fussy customer, who had the shelf before her piled with hats of every description. "Say, here's a nobby little thing that would just suit you. Try it on, and I'll be back in two minutes." As she spoke the saleswoman dangled in front of Florence's eyes a small draped turban of black velvet, ornamented with one stiff wing.



"How much is it?" There was no harm in asking the price.

"Twenty dollars, and cheap at that. It's a copy of a French model. 'Chick, isn't it?' and then with a glance over her shoulder: "Oh, my! She's signalling to me; I got to go!" And she pressed the hat into Florence's hands, and rushed over to where the fussy woman with wrath in her eye was waiting for her.

Florence had gasped at the price. Twenty dollars! If she had had her full allowance and been ready to purchase a winter hat, she would never have dared to pay more than ten, and yet—

She glanced at her watch. Twenty minutes to one. Still twenty minutes before she was to meet Bob at the hotel near by. It couldn't do any harm to see how she would look in a twenty-dollar hat.

She walked deliberately over to one of the long mirrors in front of the show-cases, removed the despised straw, and set the velvet toque primly on top of her glossy brown hair.

Another saleswoman passing took one look and stopped.

"Not that way, dearie. Allow me," and with skilful hands she readjusted the toque, placing it at an angle that was so undoubtedly becoming that Florence herself was amazed.

"That's better, isn't it? Get a hand-glass and look at the back. You couldn't find anything more becoming if you searched a week." Then she went off and Florence stared at herself, two spots of color creeping up into her pale, smooth cheeks.

She did not look like the same dispirited creature who had entered the Hat Shop ten minutes ago. This was a radiant girl, sure of herself and of her own attractions.

She went in search of a mirror, and presently found herself in another room quite as crowded as the first she had entered, but after a time she discovered a handglass and was able to secure a view of the toque from the rear.

Tears came to her eyes. What a change a smart hat made in one's appearance; but twenty dollars—it was out of the question!

Another saleswoman addressed her, this time quite respectfully, not at all in the patronizing manner employed by the other two. "Take a seat, won't you? I'll be at liberty soon. That's a very smart hat you have on. You did not get it here, did you?"

Fortunately an impatient customer claimed the saleswoman's attention, and Florence was spared the necessity of an explanation, but a daring thought crept into her mind. The woman had not recognized the hat as belonging to the stock, and yet she had only passed from one room in the shop to another. Perhaps the stock in the two rooms was kept separate. She edged toward the door. Suppose she walked out boldly, wearing the twenty-dollar hat, would any one attempt to stop her?

She glanced again at her watch. Three minutes to one! She was a block from the Waldorf, and Bob hated to be kept waiting.

Her hand was on the knob, and still she hesitated. It would be stealing, even if she only wore it to lunch and returned it afterward.

Unconsciously she turned the knob, and the next moment she was in the street. Bob should go away with a memory of her looking quite as smart as the girls he had been running around with lately. When he got back to Panama he should not remember her as shabby in a last summer's straw; he should recall her as she had sat opposite to him at luncheon in a toque copied from a French model.

As she reached the sidewalk her heart was in her mouth. Suppose some one had noticed her and she was followed? She could say it was a mistake, of course—

But no one followed her. She gained the avenue, waited for the signal to cross, entered the revolving doors of the hostelry from the Thirty-fourth street side, and caught a glimpse of Bob in the distance.

His eyes brightened as they took her in admiringly.

"Some class to you to-day, Flo. How stunning you look!" he said, as he



slipped his hand under her elbow and guided her toward the dining room.

Not until they were seated at a small table near a window did Florence's heart resume its normal beats. She was safe now. No one would create a disturbance in the restaurant, and she gave herself up to the enjoyment of the hour before her. After it was over—if no one were waiting for her outside—she would go back to the Hat Shop, make some excuse, and reclaim her shabby headgear, but for one hour she would bask in the admiration Bob took no pains to conceal.

He ordered carefully, consulting her from time to time, but she was content to leave everything in his hands. She could not prevent her conscience from troubling her, but her nervousness only heightened the color in her cheeks and added to the brilliancy of her eyes.

To cover her uneasiness she talked more than usual, and Bob found her a most entertaining companion.

He suddenly began to regret that he had missed several opportunities of enjoying Florence's society, and now he was going away, to be gone for another year, and other men would have time to discover what an attractive girl she was. He had always been fond of Florence; her memory had always remained in the background as something solid he could return to, but now he recalled that he had been away for three years and he had not seen so much of her during his brief vacation. His mind had been full of one of the girls he had met on the steamer. She was "some chicker," and he had delighted in rushing her; but, of course, nothing could come of that. He was only a young engineer, drawing a modest salary, and the New York girl had told him frankly that she could not afford to marry a poor man. Bob had not been at all sure he wanted to marry her; she was good fun, but as a wife—Now he admitted to himself that a wife must be more on the order of Florence, a girl who managed wonderfully on a small income. He knew her father's position, and yet she contrived to look smart and well groomed. He glanced from the hat to her new gloves, lying

beside her purse on the table. That was the kind of a wife a poor man wanted, one who could put up a good appearance on very little.

To do Florence justice, she never dreamed that the hat would carry Bob so far. She had merely wanted him to obtain a last impression of her which should compare favorably with the impression he carried away of other girls. She wanted him to remember her, well-dressed and happy, not a pathetic little figure wearing her heart upon her sleeve. She never imagined that she would suddenly become desirable, and so she was unprepared when he began to attack her for flirting with other men while he was grinding his life out down in Panama.

She was bewildered. She did not know enough about masculine vagaries to realize how in the twinkling of an eye she had changed for him.

As they lingered over their coffee he fell into a sentimental mood. He described his lonely life in the Canal Zone.

"Of course, some of the fellows have their wives with them, lucky dogs! A girl has to care a lot for a fellow to put up with conditions down there, and yet, after all, it isn't really so bad." He began to see how comfortable it would be to have some one there with him, some one like Florence, capable, clever, attractive.

She suddenly feared what was coming. Did Bob mean it? "It must be interesting," she ventured shyly.

"It is, at first, until the novelty wears off, and then it gets to be monotonous. A fellow would have to be pretty nery to ask a girl to go there on her honeymoon." He was feeling his way cautiously.

"He'd have to be sure that he loved her." Florence was very grave. "That it wasn't a passing fancy."

"It couldn't be that if he'd known the girl all his life."

"And only just realized that he cared?"

"He suddenly saw her in a new light." Florence awoke to the situation. "Or in a new hat," she said quietly.

Bob reddened. "I confess, it does make you look different."



"And if I had worn my old sailor?"

He brushed that aside. "Nonsense, Florence! Of course it isn't the hat! It's because I'm going away and I've awakened to the fact that old feelings are the ones that count. I've always cared for you. Weren't we boy and girl sweethearts? There's never been any one else with me. Do you think you could get ready on such short notice?" He leaned toward her eagerly. He was young and impetuous, and it seemed to him now that his love for her could not be held in check much longer.

"You've been away three years, Bob, and we haven't seen much of each other since you returned. I know very little about you, and you know less about me. You don't know what bad habits I might have developed in three years." She said it seriously, but he laughed at her. He had confidence enough for both.

"Are you trying to tell me that you smoke? They say most of the girls do nowadays, and I suppose I could overcome an old-fashioned prejudice."

"It's worse than that," she told him calmly.

He raised his brows. "You don't drink. You refused a cocktail to-day."

"Suppose I told you that I wasn't honest?"

"I wouldn't believe you. Honest; why, you were morbid on that subject when we were kids." That possibility did not worry him.

"And yet it is true. Bob, I wanted to look well to-day. I knew that this would probably be our last chance of being alone together, and when I came to town this morning I was very unhappy. I was going to lunch with you in shabby, left-over-from-the-summer things. You might be ashamed of me—you surely would be if we happened to run into any of your smart friends. You think a lot about appearances, Bob, even more than you used to. You judge by them, and you would have judged me had I appeared in my old straw hat. I needed a new one terribly, but even if things were not so bad with father I couldn't have aspired to anything as smart as this." She put up a finger and touched the brim of the velvet toque.

Bob had listened with growing amazement. Now as she paused, apparently expecting him to say something, he spoke. "Do you mean to say you borrowed the hat for the occasion? Well, it's mighty becoming, and I wish you'd get your friend to let you buy it. I don't suppose it cost a fortune, and I'd like to have you wear it when we're married. I'm not an utter fool; I don't judge you by your hat; that isn't the only thing that opened my eyes to the true state of my feelings, but it did help. And you must care a little for me, otherwise you wouldn't have wanted to look well for my sake. I know how proud you are, and it must have hurt to borrow a hat." He was very tender toward her as it came to him that she must love him dearly to humiliate herself in order to shine in his eyes.

"You don't understand," Florence went on steadily. "I didn't borrow the hat from a friend."

"It isn't paid for? You had it charged?" He could well imagine that with Florence's sensitive nature running into debt would seem like dishonesty to her.

"No, I stole it!"

"Florence!" The horror he felt showed in his face.

Her own grew ghastly, but her voice was still calm. "Now, you see how little you know about me? The desire to make a good appearance was stronger than my old notions of right and wrong. I put on the hat and walked out of the shop with it. There are two entrances, and no one saw me." She was finding a certain relief in confession, though it cut off all hope of any happiness for her in the future.

He was full of concern for her. "But, my dear, think of the risk you ran!" Manlike that was the most important thing to him.

"I think I intended to return it, though I don't know whether I should have told the truth. And I used to be truthful as well as honest, so you see how I've changed." The bitter note in her voice was for herself, not for him. She could not expect Bob to overlook such a



heinous offence against conventions. She almost wished that she had not told him, that she had simply refused him and let him go with a tender memory of her in his heart. Now, he would take away the darkest kind of a recollection.

It took Bob a whole minute to readjust his point of view. "Florence," he began gently. "We'll go first to the shop and straighten matters there, and then we'll go down to City Hall and get our license."

She stared at him, her breath coming quickly from between her parted lips. "You want to get me out of the scrape that way? Oh, no, Bob, I couldn't marry you now!" The words tripped over themselves in their eagerness to be said.

"You cared enough to do a thing like this, and you were honest enough to confess it. Do you think I'd let a girl as brave as you are get away from me?" He was sure of himself now, and a note of mastery crept into his voice.

"It wasn't bravery, it was desperation," she confessed.

"Your love went as deep as that," he reminded her.

"A love that would descend to theft!" She scorned herself, and yet she longed for his vindication.

"Hush! Don't say it." He put his hand over hers and held it in a clasp that was warm and possessive. "Come, Flo, dear, we'll drive down to the City Hall in a taxi, and perhaps there'll be a chance when the chauffeur isn't looking for me to tell you properly that I love you."

"You can't, Bob," she protested tearfully.

"Oh, but I do. The hat may have started it, but the girl herself finished it."

Somehow his words carried conviction, and Florence raised her eyes to meet his, and saw that they were full of a deep love that silenced her doubts forever.

---

## IF

*By Thomas Grant Springer*

If I were a troubadour bee,  
 And women a garden of flowers;  
 I'd sing and my song would be free,  
 If I were a troubadour bee.  
 And honey I'd sip as my fee,  
 But I'd never be wasting love's hours;  
 If I were a troubadour bee,  
 And women a garden of flowers.

If I were a butterfly bright,  
 And smiles were the sunbeams of love;  
 I'd dance in a soft bath of light,  
 If I were a butterfly bright.  
 From shadows I'd wing a swift flight,  
 And not court the grayness thereof;  
 If I were a butterfly bright,  
 And smiles were the sunshine of love.



## THE WEIGHT OF THE HAND

By H. Forrest

**T**HE bush-rats and the small, busy things that come out at night, had ceased their scampering through the dead leaves. Patched with moonlight, the silent canyon became ghastly, unreal, terrifying. It was the hour before dawn, and the mystery and the loneliness and the unbroken quiet oppressed me and affrighted me, and yet thrilled me. All night, I had lain awake among those sleeping ones beside me—awake, with no one to hinder my thoughts. My brain was as clear as the lovely sky, and all that I have been and all that I might have been, passed before my wide-open eyes.

Loosening the grip on the small, automatic pistol I had held for hours, I stretched my cramped fingers, and as the muscles relaxed, so the tension in my breast gave for an instant.

I looked at my friends.

The ashy light streaming through the oak tree, which spread above us, revealed in a hideous manner the faces of the sleepers beneath. There was something repulsive in the placidity of their expressions, in the inertness of their tired bodies, and very carefully, lest the movement disturb them, I drew myself, stiff and aching from lying on the ground so long, from under the robes, and sat hunched up, my arms encircling my knees, watching the sleepers and wondering how they could rest, while so tortured a soul cried out its pain.

And then, most unwillingly, I turned to my lover, and was startled at the pallid horror the moonlight made of his fat, boyish face.

There were five of us—three men and the woman and myself—lying on a piece of tarpaulin staked to the ground. We had been on a hunting trip and had lost our way, so we were forced to spend the night in the canyon. We had taken

the cushions from the automobile and used them for pillows. It was very uncomfortable, yet they slept like children, drawing heavy breaths, the woman whining a little because she had gone to sleep afraid.

And I, who had mocked her fears, scornfully, laughingly, had lain awake all night grasping my pistol, while I listened to the pad of animal feet in the undergrowth and often, as the sound came near, raised on my elbow, peering into the brush, ready to shoot, though why I, who wanted to die, should have been afraid I do not know. But I was afraid. My heart thudded heavily. Every little rustle startled me. Every shadow became a living thing. I expected I knew not what, and I writhed in the clutch of a palpitant, unseen and terrifying force that gripped my soul and my heart, and squeezed them dry of every thought, save fear.

I glanced across my lover at the lame boy slumbering beside him, his thin, tragic face upturned, topped by a knitted cap with a tassel. He looked like a dead brownie, and I thought he belonged there—in the pale moonlight, among the leaves.

There was a bond of sympathy between us, the boy with the twisted back and dragging leg, and I with my distorted past and my uncertain future.

Shuddering, I turned to the woman huddled at my right. She was stout, with a good-natured face that was almost childish in repose. She lay on one side, her back to me, an arm thrown across the shoulders of her husband, who lay beside her. He was sleeping the deep sleep of physical exhaustion.

While I sat there, a shadow fell over the canyon, and, glancing up, I saw that a lot of strange, leaden clouds were creeping toward the moon, which was



hanging low in the sky. I got up, very cautiously, and looked down the trail. A sound like a thin-toned, elfin voice running through the grass, came to me, and I knew it was time for me to go, as I had planned during the night.

Some twenty paces away, on the edge of a creek, was an old water-trough, almost hidden by the branches of a scrub oak. There was a deep, boarded well beside it. The boards were rotten and evil-smelling. The water was covered with skippers and leaves. Seepage from this spring trickled into the creek and oozed sluggishly down the canyon, ending in a stagnant pool.

Backing slowly toward the trail, and holding the pistol with a painful grip, I kept my eyes on the face of my lover—the half-grown man for whom I had given up my dear little boy, and my husband, and my home. Yet, after all, did I give them up for him, or to satisfy my own selfish desires? Had I been urged to go, perhaps I might blame him. I had gone of my own free will, in a moment of utter weariness and hysteria, and I had known, once the step was taken, there could be no turning back. The home meant nothing to me, nor my husband,—but, ah, my baby, my tender-limbed, sweet-voiced little boy! The day I left him he was sitting on his rocking-horse on the sidewalk in front of the bungalow. Through a mist of tears, I shall see him, always, his pretty, yellow hair lifted by the wind, and his black eyes sparkling like diamonds—riding away as hard as he could, clutching the reins with his fat little fists, his face dimpling with smiles as he called "Good-by!" to me. And so I let him ride out of my life, brighter than the sunshine, the sweetest thing in the world, and I had plunged blindly into the darkness that losing him meant.

As I crept down the trail, I saw him riding before me, in a path of silver light, and I heard the gurgle of his laughter, as he turned and smiled over his shoulder at me. But when I thought I had reached him, and would have clasped him in my arms, I stooped to find only a cluster of moon-flowers at my feet.

Again my heart was chilled with fright. Starting at every shadow, at every sinister crackling in the brush, I rushed madly through the brambles and shrubs, scarcely daring to look where I went, lest I meet the eyes I felt all about me, gleaming like balls of fire, until a sharp turn brought me to the tarn lying under a huge, overhanging boulder and darkened by trees. A mist, dripping from the gray moss, wavered over the pool, and the unholy silence of the reed-shadowed waters thrilled my soul with horror.

It was a lonely spot, that unlovely and evil swamp, with its melancholy drip of tears, its unseen eyes, its words forever unspoken.

Stumbling across the slimy roots of dead trees, roots that groped like tired, work-gnarled hands among the reeds and sunk with desperate clutch into the black water, I peered into the dismal pool and in the light of the veiled moon saw my white face gleaming there.

What a pitiful face!

Surely that was not my face—that pallid, drawn and haunted thing. It was my sorrow-stricken, lost soul, which I saw for the first time.

As I leaned there, wondering, shrinking from what I saw leering back at me, out of the dew-wet, moss-hung and dead trees—like figures of despair in the pale glow—a little hoot owl flitted over the water and passed darkly across the moon.

Then I remembered why I had come.

Raising the awful weight of my body so that I knelt on the edge of the pool, I released the safety catch on the pistol, pressed the muzzle over my heart, and pulled the trigger.

The hammer fell with a click.

I pulled the trigger again.

Once more the hammer fell with a click.

Vainly I tried to eject the cartridge, but only succeeded in jamming it. The pistol had not been fired or cleaned for years, and it was quite useless. I had failed to carry out my last act of cowardice, and I, the thief, who had stolen from her own little son, who had pandered her soul and made herself a fugi-



tive from happiness, knew I would never try it again. Overcome with rage, I twisted the pistol in my trembling hands; then, leaping to my feet, flung it into the pool. The filthy water splashed into my face. From all about the frightened birds fluttered in the trees. The small animals, disturbed by the commotion, scurried wildly through the brush. But, unheeding, I walked slowly up the trail, and, reaching the spring again, found my friends still sleeping, as when I left them.

Sick at heart, I fell against the oak sheltering the well, and as I pressed close to the rough trunk, a faint, rustling sound filled the canyon, as though a mighty Hand had grasped the trees and shaken them gently, and the ground trembled, undulated slightly, then rocked violently. Staring upward, I wondered if those huge, overhanging boulders would loosen and come hurtling upon us, but before I could move or call out, the trembling ceased, the leaves shivered a little and were motionless, their frightened whispering sounding far down the canyon, where perhaps the

Hand was passing on, and the cloud which had hidden the moon for an instant floated lazily up to join those other leaden ones that had gathered thickly. There was no sound, no stirring of the wind, no light save the ashy glow from the half-veiled moon—just the dull, breathless pause that precedes and follows an earthquake.

Overwhelmed by the mystery of that earthquake at dawn in the far-away canyon, cowed by that unseen Presence with which I had battled throughout the night, I, too, felt the weight of the Hand and knew that as its grasp is powerful, so is it also relentless.

While I stood there, crushed by the knowledge that I must travel on to the end of the journey I had mapped out for myself, yet enthralled by the terror and the beauty of the night, the cloud drifted away from the moon, and the canyon was drenched with a cold, silver light.

The lame boy stirred, and lifted his head. We looked at each other, and he smiled a little, wistfully.

---

## THE PILGRIM TO BOHEMIA

*By Lewis West*

Eager-eyed pilgrim of pleasure  
 Who knocks at Bohemia's gate,  
 What is the weight of the treasure  
 With which you seek to tempt Fate?

Is it a song you are singing?  
 Is it a verse you have tried?  
 Or is it paint that is clinging  
 Fast to the hand at your side?

Eager-eyed pilgrim of pleasure,  
 What of the heart in your breast?  
 Will you exchange it for treasure,  
 Throw it away for a jest?

Stale on your lips is the poem,  
 Withered the song,—That is Fate,  
 Passionate pilgrim, what brings you  
 Now to Bohemia's gate?



## PALS

By S. N. Behrman

"AND," concluded the doctor as the climax to an already formidable list of prohibitives, "you are tuberculous. You must not marry."

"But," protested Deering, rather blankly, "I'm engaged."

The doctor remained unmoved. "Break your engagement," he said decisively.

Deering fumbled with his hat a moment. "You see, Doctor," he said, "I'm not only engaged but—"

"What?" volunteered the doctor kindly.

"In love."

"Particularly if you are in love," answered the older man.

Deering was silent. There seemed nothing he could do or say. The doctor leaned over his desk and wrote prescriptions. When he was finished, Deering spoke again.

"Are you sure, Doctor? Is this final? Do you mean that I won't ever be able—" Deering's voice trailed off, and the doctor ruminated.

"Of course," he began slowly, "in time you may outgrow this weakness. But just now it wouldn't do. It wouldn't be fair to the girl. It's pretty tough, particularly as it isn't your fault in any way, but there it is!"

Yes, there it was! Deering put the prescriptions in his pocket and left the office. On the street, a hurtling December wind caught him and left him shivering on the curbstone. The air was filled with snow flurrying in nasty, vicious little squalls. It drove against him maliciously, as though it bore him a personal grudge. Deering decided not to take a car, but bent his head and walked head-on against the storm—block after block. In his brain, the doctor's dictum, "You must not marry," kept flashing in a monotonous recurrence.

And then he began to think of her. Strangely enough—or perhaps naturally—up to now it was only of himself that he had thought; that he must lose her, that he must step aside and give her up, that his life would be lonesome, very unhappy. His own sense of loss was all of which he had been conscious. And now he began to wonder how she would take it. It would be a great shock to her; everything had been arranged; she had his ring, cards had been sent out. But people recover from shocks. She would give him back his ring, the cards would be recalled, and she would be free.—Free!—That started a new train of thought, opened a new vista of possibilities. Helen was very pretty, altogether desirable. Others would court her, of course. And, not immediately but a few moments afterward, it occurred to Deering that she might accept one of these others. Before he could check it came an overmastering impulse not to tell her of his trouble, to keep her in spite of everything. But it passed as quickly as it came, leaving behind it a sense of shame.

Finally he reached the drug-store. As he told the clerk to hurry the prescriptions he felt the fatuity of his desire for haste, of his having the prescriptions filled at all, since the medicine held out no hope either of health or happiness.

At the candy counter he bought her favorite brand. He never came now without bringing her a half-pound box. To-night he bought a pound. The singularity of the aberration struck him, but he did not attempt to justify or even to explain it.

From the drug-store to her house was only a short space, but the streets were so thickly covered with snow and the wind blew so fiercely that he made but slow progress. Besides he was not in



a hurry; he felt none of the customary impatience to see her. He was thinking rapidly; walking very slowly. So lost in thought was he that he was unconscious of the fact that his left hand, which he could not get into his overcoat pocket, full with the candy-box, was freezing. "How shall I tell her?" he was asking himself. And then: "How will she take it?"

He rang the bell the regulation number of times. Instantaneously followed the click-click of the opened door. He looked up as he entered and saw her come out to wait for him on the third landing—a slim, crisp figure, in a white shirtwaist and dark skirt clearly outlined against the streaming light from the room behind her. He climbed the stairs slowly. As a rule he rushed up three steps at a time. But to-night he climbed.

"How slow you are," she laughed as she kissed him. "It's so cold standing here. And I was so impatient."

He kissed her and hung his coat on the rather decrepit hat-tree. "I'm warm enough," he said, smiling at her. "I've walked twenty blocks."

He took the box of candy from his overcoat pocket and gave it to her.

"My nightly tribute," he said, still smiling.

She acknowledged it brightly. "Your k-n-i-g-h-t-l-y tribute," she responded, pleased with her own cleverness.

"I'm a sorry knight," he said as he seated himself wearily in the only arm-chair, where he always sat. She busied herself with the candy-box, berating him for his extravagance.

"I can't allow these lavish favors, Frank. You'll want to take me to the opera next. I'm going to make this last so you won't have to bring me any tomorrow night. I won't allow you to spend your income on candy, particularly as after a certain date it will be my income."

"But it's your candy," he rallied.

"As between income and candy, I vote for income. My business training hasn't gone for nothing, Frank."

He looked at her as she stood there taking a bon-bon from its bright tinfoil wrapping. She was very pretty,

very dainty—her small nimble hands, her slender round throat, her smooth, thickly-coiled hair. And a quick longing for her came over him with the poignant consciousness that she was not for him, that he must not, even now, get up from his chair to take her in his arms.

She saw him looking at her, quietly laid down the sweets, and approached him.

"Frank," she said slowly, "what's the matter?"

It was a moment before he answered her. "It's all off, Helen," he finally said.

"What's all off?"

"Everything—the little flat, the trip to Washington, the quiet little dinner for just a few friends,—everything."

"Tell us about it, friend Frank," she said gently.

So he told her and she listened. Not once did she interrupt. He finished with the words of the doctor; that in the uncertain future it might be possible for them to marry, but that just now it was out of the question.

She grasped eagerly at the poor straw. "Did he say that, Frank? Did he emphasize it? Did he?"

The man's voice was hopeless.

"No, he didn't. It was only a bluff, I guess. There's no way out of it, Helen, I can't have you. I've got to give you up—I've got to."

Something in his face almost frightened her. And decided her—gave her courage for what, in that instant, she had made up her mind to do.

"But, Frank, dear," she said softly, "supposing I won't let you give me up?"

He did not understand. "I'm hoping it won't be so very hard for you, that you'll forget—"

"But if I don't want to forget?"

He showed his bewilderment. She pushed a chair squarely in front of him and talked in a prim voice.

"Let me explain. A horrid doctor tells you you must not marry. You see a loop-hole for escape. But I refuse to let you escape—"

"But, Helen—"

"It's very simple. I shall not deprive Noble and Underwood of my valuable services as stenographer. You will con-



tinue adding accounts for a contaminated food-concern. You will not marry me nor shall I let you marry any one else. Nor will I marry any one else—even assuming that there should be any one as foolish as you to wish to.—Don't you see? Do you think I'm going to let you go away and forget all about me? We'll stick together, just as a few weeks from now I would have promised to—and perhaps, some day, we'll get a little flat of our own, and the trip to Washington, and—”

Her head fell forward on his breast. He bent his over her hair, and laid his hands gently on her quivering shoulders.

Finally she rose and looked at him ashamedly through her tears.

“I'm a cry-baby,” she confessed.

“You're a darling,” he denied.

And so they talked through the evening—making new plans, breaking all the old ones. It was settled—she was to go on working as she had been doing, the order at the printer's for wedding cards was to be remanded—they were to be “pals,” living always in the hope that the future might bring the realization of past dreams.

When they had said “Good-night” for the last time, they shook hands. For they were not to be as lovers now, but friends.

“When I came here to-night,” he said, “I shuddered to look ahead. Now I'm happy, more than happy, because I know you love me.”

“And I, too,” she said.

“Are you happy, dear?”

“Wonderfully happy.” And, seeing the brightness of her smile, he could not doubt it.

He went downstairs. She turned and walked slowly back into the room. For a moment her hands mechanically fingered the box of candy on the table. Then she fell on her knees to the floor, sobbing bitterly.

They grew quite used to it during the next year. It was rather sweet, their friendship—their calm, quiet little talks, their modulated laughter, the unruffled depth of their understanding. It was as though they were two old people, Helen

sometimes thought, two old people who had loved in their youth passionately, parted, and then come back to each other after many, many years—subdued, chastened by life, disenchanting, but not embittered. It seemed to Helen just like that. The time when they had loved as young people love, seemed to her far away; Frank seemed to her a past lover, not a present one. And the sobriety of their meetings, the new attitude they took, the mature way they talked now about things, led her to believe that she was in truth much older than her years, that for her the love of youth was no more. Not because she made a conscious effort to suppress it, but because the desire for it was somehow gone—as though time had taken it away.

Yet she was delicate enough not to let Frank see the growth of this involuntary indifference to the physical side of their relationship. For she could tell sometimes by the way he looked at her, by his manner of touching her that for him she was the same as she had always been—a girl, to be desired. This troubled her. She wished him to feel as she did—as old, as settled, as removed from the tempestuous, “silly” temptations which young people are commonly lured by. For her part she fancied herself free of them forever—this tempered creature of twenty-four.

As for him, after the first month or two, when his disappointment was still new, when the pain of renunciation was yet fresh, it was easy for him to regard her as a sainted creature, before whom it was only fitting to bow down, to touch reverently. Was she not sacrificing herself for him—sacrificing everything? But after a time it began to seem to him that it only could be so. Loving him, what else could Helen do? And he began to think of her again as the creature of flesh whom he adored; he began to hope, to look forward to the time when she would be his as she had before. It was only by the exercise of great control that he met her on the plane they had decided—“pals,” friends who met each other to talk, to be, as she put it, “sensible.” And she, discerning this weakness in him, feared increasingly the



time when he would sweep aside the fragile limitations they had ringed about each other. That, she felt, would spoil everything. For she herself, she felt with a proud sadness, was now beyond temptation. She thought desire had left her, when in truth it was only desire for him that she was free of.

And then "Billy" Noble, newly graduated from the law-school, came into his father's office to stay. She had seen him many times before—he would come in during the holidays, go into the room marked "Private," where his father sat, come out smiling into everybody's faces and go away again. Once he had said "Good morning" to her. It was a spring day and he was sailing for Europe—he had been evidently in a jolly mood. A tall chap he was, with frank eyes, a lot of light, curly hair, and an easy, swinging gait. He had never seemed to her a reality somehow—she thought of him, when she thought of him at all, as a half-mythical creature whom it would be absurd to consider in a personal relation—as though he were a figure in a play or a character in a book.

And now he came into the office where she saw him every day. He dictated most of his letters to her. He would laugh at the droll things she said. They got on nicely.

One day, when she had finished some work for him, he asked whether he might take her to dinner. She told him she was engaged, though she did not add "to be married." He apologized. After that he seemed constrained in his manner toward her, and she saw a good deal less of him. That night though, as she and Frank were sitting together in her stuffy little parlor, Frank reading something elevating aloud to her, the thought crept into her head: "I might be out with Billy Noble to-night." And, in spite of anything she could do, the thought stuck.

About five o'clock one afternoon a few months later, she and Noble were alone in his office. He was in the midst of dictating a brief when he suddenly asked, with entire irrelevance: "Miss Leighton, when are you going to be married?"

"I don't know," she answered, looking at him fairly.

"You told me you were engaged—"

"I'm not exactly engaged. I was, but—"

"It's broken off?" he asked quietly.

"No—it isn't."

"You are engaged and you're not. You're talking in riddles."

So she told him. That Frank was ill; that he might get well, but it was doubtful; that he loved her; that she meant a great deal to him. And there she stopped.

Billy Noble got up and squeezed her hand, lying idly on the desk in front of her.

"You're a brick!" he said. And casually he asked her to go to dinner—in a way that it would have seemed foolish to refuse.

It was a very jolly dinner. She found herself laughing outright—something she never did now when she was with Frank. And Billy was very interesting—he'd been to so many places and knew so many things. When dinner was over, he asked her to go to the theatre with him. Her face darkened; he wanted to know why she couldn't come.

"I must hurry home," she said; "Frank is coming to see me."

"And when may I come?"

She began pulling on her gloves rapidly. He reached his hand across the table and closed it over hers—glove and all.

"Frank comes every evening," she said.

He looked into her eyes. "You're a nice little girl," he said, "but very foolish."

That night when Frank came she was very unhappy. She felt vaguely guilty—as though she had been faithless to him. And he irritated her slightly, too—he would touch her face and her shoulders. Finally she had to ask him, rather sharply, to "be sensible." But he looked so hurt, so unhappy that a qualm of remorse swept over her, and she kissed him swiftly—for the first time in months. He misunderstood, and grasping her to him pressed his lips to hers passionately. "You darling!" he whispered. "You



darling!"—She had to struggle to free herself—she was white with anger.

"But—" he mumbled brokenly, "I don't understand—you—"

"Of course you don't," she half sobbed. "You've spoiled everything!"

And she swept out of the room, leaving him miserable. But on the way home, he figured it out that she was probably ill, and he determined to act the next day as though nothing had happened.

Helen was very angry. She felt almost outraged.

That was it—the very word. That Frank should thus intrude into the beautiful calm of their "friendship" with an emotion, crass and earthly! It was disillusioning. Why could he not be like herself—purged of the weaknesses of the flesh, rarefied, etherealized by this trouble that had come to them?—Poor Helen!

The next night, she told Frank that he must not "let it happen again." And Frank promised. But the next night it did. Helen was furious and did not let him see her for over a week. When she did he was humble, apologetic.

"You promised—" she began.

"Yes," he admitted, "I promised."

"Well?"

"You were close to me and I—forgot."

"You shouldn't forget," she said, a bit mildly, her aggressiveness softened by the almost comic meekness of his expression.

"After all," she continued, "it's hard for me, too—"

"Is it?" he asked eagerly.

"Of course."

"You brave little girl. And instead of helping you I make it harder. After this you'll find me strong, too."

And there they dropped it. Nothing Helen could have said would have been better calculated to keep their relation just as she wished it. Her confession that she, too, was a prey to temptation was pleasing to Frank's vanity and bolstered his weakness. But Helen was only partly pleased. For when she admitted that it was hard for her, she knew that she deceived him. That he imagined she missed his demonstrations of

affection. She began to fancy she had done with that part of love.

But as to this she was soon disillusioned. Being a clear-headed and analytical little person, she became conscious, as she saw Billy Noble more and more, that she took a pleasure in his presence quite apart from the mere innocent delight of companionship. Perhaps this realization came indirectly as a result of his showing, unmistakably, the tremendous, though unexpressed, admiration he had for her.

Helen was not unschooled or unconscious (had she not been for nearly a year engaged to a man?), but she chose to ignore these manifestations of his interest—love's antennæ—on the principle that to openly resent them would be embarrassing and in bad taste. Then it came to her suddenly, like a shock, that she didn't really mind them. And mercilessly her concise, business-like little brain forced her to admit even more—that she *liked* them. That was dangerous. Helen was sober-minded and honest with herself. She decided, not so much that Billy Noble was dangerous, as that she was in danger. And being essentially discreet as well as honest, not belonging to that variety, almost exclusively feminine, which emulates in morals a standard analogous to that of the marksman who measures his skill by the surprising closeness with which he can come to his target without actually hitting it, she decided that the best thing she could do was to tell Billy Noble that she wouldn't see him again outside the beaten way of business. But when she did tell him so he laughed.

"All right," he had said. "Where shall we go to-night?"

And when he saw that she meant it, really meant it, he forced a compromise. He must see her once more, just once. A hail and farewell to their friendship.

She capitulated.

"Very well," she said, "once more. But the last time—the very last—"

They went to dinner.

Sitting opposite her, in evening clothes, he was pleasant to look at. Frank had been looking thin lately, and seedy. Try as she might, she could not keep these



little comparisons from cropping up.

But after a moment the music, the good food, the pleasant surroundings of the restaurant, and Billy's jolly talk made her forget Frank. She gave herself up completely to the "fun" of the moment. Was it not the last time?

He was in a rare humor, like a college-boy on a lark.

"Now," he said, "that I know this is the last time I am going to see you, I may say anything I like to you, mayn't I? I may even make violent love to you, tell you how beautiful you are—all that sort of thing—"

"Of course not. For you *will* see me again—in the office."

"My dear child," he said patronizingly, "we are here, solemnly and finally, burying our friendship. These, I'll have you understand, are funeral-baked meats. If you think for a moment that after to-night I am going to continue being your devoted slave, you are much mistaken. In future you are to me an automaton, a fixture, a creature who is paid to do my bidding from eight in the morning till five in the evening—in short, my stenographer."

"All right," she said, smiling. "That's fine. Just what I want."

"Remember—no overtures, no furtive, meaningful glances over your typewriter, not a vestige of familiarity. For I warn you—you will find me glacial, unresponsive."

"Some one might think that *I* had been flirting with *you!*"

"You haven't. I've gallantly saved you the trouble. But in the future—behold me, the merciless employer of labor, the unfeeling taskmaster. You," he emphasized, "are labor. I," proudly, "am the taskmaster. In the future I devote my life to browbeating labor."

"Thank you for pointing out with painful clearness my humiliating position, Mr. Noble. But what would the taskmaster do if he found that labor had asked Mr. Underwood, as a special favor, to allow her to do *his* work and send Miss Gaunet over to you. A change Miss Gaunet and Mr. Underwood would both appreciate."

"What would the taskmaster do?"

"Yes."

"He would fire Miss Gaunet and her successors till he got the labor he wanted."

"Thank you."

"Don't mention it."

They laughed. They were having a very good time.

Suddenly his face grew serious. "Tell me," he asked, "why won't you see me again—just like to-night? What's up, St. Helena?" It was his whim to call her that.

But his question brought a troubled look into her face. And he reached out his hand and took hers.

"Never mind—don't tell me—I don't care to know. Because I know you *will* see me again—and then some."

"I won't!" she said stoutly, too stoutly.

"All right," he said. "We'll talk it over—after the show."

It was a very funny show. About a man who was going to divorce his wife, but ran away with her instead, to a certain way-side inn, and fell in love with her all over again.

Helen and Billy enjoyed it immensely. When something very funny happened, they would clutch each other's hands with the joy of it all.

When the play was over, they walked down the cool, bright street, laughter still clinging to their lips. But by degrees they quieted and walked along without talking, her face quite serious, almost wan, and he with a little remnant of smile still playing about his mouth.

He asked her whether she wanted to go anywhere and she said she would rather go right home—if he didn't mind. He didn't. Usually he would have pressed her, but to-night, for some reason, he didn't seem to care.

She was thinking what a delightful evening it had been, and that it was the last. She wondered what he was thinking.

"What are you smiling at?" she asked.

"At you."

"Why?"

"You take things so seriously."



"What, for instance?"

"Why, me."

"Don't you want to be taken seriously?"

"Not if it means you're not going to let me take you out any more."

She was silent a moment. Supposing he knew—that the reason she wasn't going to let him see her any more was because she was *afraid!*

"You don't understand," was all she said.

"You're a great little girl," he answered irrelevantly.

That was all they said, till they reached the house.

"Shall I walk upstairs with you?" he asked as they entered the hallway.

"If you like," she said.

"Perfunctory, but we are thankful for small favors."

They climbed the dim stairs, he two steps at a time, so that he reached the top ahead of her. He was like a little boy, she thought half-wistfully.

"I'm so tired," she breathed, as they reached her door.

"Of course, I'm going," he said cheerfully.

"The play was wonderful, thank you."

"I'm not the author," he laughed.

She gave him her hand, and he squeezed it.

"Thank you again, Mr. Noble, for all the nice times you've given me. Good night."

"Good night," he said good-naturedly. And he continued to hold her hand.

"Or perhaps, since I am not going to see you again in a—personal way, we ought to say, Good-by."

"Good-by," said Billy, leaning comfortably against the door. He was holding her hand tightly in both his, looking at her. He thought she was the most feminine girl he had ever met.

"Well?" she finally said.

"I think," said he, "that I can see you to-morrow night, after all."

"Billy"—in her impatience she forgot to be formal—"haven't I told you once and for all—"

"You see, I did have an engagement," he interrupted in firm but unruffled tones,

"but it occurs to me now that I can very easily break it."

"I'm not going to see you again, except in a business way—ever," this with a determined stamp of a slippered foot.

"The question is," ruminated Mr. Noble, as though meditating aloud, "where shall we go?"

There was a pause. "Billy—please—you make it hard for me—"

He still held her hand and now he drew her close to him.

"Do you really mean that you don't want to see me again—ever? You know I don't believe you do—really."

"Yes, I do. It isn't fair—to him."

"You refer, I suppose, to your friend—the gentleman who has the habit of being engaged to you."

"You mustn't, Billy—"

"He's a crum—"

She drew away from him.

"Billy!—Mr. Noble!"

"I'm sorry, little saint, but he is. Any man who'll keep a girl tied to him just because she's foolish enough to let him is *some* crum, believe me."

"I won't listen—" She started for the door, but found him facing her.

"Yes, you will," he said firmly. "I've started and I'm going to finish. It seems a rotten thing to do to knock a man to a girl behind his back, but it's been on my chest a long time, and I'm going to get it off. In a moment of sentimental impulse you promised this chap you'd stick to him through thick and thin. It was a nice impulse and I appreciate the spirit that prompted it. Only a little saint like you would have had it. But it won't stand against a little cold thinking. Come now—admit the absurdity of the whole business like the sensible little lady you are."

"I'll admit no such thing. Supposing Frank hadn't found out till—till after we were married. Wouldn't it have been my place then to stand by him, no matter what happened—wouldn't it?"

"But luckily you *weren't* married and you *weren't* under any such obligation. The contract wasn't signed."

"A lawyer's argument, of course! Frank had my *word*. I *loved* him."

"Oh! You *loved* him!"



"I do still."

He stood very close to her.

"Do you? Do you?"

"Of course I do."

He took her face between his two palms and made her look up at him.

"Why do you stick to him? You know you don't love him. You can't. Whatever it is that you feel for him it isn't love. A girl like you can't love a man who is weak. Tell me, Helen? It means something to me, too, you know—a great deal—"

"He needs me, Billy—" was all she said. There was a long pause.

"All right, little saint. You're the boss."

"Good-by, Billy."

"Since this is good-by—let me kiss you, once—will you? I've wanted to—lots—"

"No, Billy," she said softly. "It wouldn't be right."

"On the forehead—a sacramental kiss—"

He did so—and in a moment the darkness, everything, seemed to close in on them, sending them into each other's arms—

Late the next afternoon, sitting miserable and dry-eyed alone in her room, Helen was still thinking of herself and her emotions of the night before. She loved Frank, and yet, under the other man's kiss, she had forgotten everything. . . . How was she to account for it? For, as she sat there, she realized how madly, Billy's kiss had stirred her.

Then a messenger came with a note from the man who had held her so ardently in his arms the night before.

"I know now that you love me," it ran. "I am glad—glad—because I love you. You've got to give the other man up and marry me."

And that night, jubilant, Frank came to see her. The doctor had removed the ban against his marriage.

He could not understand her apathy.

"Helen," he cried, "you don't seem to understand— It's lifted—the terrible load. Are you ill, Helen? You don't seem to understand."

"Yes, dear, I understand. And I am—glad. But I have something—to tell you—"

He was dulled by her attitude.

"I expected you to be so happy—" he complained.

For a moment it struck her that she need not tell him. Why, after all, should she dampen his happiness, perhaps indeed spoil it? Why not wrap herself in the shelter his love offered her? Had she not earned the right to anything he had to give by her devotion when his future seemed hopeless? If only she could be more sure of herself!

He caught her, swaying, and rested her in the big chair.

"What is it, dear? You're ill, Helen!" She brushed a hand over her eyes.

"No, Frank—I'm not ill.—Sit down, Frank." With her foot she pushed a chair in front of hers. "I have something to tell you."

"Let it wait, dear. You're not well."

"No, Frank. This can't wait. If I don't tell you now it might get to be too strong for me—I might get so I wouldn't tell you at all—"

"All right," he said gaily. "What of it? Dear, what difference does anything make now? Can't you see how happy I am? I don't want to hear the old thing."

"Yes you do, Frank," she said slowly.

"Well, if you insist—Fire ahead!"

They sat facing each other a few moments—she leaning far back in the big chair, he bending forward eagerly, his hands clasping hers in her lap, their knees touching.

"I hardly know how to begin," she said wearily. "It's so terribly—funny. I can't realize it—myself."

He waited for her to continue. Something in the expression of her face kept him silent.

"Frank," she began, "when you told me of your illness I said it wouldn't make any difference between us—that I'd keep on—loving you—just the same."

"You dear—!"

"Don't interrupt me—please—till I'm through. I was willing to stick to you for good, I meant to be faithful to you till you got better—and if you didn't—"



if you didn't get better—to stick anyway—always—”

“Darling—you're pale—you ought to be in bed—”

“I'm going to finish, Frank. I meant to stick squarely to you and I tried—honestly—”

“And you did—bless you.”

“No—I didn't.”

“What do you mean, Helen?”

“Some one has fallen in love with me, Frank,” she half smiled.

“And you?” he asked quickly.

“I told him I was engaged—to you.”

“Well?”

“He didn't believe it. Somehow I couldn't convince him that I was in love with you and not with him.”

“You encouraged him? You let him see you? Did you?” Sharply the questions came like the interrogatory crackle of the cross-examiner.

“You must be easy with me, Frank.”

“Forgive me, Helen.” He paused. “Now tell me all about it and we'll drop it—the whole thing.—Perhaps it was too much to expect you to spend all your spare time with an invalid.” In spite of himself his voice stiffened with irony.

She did not seem to notice.

“What's happened, Helen?” he asked tersely. And as she did not answer.

“Are you in love with this man?”

“No. I don't think so—I like him, but—”

“You've been seeing him?”

“Yes.”

“Encouraged him?”

“No. I tried not to. I told him last night—”

“You saw him last night?”

“It was to be the last time. He asked me to let him see me once more. And last night—”

“You told him you wouldn't see him any more after last night?”

“Yes.”

“Then,” he said brusquely, “we'll consider the matter closed.”

“But, Frank,” she said, looking straight at him. “Last night—he kissed me. I didn't love him and yet when he kissed me I forgot you—our engagement—everything—”

“Good God! Helen!” The memory of the year he had been denied her kisses made him rage. “But you love me!”

“Yes, I thought I loved you—now I am not so sure.” She was trying to explain to herself, not to him.

“Your love couldn't have been worth much, if it went to pieces under another man's kiss.” Frank was bitter.

“Frank, dear, don't condemn me. I shan't see him again.”

“But you've shaken my faith in you—I can never be sure of you again—”

Helen looked up into his pain-twisted face. He seemed like a stranger to her and she drew away from him.

“I couldn't be sure of myself. We can never go on now, Frank, it's all at end between us.”

But he would not accept that. He pleaded with her, in the name of their old love, but when he saw that it was useless—he began to heap reproaches upon her. She had never cared—she wasn't able to care, to feel a deep sentiment—

When he finally left her, her heart was very heavy and then suddenly Billy's note gleamed white on top of her bureau.

In the gray twilight she read it—several times.

And suddenly she understood it all; saw everything clearly. She had been trifling with her real happiness. Her affection for Frank had been almost sisterly, that was why she had welcomed the change from lover to “pal,” but with Billy it was different. Her whole heart had gone out to him.

Billy! How blind she had been.

Billy! Why she loved him! All this time without knowing it, she had loved him! And that was why his kiss had thrilled her.

After a time she sat down and wrote to him.

“Billy, dear:

“You are right and I am glad—glad—because I love you.

“HELEN.”

And smiling joyously, she brushed away a tear.



## THE TIP OF TEMPTATION

By Robert P. Jule

**A**S my rooming house was very free and easy (except in the matter of rent in advance), I was not surprised when Gertruda followed her knock and my invitation into my bedroom.

I was very glad to see her, since I had been up for the last hour trying to make up my mind to go out. Now, of course, as Gertruda and I were friends, this would be impossible.

I knew that something weighed upon her mind, by the heavy air with which she lit a cigarette and sat down.

"Bill," said she, at last breaking the silence that had grown so sombre that it darkened the room in spite of the eleven o'clock sun.

"Yes, Gertruda?"

"Do you know any honest work that can be handled by a flapper of my figure and magnetism? Ain't there no manicure parlor that wants a dame, that knows when to hold hard to a man's hand to keep it from going round her waist?"

"Honest work? Gertruda!"

"I don't wonder you're scared, Bill. It'd frighten any male to have a bear with my innocent eyes look at him and ask to be put hep to honest toil, even in a manicure parlor. No, I ain't fixing any game on you. What's the use? But just now I got a yearn for my old sheltered life when I was a telephone girl. I know about you and that manicure dame. If she is a true woman (and don't get a glimpse of me) she'll put you wise to some place where I could nestle down an'—"

"But, my dear, it's a hard life—even with the tips."

"I'm going," said Gertruda, rising in mysterious wrath. "Tips!"

But no woman ever went when she said she was going, so I waited for Gertruda's next remark.

It came while she was trying to find where her bag had gone.

Gertruda enters a room in a shower; gloves one way; bag another; coat another. Gertruda is a great trial to her neat and orderly young husband, Slim Dick, the well-known and much respected confidence man.

"That there word makes me feel like a female leopardess," said Gertruda, as she knelt to look under my bed. "Damn that bag! Now would you think a thing like that could roll? But there's a hex on me to-day. I had to turn back for my gloves and spoil the most withering farewell and exit that I ever handed that there husband of mine. No, Bill, come to think of it, it's beneath my magnetism to extract half a buck from some horny hand that I've made to shine, when the same amount of personal charm chucked at a real 'comeon' has resulted in thousands. I've made up my mind to quit being a crook, but it don't follow that I ain't got pride enough not to care for my former standing."

Here she emerged, panting, dust on the knees of her smart blue serge.

"Yes, I'm hexed to-day. It's bad luck to turn back once you get started, especially if by doing so you give a man a chance to edge in a word. We'd scrapped for two hours before I could feel sure I worked up an exit and still left nothing unsaid. Then I had to go back before the effect was even begun to be wore off, and that gave Slim the chance to hand me a remark that kept me for an hour more. Yes, I'm hexed to-day. But I don't care. When men have handed a dame of my temperament the game that has been handed me, Gawd can't do nothing more."

"What in heaven's name has happened?"

"Times is," mourned Gertruda, sitting down on the edge of the bed and



brushing her knees, "times is (ain't you got a whisk broom, Bill?) when I wish I was back in the woman's stirr at Occaquan."

She sighed with memory of the prison that had once enclosed her graceful figure and pretty face.

"Did I ever tell you about the time I had the chaplain going there? He had to read Slim's letters to me. Say, Bill,"—her face rippled with smiles—"he made the pardon board let me out quick on my indeterminate, because he was afraid I was going to get him. Say, a flapper has got a guy just where she wants him when the law makes him come to see her every time he has to give her a letter. I will say, that things is made easy for a lady when she gets into the stirr—that is in the personal magnetism line. How many dames that can't sink a hook into a man without his cutting it right out but would take a two-spot for the right to lamp him with her sad beams through the bars of a cell? You know at Occaquan, prisoners is allowed to receive letters at all times. Slim wrote me most every day when I put him wise. Oh! them was the happy times!"

Here she burst into tears, and not being able to remember what she had done with her handkerchief, dried her eyes on the corner of the sheet.

"What has happened, Gertruda?" I begged when her shoulders had ceased to shake.

"Nothing, except that the man I went to the trouble of marrying, even when it was a risk for me to have my name wrote on a hotel register, to say nothing of a certificate, has went and played me traitor."

"What has happened?" I repeated, this time anxiously.

"What's happened!" she cried bitterly. "Oh, nothing, but what every married woman gets whether she expects it or not—the man I took the risk of going to court to have certified was my lawful husband, and was gave a certificate that could be showed to any dame that gimme the top register laugh when I said so, that man has—Oh! don't mind that tooth mug, I had to break something. Here's a quarter."

Gertruda picked up the fragments of the wreck she had made of my cup, and put them carefully upon the washstand. Then she said in a manner that would have proved to any one that she had once been on the stage:

"I'm a ruined woman, Bill."

This appalling remark could only be taken in one way—the worst.

"Gertruda," I gasped, "you don't mean to tell me you've lost your money!"

"Yes. An worsern that. Bill?"

"What?"

"I've lost my pride and ambition. That explains that remark that was gave when I first came in, the one about wanting honest work."

"Would it do you any good to tell me what's happened?"

"It won't do me no good, nothing ever can again, except to see that there certified husband back in the class from which I rose him—snatchin' leathers from working dames on a Saturday night—But, oh! Bill, Bill, to think that the man that I lowered myself to go and have stamped by the license bureau as my property (when the best he could have expected would have been I'd have let him come around when there wasn't a chance of anybody high up in the profession droppin' in), to think of that man—"

Here she burst into tears and hid her head in the pillow.

It struck me as a pity, considering how appealing and pretty she was in her grief, that I was not some old rich "comeon." I am certain that Gertruda at this moment could have extracted the gold fillings from the teeth of Mammon had she wanted to.

"There—there!" I soothed as I patted her heaving shoulder, "tell me all about it."

"Well," she sat up and dabbed her eyes with the edge of the sheet, "it is some relief for a dame to have a friendly ear to hollar into. It was this way—"

"Wait till I give you a light."

"Oh, Bill, a pill goes good with a wrecked life. Why is it that only the man a woman ain't in love with is the one who thinks of giving her them little ladylike attentions which is so sooth-



ing? When a woman has gave her heart to a man, all he does is run for the meat axe."

"Have a drink. The bottle is in the washstand."

"No. If I took to drink now there is no telling what would happen, and though I have lost my husband, I still got my shape to consider. You know about that diamond necklace that I got with the money that came from the game at Palm Beach?"

"Yes."

"Well, I banked it by hocking it and raising a little on the ticket; just enough not to worry me if I wanted to get it quick. Oh, Bill, Bill, I really never wore that necklace into society except just once down to Jake's and that at a hour when any phony would have been took for the goods. Say, really, they hadn't (until I'd yelled it all over the place) no more idea that I had eight thousand around my neck than that I'm a blonde by the gift of God. That's what comes of waiting too long to work up an entrance; the booze takes the centre of the stage. But say, when a few of them gents had had a chance to put the glass on them sparklers, you'd oughter have seen the success I was. Before I left, I had had my toes stepped on (under the table) by Frisco Dan, the head of the profession, and had had to throw the Newport Kid's arm from round my waist three times—even that didn't stop him until I put my arms around his neck and bit a piece out of his ear that made him yell till all the bunch was really wise as to my feeling for him. You'd oughter heard them give him the laugh. Oh! oh! I only wore them sparklers once—just once! Bill, I wish you had something more I could break.

"Say, how could I wear them, loving my husband as I do? And regarding them as a bank account? If I'd kept them by me, I'd have just been wore out running to the jewelers to see if Slim had slipped in a phony on me. Bill, a husband and wife never had ought to be in the same profession. It leads to jealousy. Jealousy, professional jealousy is what has broke up our home.

"You see, it was all right when Slim looked up to me; and was a learner. But no sooner had I got him really started into a high-class crook, than he begins to have them feelings known to men; which same is that they are always to lead the procession and a woman is to follow carrying the water bucket in case the sun should get too hot.

"We began to have mixes as to which was the best crook. Now you know I got a soft and shrinkin' nature but there is some things that I won't stand for; which same is holding back the hand when I've done a good act and have a right to my bows.

"Every time we done a trick we had a mix: him denying me my rights and holding back on the hands that was due me for my work. Then we'd make up. Oh, Bill, ain't women fools? They let men drag them round the floor and throw them under the sink when all the time what the act calls for is for them to grab the nearest thing that a man can understand, when he gets it broke over his dome. I swear to Gawd, that two people who weigh in about the same figure, should never get married. There's no peace in marriage until one or the other has been gave a knockout. Otherwise the fight goes to any number of rounds and there can't be no decision."

She sighed.

"Well, every time we pulled a game, instead of sitting down and being happy, we got up and hopped over the ropes: he handing me the blimm that he'd thought of it first; or that it wouldn't have come off but for his rushing in when I was gumming the game; and me the same only backwards. We had a dawg's life.

"But in spite of that I was happy. I love a scrap; besides I had got the habit of Slim, ever since I first lamped him buying drinks for a blooey blonde that had oughter been grateful to slip her leather into a man's pocket before she ever left her front door. Slimmy was paying! Think of it, paying out *real* money and him with them blue eyes of his.

"He knew I had the ticket for the necklace. But he knew too what instructions I had gave to the hock shop in case



anybody came in with that ticket. That necklace worried him. I admit I'd work it on him sometimes. Not that if he'd needed it, I wouldn't have gave it to him—but it was our bank account; Slimmy can't keep money; no more than he can keep his hands off it. But I just let him see that I was a woman with her own money. Bill, I sometimes think it ain't right for the wife to have the money. But if she don't have it neither of them will. You know men, Bill.

"Well, as I said, between the sparklers and who was the best crook, our flat was just a place to come home and mix-up in."

She turned to me and hit the pillow as she demanded:

"I ask you, Bill, I ask you, if there ain't more real art in a woman just using her own face and shape and getting away with every kind of a 'comeon' from down to whiskers, than in a man who can change his voice so you won't know it, and has got to use make-up to change character? I admit that Slim's way of shooting his voice around is clever—but it ain't art: it's slap-stick."

"It certainly is."

"Well, things went along as fierce as ever until . . . Bill, why ain't I got more firmness? Had I have held back from them eyes of Slim's when he just can't make them behave after a row, and lamps the mad out of me with them blue orbs and says, 'Let's forget it, kid,' well, if I'd have put him on the pavement for ten days to cool off he'd have had more respect for me.

"But nobody can have no respect for me now. No wonder I am asking you to put me wise to honest work. . . .

"Well, all at once things quieted down. Slimmy don't come back at me when I'd get into the ring to fight for my reputation. In fact he hands it to me without ever weighing in; quits at the ropes. I'd oughter have suspected.

"Bill, why is it a woman can't never be content? She wants a man to keep up the monologue once he's admitted he's been wrong. That was me. Gee, but I must have got on his nerves! I can see it all now, too late."

Here she used the corner of the sheet again.

"Presently I quit making him admit I was the star of the team because I seen something about him I could not make out. I knew he had some game.

"At first I thought it might be a dame. But he didn't manicure his nails enough for that. Well, I thought I'd just lay low and see. Then, Bill, he began to read the papers."

"What? Oh, you mean the sporting sheet. I don't see anything in that," said I.

"Bill, he was reading the war news! I don't mean the headlines. Sometimes I look at them myself. I mean the battles; and whether there was going to be peace or not; and if the Kaiser was about to croak. That's what I mean, Bill."

She meant a great deal. If you knew how absolutely the little world to which Slim and Gertruda belong are absorbed only in themselves, you would understand.

"Naturally, I got worried. When a man takes to reading there is no telling what will happen."

"What did happen?"

"This. One day he comes bounding in and flashes a roll at me that would croak a horse. He hits the ceiling about a million times before I could get a clinch on him and hold him down to know if I was to pack for a getaway.

"Bill, you can't think how frightened I was when he told me that he'd made that roll honest. I thought he might have hooked up with some millionaire dame, you know.

"Then he explains to me that what he is showing me is only the edge of the roll; that he's getting rich by the minute; that he's going to quit the crooked game and live honest because he has found a game that beats anything in the con line—Wall Street.

"Well, it took me five hours to get what I can give you in three minutes. Did you ever hear of them things they call 'War Babies'? I don't mean the kind that would come anyway, but that the war is a grand excuse to account for, I mean the war stocks; them things that



go up twenty-five points every time you hear of 'em, and ain't in 'em?"

"I've heard of them," I admitted, thinking of the riot of speculation then smashing around Wall Street.

"Well, he was in them—Crunchable Steel."

My eyes widened. Crunchable Steel!

"Well, it seems he was getting rich, and I was getting nothing but the information. It set me thinking. Especially as he shut up with a snap that pinched my fingers every time I tried to pry him open.

"Bill, you can't think how I was worried. I'd rather it had been a rich dame than Wall Street—there'd have been some chance of gettin' him back. I've had a lot to do with 'comeons' that were in the Street and I know. If he had his own money what would be the satisfaction to me? I know the wives of them Wall Street guys (you know I been on the stage); and I could make a fine picture of me sitting in the Waldorf (when Slim had fixed things so I could get in), sitting there doing nothin' while some flapper was doin' Slim. Honest, I cried a quart.

"It don't never soften a man to wet him with tears. Bill, though women can never be got to think so. Any more than you make 'em yearn for your society by raising hell when you get 'em alone. But, Bill, I was so worried. Here was Slim doing work he didn't need me in; and getting rolls that would come in so fast he'd have a new one before he'd lost the last bucking the wheel; and never needin' to come broke to me in the mornings for me to stake him. . . . And how did I know he'd want to stay by me now that he could afford his pick of natural blondes?"

"Say, I just yearned for that damned Crunchable Steel to smash right then.

"I had the faint hope that he was putting some game on me to get at the necklace until I'd put the roll under the glass and seen that it didn't have no stake mark on it."

Let me explain that Jake always has in his safe, a roll to supply, when such evidence is needed to prove to a 'come-on' that there is real money in the game,

and that he has marked it so that if by any chance it is lost, he can trace every dollar and exact vengeance. Jake is a little suspicious, though he should know that with his connections, no crook in his wildest moments would dare spend any of that money. The dive keepers would spot it, if Jake passed the tip, even as far as San Francisco. One of Jake's bills, spent in a dive in Chicago, resulted in the ending of the very promising life of "Fatty Blanco." No Jake's roll is safe.

"But look here, Gertruda," I said, "this sounds queer to me still. Slim is too noted a crook to be let go into Wall Street, or any of the brokerage offices uptown; as to the hotels, he would not dare show his face. How did he work it? Did you find out? I may want to take a little flier myself sometimes. Where did he go to speculate, did he tell you?"

"No. But I found out for all that. The things a man won't tell his wife, he'll tell a bartender. Next day I went to Jake's.

"Well, Jake wised me up to the fact that it was Texas Ruby who had first put Slim onto the stock market; Texas used to be a paying teller.

"Say, I knew that if Texas would wise up my husband he would wise me twice as fast. Honest, Bill, I had been so worried that not till then did it come to me that there was no reason I shouldn't get into the honest graft myself. I was a business woman even if my heart was broke. Besides, it was something to have on Slim.

"It took just two cocktails for me to get the whole game. It seems that Texas had a friend that was kind to him for the sake of old times; he had a little office where only the highest kind of a crowd ever come—in fact they was so high that they didn't come there hardly at all; just phoned him what to do. He was an operator. The high old guy had never seen a crook in his life; didn't suppose there was such things except in prisons and such places. Oh, Texas said he was way up.

"And so he was; about twenty floors



in an office building to which same Texas took me.

"There was just the name 'Mr. Marvin Frewen' on the door.

"Bill, I'm a suspicious woman, and used to moving in the highest hotel circles in the time I was on the stage, so you can't fool me. That office was all right. Any lady with money to invest would have trusted them rows of books all round the wall and them chairs. Rich! Say that ain't the word for it. It was one of them places that nobody can't help but telling is *it* . . .

"There was a nice young fellow at the big desk who took my name in to Mr. Frewen. Then he comes back and says Mr. Frewen can't see us, and, well, we'll have to make an appointment: Mr. Frewen can't see nobody but by appointment.

"You can imagine that got me; me setting there completely surrounded by them trustful-looking books while Texas wrote a note to be sent in to the old guy begging him to see me.

"I was just faint with longin' for him to see me, Bill. I'd wore my full crêpe mournin' that had drawed to me more than one cold, calm heart because of the wistful lines of my shape and my sweet, gentle, pitiful face looking out so helpless from the surroundings of my widow's veil. I will say that crêpe brings out the natural tones of my hair better than nothing I know.

"But when at last I did get in to the old guy, I had the dreadful sinkin' feelin' that comes to a dame when her personality is throwed back onto her hard. He had unemotional whiskers and terrible eyes. The eyes of that man! Oh, them awful, unhuman black eyes of that there man! Them rows of books oughter gave me a sort of preparation for them black orbs. Bill, they was bad enough as Gawd had made 'em, big and black and borey, but when is added them kind of specks that makes eyes look three times the size of nature, it was just awful! Bill, even now them black lamps makes me shiver.

"Bill, as I sat there tellin' him about me bein' left a widow with very little money; an' how I didn't know what in

the world to do because I'd always had a man to depend on, I had the most awfullest gone feeling about my magnetism, worse than that time I told you about when I went up against the Mormon an' got the shock of my life."

"You never told me about that—"

"It's one of them things in a woman's past that is best hid. But speaking of this guy with the orbs, I had the feelin' that Slim was right about not trustin' always to art and usin' a little slapstick to get an effect over. I had a wish I'd told Jake to get me a baby to bring with me. But, Bill, you know I do hate them properties. I'm known in the profession as an artist, an' an artist has got to respect her name."

"Yes, indeed. You are never crude."

"Well, the best I could draw outer that guy, after seven good tears had rolled down my cheeks one after the other (I counted them. That emotional work always does bring the tears from me; I got such a temperament) and I'd turned my head so the light could glisten on 'em, the best I could get was the advice to hold hard to my money and not trust to Wall Street.

"Bill, that there cold throwoff just got me goin'. I done the best emotional work of my life right then; quiet but refined, you know, but with a punch that oughter have rung the bell on any man's heart.

"Well, I can't say as I was sure that I'd rung the bell, but I gathered that I heard a faint tinkle when he told me to go away and think matters over, and see if it wouldn't be better to keep out of Wall Street.

"I went away and thought matters over and come to the conclusion that as a con woman I had fell too hard for them orbs. A con woman always has ways of finding out about a man, so I found out about Mr. Marvin Frewen.

"I found he was all right; absolutely O. K.; passed and stamped under the Pure Heart Act; on lots of boards of charities (you see he took charge of the private charities of people so rich that they never took time to sign their own checks—Oh, Bill, how I yearned for that man when I found this out), besides



that, he had all kinds of money of his own; one of them ex-center-ick old guys that is around loose in holes and corners in the big burg, that if the crook profession was organized proper, we'd have wrote up in a business guide. He was next, naturally, to the big guys down in the Street.

"Well, Bill, if there is one thing I am, I'm a business woman, which same is proved by the fact that I got six thou outer Jake on my necklace and could'er got more, but that I had to have it quick so as to get into Crunchable Steel, without losing thousands and thousands by waiting."

"Did Mr. Frewen put you into C. S.?"

"Yes, but not until I had worked on him for a hour and made the most awfulest scream of despair. It was a winner, that scream. Better than I ever done when Slimmy breaks in on me when we are gettin' a guy under the Mann Act."

She paused and gave a shiver.

"Bill, stocks is a good name for them things because they get you by the neck and hands (just like them stocks at Delaware) and all you can do is stay there till somebody or something comes to unlock you loose. First day I was in, Crunchable went down three points and I telephoned five times to Mr. Marvin Frewen to get me out; then when I got the papers that night I seen it had gone up five points, an' I never slept a wink for fear I was out. The worst of it was, that Slim had went to give his old town a look at him with honest graft in his clothes—first time he'd ever went back there since he left it—just about the size of the water bucket he carried for the circus he run off with. He'd asked me to go with him. Imagine asking a woman to go off with her husband when she's in the Street!

"I didn't tell Slimmy I was in the Street; just let him think I was in for the bughouse."

"Did Mr. Frewen get you out when you told him?"

"No. I near died of delight when he phones me not to worry; he knows when to do it. So he did, damn him!"

I saw her look toward my shaving

mug, and I put it under my pillow while I soothed her.

"Bill, I was worse wore with the week I was in Crunchable than I ever have been at any of my trials. I just couldn't keep away from near the ticker; though I was showed out of three hotels where I was tipping the boys to run into the café and bring me word from the ticker. I was always hollerin' through the phone, no matter which way Crunchable went, for Mr. Frewen to do something different than I'd told him to do the last time I called him up. Finally his clerk wouldn't let me talk to him no more.

"After I'd been showed out of them hotels (think of an artist like me going into a hotel—with my standing and name in the profession—that'll show you how the game got me)—after that I sat at home; never made a bed or dusted a thing, just sat there while messenger boys was running back and forth from the nearest pool room. And all the time losing pounds and pounds of my slender, flapper shape. Fierce! fierce! fierce!"

"But my dear Gertruda, why the worry? For the last week C. S. has been bounding up without a break."

"But how was I to know any minute it wouldn't take to bounding down? I'd just set there and figure how much I'd won and it got to seem like nothing against what I might get if I stayed in, and then would come a boy with a slip to tell me Crunchable had went down a point, and I'd just scatter into a fit for fear Mr. Marvin Frewen hadn't got me out; then come another slip to say it was up two points; and I'd sling my hat off, that I had put on with the intention of going down and bustin' in his door and yellin' till I got my money (they wouldn't answer the phone at his place no more when I called up) and then I just wouldn't know what to do.

"I had two lines of messengers runnin' all the time; one to bring me the news about Crunchable and the other to take letters down to Mr. Marvin Frewen. You see, his clerk had forbid me to come to the office after I'd called four times in one day.

"I was glad Slim wasn't home, be-



cause the flat was a sight with dust and things that I'd broke to relieve my feelings. Oh, Bill, a lady crook that ain't able to get near a ficker is got a terrible handicap when she's in stocks. Her own home has to take what comes of her feelings."

"See here, Gertruda, was Marvin Frewen straight?" I was compelled to demand.

"Absolutely," said Gertruda bitterly. "No man who ever held my hands when I had hysterics did it kinder."

"So you had hysterics?"

"I did—right in the middle of all them books with him holding my hands and the clerk watering my brow."

"Well, so you went to his office after all."

"I should say I did—*went* ain't the word for the way I got there; after a strange voice had said over the phone that Mr. Frewen couldn't understand at all, and would I please come down.

"I come down flat when I seen a proper-looking old guy sitting at the desk in the inner office, a guy with natural order orbs, and seen a clerk that I'd never lamped before. Yes, Mr. Marvin Frewen was all right—absolutely all right, except that he had went on a little vacation and left his trusted clerk in charge of his office, his trusted clerk that he had got out of a reformatory.

"Mr. Marvin Frewen wasn't in Wall Street at all. He was one of them guys that feels so sorry for the cons that they just have to give them a chance to work a new game and get away with it better."

She stamped her foot with rage and I feared for my looking glass.

"How did you learn all this?" I hurriedly asked in order to save the furniture.

"I learnt from him, between screams. He'd went out of town for ten days, leaving his office in charge of the truest character that ever came out of the pen. He felt it was a perfectly right thing to do, because, he said, there was no temptation in the way of money in the safe. As if an office like that and ten free days wasn't temptation enough.

"I broke away while he was calling

the bulls. I seen then how it all was; Texas had known the clerk and Slim had known Texas, and they had all worked together to get me. Oh! Oh! Oh! I wouldn't have minded it if Slim had got the necklace working a lone hand. A husband can't be held accountable for what he does to his wife, but that he should have gone and got a crook with glaring orbs to work me, just as if I was no more to him than any strange woman, that just busted up everything; as I told him when he came back this morning with the clear blue eyes of his plainly showing that he had been on a bat with my money; and some other dame too, I'll bet. He needn't think I'll ever fall for them eyes of his again, never again, not if I have to spend the rest of my life matchin' that sweet blue color which always has took me in a man's lamps. But, Bill, Bill, my heart is broke—my nerve is gone—I'm a ruined woman and a wreck—that's why I'm asking you to put me next to honest work."

Here Gertruda gave way to a grief so great that she almost dragged the sheet off the bed.

I was much relieved by a knock at my door.

"Come in," I said.

There entered a figure all in gray; whiskers; spats; gloves; scarf; and hat, at sight of whom Gertruda "made" a scream.

"It's him!" she cried, springing to her feet and pointing. "Bill! it's the crook that got my money; that passed himself off as Mr. Marvin Frewen. Bill, I don't care if he's your life-long brother, I'm going to haul off his hay in bunches."

"My dear madam," said an aged, dignified voice, "before you go any further allow me to tell you it is all a mistake and I," here the gray gloves brought out a long wallet—"having found you were not at your home, and being told by your husband that you probably were here, since you had said you were coming here, I followed to give you this," extracting a huge roll of yellow bills of staggering denomination, "this is your profit on the stock that your money was



invested in. Your original investment has grown to ten thousand dollars."

"Lemme faint," said Gertruda in a weak voice.

But instead of fainting she gave a frightened scream: "Bill! Bill! his eyes has turned *blue!*" Her shaking finger pointed at the eyes that the thick lenses had magnified hideously.

The old man in gray straightened up, and took off his spectacles. "Gee," said a young brisk voice, "it's good to get them off. I can no more see through them than through a board."

Off also came the whiskers and wig, and the handsome face of Slim Dick grinned in triumph at us.

"Say, Bill," he cried, "what do you think of a crook, and a lady confidence woman at that, that don't know a man can expand the pupils of his eyes till they are so big they look black, by using belladonna? Say, Gert, own up, now, which is the better crook?"

For a moment, as I shuddered before the expression in Gertruda's face, I thought that the furniture, Slim and I, were all going down in one grand wreck. Then I saw something in her face that gave me a faint hope that we might still be saved.

"Why didn't you tell me this at home?" demanded Gertruda.

"Because the instalments on the furniture are all paid. And, besides, I wanted Bill here for a witness. Come on, which of us is the better crook?"

Gertruda turned to me:

"Bill here will be my witness if I ain't always said you was," cried Gertruda. "Oh, Slimmy—Slimmy! how did you dare risk them lamps of yours, even for me. Bill, ain't that devotion for you? Ain't that—"

But here Slimmy gathered her unto him, and proudly addressed me above her head.

"It's settled who is the champion—Now we are going to have a happy home."

"After this," quavered Gertruda, as she extracted Slim's pocket handkerchief and dabbed her eyes, "the bouts will all be strictly according to the rules—scratching and biting barred, I swear it."

A day or two later, Slim called upon me.

"Look here, Bill," he confided, "in case Gertruda should ask you, don't tell her anything about how stocks are bought on margin. She thinks I used her money to buy outright and so she's content with a small profit—but if she knew how we'd worked it she might not be quite so calm. You know what a business woman she is. I never meant, anyway, to really lift that necklace, but Texas and me could only raise a thousand, and that was only enough to flash on her. I know her well, and so I decided just not to let her know I was using her money in stocks, but give her the profits after we'd got out, and all was settled. She's awful nervous about her own money. See how comfortable it all worked out?"

"But it seems to me, she did know that somebody was using her money in stocks; at least, I got that impression from her."

"I know, but 'somebody' ain't a woman's husband; 'somebody' don't have to listen to her like a husband's gotta. Besides, a woman ain't got any real confidence in a man's judgment after he has let her marry him. Remember, Bill, not a word about buying on margin. What a man's wife don't know she can't worry him about. Yet, funny, ain't it, that with all the brokers Gertruda has known, she never learned about buying on margins. Gertruda's a natural genius, I'll admit that, but she's not got the kind of mind that'll make her a great artist. To be a great artist you just gotta clamp your mind on the dee-tails."

And Slim went off perfectly satisfied that he had proved his case. He *was* the better crook.



## HER HUSBAND

*By William Goode*

SOME person, who evidently believes himself an authority, has gravely asserted that women differ only in the color of their hair. He would have us believe that temperamentally, physically, and morally they are all alike. Offering no argument myself, I will mention one at least who, to my knowledge, could not be made to believe this. Ed Stanton was absolutely convinced that there was one woman on earth so vastly different, so superior to all others, as to offer no comparison. And Ed, handsome, free-hearted, and winning fellow that he was, had known many of them in his day.

To his brother drummers on the road, he could talk of nothing but his cosy little Harlem flat, and the wife and three-year-old kiddie. If you were to believe him, the happiest hours of his life were when he could jump a week-end down to New York and spend them in his home.

One Saturday, he dropped into Syracuse to see a customer. The man was out of town, and would not be back till Monday. It was important that Ed should see him, so there was nothing for it but to be on hand early Monday morning. It was Ed's chance. He could easily get back to Syracuse on a Sunday night train, so he left his effects in the hotel and started hot-foot for the depot. He just caught the New York flyer and dropped into a seat beside Jim Hovey, a fellow commercial traveller.

Now Ed didn't care much for Jim, for he didn't believe him on the level. In his travels, he had heard stories of his escapades with hotel waitresses, and he did not approve of that. In fact, Jim really stood in bad at a number of up country hotels on this account. Hovey had a wife and four children down in New York city. Ed thought it a good

time to remonstrate with him, but Hovey resented it.

"Oh, say, Ed Stanton, I've seen a few of your footprints in the mud. Don't preach to me."

"Not since I married, Jim."

"Poof! Do you suppose my wife is sitting at home like a sick kitten while I am away? You betcher not! She's having a good time as well as I. What do you know about what your own wife is doing?"

"I do know what she is doing while I am away," and Ed's big fist showed up under Hovey's nose. "Don't you speak of her again in that connection or I'll smash your face."

"Well, how does she know what you're doing?"

Hovey got up and changed his seat then, for Ed was plainly in a dangerous mood. As Jim lived in Brooklyn, he stuck by the train to the Grand Central, but Ed dropped off at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street.

Twenty minutes later he was kissing his wife, Esther, dancing the kiddie on his shoulders, and having a great time in his own home.

"Ed, dear," said the little wife, "I do so wish you'd give up traveling and go into business. Now, there's old man Hooper on the corner wants to sell his store—"

"The retail trade is on the bum, darling," said Ed lightly. "A salary is a regular thing and better for a while. When that little bank account of ours gets big enough we three are going up into some pretty little country town to spend the rest of our days. It's the life, all right. Business is awful!"

The subject was dropped, for Ed always refused to talk business at home. So he rolled over on the floor with the kiddie, allowing him to think he had



the best of the tussle, which caused the little fellow great delight.

"Don't you fink you is licked enough now, papa?" he cried gleefully, straddling Ed's broad chest. "Why don't you cwy for me to stop and let you up?"

Ed pretended to beg for mercy, and so the frolic went on until the kiddie's eyes began to grow heavy, and mamma took him away to bed.

"I came down on the train with that skunk, Jim Hovey," he remarked to the wife. "I've lost all respect for him."

Esther knew the story of the Hoveys. "I'm sorry for Mrs. Hovey," she sighed. "It must be awful to live with a man like that."

"Well, many a woman does, dearest." "I don't!"

She looked straight at him as she spoke. Ed shifted a little.

"I'm a man with all a man's mean ways, Esther," he said candidly. "I was no better than any other—before I met you. No one has stepped in between us since, though."

She read truth in his handsome face and folded her arms about his neck.

"If you were to forsake me, Ed, I'd kill myself."

"Bosh! That would be foolish. I wouldn't be worth it. Besides, there's the kiddie."

Her face burned and her eyes softened. That terminated the discussion.

Ed had to get the four-thirty the next afternoon, and he lingered until he had to run for the train. He wasn't sure when he would be home again, but he hoped soon. He would write. It was some chance like this that would bring him home.

For a while after Ed had gone, the little wife had a bit of a cry. It was not from unhappiness, by any means, only a little feeling of loneliness and longing, seeking a natural outlet. She loved Ed Stanton, and she tried to trust him with all her heart and soul. She felt that he was so big, and noble, and open-hearted as to be incapable of wrong. He had never concealed anything from her. In all things they had been as one. Every penny of his money was banked every month in her name, and the account was

nearing the necessary figures to purchase that little home in the country they had so long planned for.

But, she was a woman, and lives there a woman who is not a victim of doubt? He was away from her so much in the great world with its temptations—that—possibly—she tried to smother the serpent of suspicion.

She went to bed a little later, and it was not until the next morning as she was dusting the living room that she made a discovery.

"Why, Ed left his raincoat," she said, yanking it from the depths of a chair; "that's too bad! It looks like a rainy spell and he will need it."

Knowing there was no way to send it to him, she started with orderly instinct to hang it in the closet. She had closed the door upon it when a characteristic thought impelled her to go back.

"I wonder if he left anything valuable in the pockets," she mused, and felt a little tug of fear in her breast. Quickly her nimble fingers sought the depths of each pocket. A pair of gloves, a couple of buttons, some matches, and—she drew forth a folded sheet of notepaper.

The bell rang.

She had to hustle to the door. It was only the butcher's boy. With the crumpled note in her hand she went back. Little Homer was playing with his toys on the big rug. She passed him and went into the kitchen. There she smoothed out the note and read, with dilated eyes and stifling heart:

"Well, honey, here I am in the sweet little apartment you have provided for your little caged bird. It's a dream, and I know I shall be happy here, waiting for your coming. Day and night I dream of you and long for you. Of course, dear, I know how life is. It's pretty hard for you to have her on your hands, but you will find a way to dump her when the right time comes. Then we will be together always. I shall expect you on Tuesday, sure. You can run down in the afternoon and go back the next morning. Darling, that will be a happy day when we are together for all time.



"P. S.—Don't forget the candy and the cigarettes and don't forget the change in number; 1482 One Hundred and Twenty-ninth street. With a hug and a kiss,

"YOUR OWN CARLOTTA."

Twice the staring eyesight of the little wife followed these lines from start to finish. The floor reeled, and she rank into a chair dizzy and confused. Life had become a sudden void, the world grown desolate and dark. She clutched her throat to get breath and so for a time she sat there more dead than alive.

So, the thing she had feared had come to pass. In one fell swoop the happiness of her life had gone out in darkness. It would never come back. All was ended. She tried to think what to do.

How long she battled with reason, sitting limply there in the chair, she never knew. She was brought out of her stupor by a sudden crash, a little scream, and she sprang up and rushed into the parlor.

Little Homer had pulled a pretty vase from the table and it lay in fragments. He was whimpering and expecting a scolding. The revulsion came, and she impulsively caught him up in her arms, wildly kissing and fondling him.

"Poor little boy," she wept incontinently, "you didn't mean to do it, darling. No, it's all right! Mamma won't scold. I've only you now—darling, only you."

The little fellow was puzzled.

"Don't cwy, mamma," he patted her wet cheek, "me didn't mean to bweak it. Me sorry!"

She overwhelmed him with kisses and then found his toys and went to her room to think. To think—that was it—what she should do.

For an hour she fought it out there alone. Then calmness came to her at last.

Esther Stanton came of a strain that in years past had furnished heroes in the service of the nation. Her father had fought and died at Gettysburg. Two brothers had died in the Navy. She knew of only one living relative, an uncle somewhere in the upper part of

the State. She would never think of going to him.

She was alone.

Perhaps it was just as well. But, this woman who had come between them—she clenched her hands and thought. Of course, even if Ed was to discard the woman, she could never take him back. She could never trust him again.

"I'll give him up," she said resolutely; "it is better—but I want to see her. I want to impress upon her what a thing she has done."

She smoothed and folded the fatal letter. If she hadn't found it, she might never have known. She knew that hundreds of men were practising this deception every day, but mercifully their wives never knew it.

Her resolve was made. Mrs. Belden, her next-door neighbor, would care for Homer for an hour or so.

Dressed neatly, and looking charming in spite of her pallor, she was soon rapidly making her way to the number in One Hundred and Twenty-ninth Street. It was not far. She wondered how he had dared to bring her so near to his own home.

At last she found the number. In a narrow hallway she examined the letter boxes. There was a name which convinced her:

"Carlotta St. Onge, Suite Forty-two."

In a few moments, the elevator boy landed her on the third floor and she stood before the door of forty-two. She was a little faint, but she called up her nerve and pressed the bell.

The barking of dogs sounded within, then a diminutive colored maid stood before her. A couple of spaniels frisked at her feet.

"Is—is Miss St. Onge in?"

"Are you expected?"

"It doesn't matter," and Esther brushed past the maid, and into the lavishly furnished, though unkempt, room beyond. There was an odor of stale cigarette smoke, and a tall dark-haired woman in a wonderful blue kimono rose, graceful as a panther, from a lounge. She stared at Esther half in amazement and half in anger.

"How is this?" she exclaimed haugh-



tilly. "Didn't I tell you to admit no one, Sophy?"

"I took the liberty," said Esther calmly, "do not blame the maid. It is necessary for me to see you."

The woman regarded Esther critically and waved the maid from the room. Then she sank back on the lounge and indicated a chair.

"Well, I admire your nerve. However, be seated and state your business. If it's anything to sell—"

Esther quickly extended the letter.

"I found this in my husband's pocket. It explains itself."

The woman gave a start, took the letter, glanced at it, flushed hotly, and regarded Esther through half-closed lids.

"Righto, lady! I wrote that letter to your husband. So you are the wife, eh? He and I are good friends."

"So it would appear," said Esther calmly, though raging inside. She had self-possession enough to give the woman before her careful mental appraisal. How could Ed Stanton love a woman like that?

"I'm sorry," with a drawl, "but, you see, a man's heart will go where love sends it." She selected a cigarette, and extended the box. "Will you smoke? You look all nerved up, dear."

Her words were soft, solicitous, and her eyes held a slumbering light of sympathy, born of knowledge of conquest. Esther returned her gaze without wavering.

"I have not the habit," she said coldly.

"Oh, well, I'm sorry," replacing the box; "nicotine is a wonderful bracer. Of course, you know, I am curious to know why you have come. I hope not to shoot me."

"It is hideous to shoot a reptile," said Esther firmly. "I came here to gratify my curiosity. I wanted to look into the eyes of one of my sex who could have the heart to do what you are doing."

Carlotta's eyes opened very wide and she blew a ring of smoke.

"Dear me! am I alone condemned? Is he not also doing it?"

"Knowing that he is pledged to protect and love another woman, you can hardly defend your position."

"He swears he loves me. He swears he does not love his wife. Love will go where the heart sends it. Am I wrong in accepting it?"

"You are wrong, because in doing that you are destroying the sacred ties of a home."

"Home!" Her laughter was like a bell. "What is that? A song was written about it, I believe. All the home I ever knew was a small edition of the *Inferno*. Happy home, eh? Husband and wife scrapping and nagging eternally; brother and sister fighting over inheritances. Mothers dying broken-hearted. Oh, say, all the hell there is on this earth is to be found in the place called home. Don't talk to me. Take your own case as an example."

Esther felt suffocated. She recognized that the woman was more virile, more powerful than she, in every way. A great languid, sensual, philosophical female animal, with a mind fed upon false theories. A social anarchist.

Carlotta inhaled the cigarette smoke.

"You see," she pursued, "the line between us is not so very well defined, after all. You're a dear, sweet little woman, but you don't know men. It's a shame to fool you, but don't blame your husband altogether. You have fooled yourself. You ought to have made a better study of human nature. If you had, you would never have married."

Esther's eyes flashed.

"Such heresy as yours, if commonly accepted, would destroy the world. Without morality there would be no life."

"That word morality is a flexible one," said Carlotta smilingly. "There is but one standard to guide the human race. That is the instinct of love. Where there is real love there is morality. No laws, either of Church or State, no sense, falsely conceived, of honor or duty, can change it. Love mocks at law, and law cannot control the dictates of love."

"You love my husband?" asked Esther coldly.

"I do, and he loves me."

The room whirled about Esther. When she came back her head was pillowed on a soft breast, and salts were



at her nose. Perfumed lips gently touched her brow.

"There, little one, you are all right now. Say, but you are a sweet little creature. Any man ought to love you."

Esther put the other woman's arms from her. She whirled and gripped the edge of the table, panting with fury.

"Don't dare touch me! I hate you!"

Carlotta languidly dropped back on the lounge. Her half-shut, dreamy eyes contemplated the wife silently.

"You are a destroyer of homes, of human lives! You come into my life and steal from me the only treasure I have, my husband's love. You make a widow of me and an orphan of my child. There is no goodness in you. With your blandishments, you have stolen my husband. You are a thief! I loathe and despise you!"

Esther put all her soul into her denunciation. The two women gazed straight at each other. Carlotta had bitten her cigarette in two. There was a dull sombre light in her half-shut eyes. Her wonderful shoulders moved at last in the faintest sort of a shrug.

"Capital, my little tragedienne; I never saw it done better. However, you came to see me with a purpose. You came to ask something of me. What is it?"

"I will accept nothing from you."

"Not even your husband?"

"No!"

"Well," scornfully, "you can have him—if you can get him. We will let him choose."

Esther was breathing hard.

"The choice is already made," she said.

"I have no will to interfere with his desires as betrayed in the letter I have. I renounce all claim to him. He is yours!"

"Not yet," said Carlotta, rising suddenly. "You misunderstand me. I want you to know that my sympathies are with you, and that I am not as bad as you think I am. I am going to be fair. Unless he is willing to choose me in your presence, I renounce him forever. If he has told you he loves you, and he has told me he loves me, he has lied to one of us. The fairest way to settle this matter is to go before him."

"It is not necessary—"

"Pardon me, it is necessary—and possible." Carlotta pointed to an ornulu clock. "In four minutes, if he keeps his word, and he has never failed me yet, he will be here."

Esther clutched at her heart. Ed coming here! So he had not gone to Syracuse, after all. He had lied to her. He was in New York, and would be presently in this house—

She started to leave. Her whole soul rose in rebellion against the plan of facing him before this woman. She felt a horror, and a repugnance beyond expression. But Carlotta stepped before her. She was big and powerful.

"It is too late to get away, dear," she said tensely. "Listen!"

The click of the outside door was heard. The low voice of the maid, heavy footsteps, and a man's voice.

An insane frenzy seized Esther. Never would she face Ed in that place. She wrenched herself free and darted for a side door. She was too quick for Carlotta and sped through it. There was a narrow passage and she followed it, luckily to a side entrance. Dashing down a flight of stairs, she reached the street.

How she got home she never remembered. Finally, faint and quivering, she burst into her own apartment and bolted the door. She paced the floor wildly, wringing her hands. Her married life, her dreams, her hopes and joys had all come to this. Ed, her husband, the man she had so blindly worshipped, was false. It was terrible!

For a long time she tried to fight it out, there, alone by herself, and to conquer the impulse to self-destruction. How desolate the world was, how barren was life! In the midst of her hysteria there came a gentle tap at the door.

"Mrs. Stanton!"

It was the voice of her good neighbor, Mrs. Belden. With a great effort she composed herself and staggered to the door. As she opened it, little Homer came leaping into her arms.

"I want my mamma, my own mamma!"

She caught him up and kissed him



frantically, lifting her tear-wet face finally to articulate:

"So kind of you, Mrs. Belden. I cannot thank you enough."

"The little boy has done nothing but call for you, Mrs. Stanton. Why, my dear, are you ill? Are you in trouble?"

The kindly neighbor placed a motherly arm about her waist. Esther controlled herself long enough to say:

"Yes, but I cannot explain it now. You are so kind, Mrs. Belden. Thank you, so much!"

"All right, my dear. Call me if you need me."

Esther closed the door, and with Homer in her arms staggered back into the living room. She sank into a chair. The little fellow was cooing with happiness.

"Homer loves 'oo, mamma. 'Oo is my dear mamma. I waited so long."

"Darling one, we have only each other now," whispered the stricken woman. Then, as the little fellow slid out of her lap and played at her feet, she tried to think clearly what it was best to do.

Of course, it was all over between her and Ed. The old life was buried. She must look to the future. She must live for little Homer.

How could he have done it? What spell had that woman cast about him? She had believed him honest, noble and true. Bitterness raged in her heart, a terrible sense of wrong.

"Pease, mamma dear, I'se awful hungry. Pease, can I have a pum?"

"Bless your little heart," sobbed the afflicted woman. "Mamma is cruel to forget you. Yes, you shall have a nice big plum. We'll go right now and—"

She caught sight of something in the little fellow's chubby fist. It was a white envelope, tightly rolled.

"What have you there, Homer? Give it to me."

"It's a letter for 'oo, mamma. The postman camed while you was away."

Mechanically she took the letter from the tight little fist and unrolled and smoothed it out. As she glanced at the superscription, she gave a start. It was Ed's handwriting and addressed to her.

She saw also that the postmark was Syracuse and it was dated the previous

night. Puzzled, she tremblingly tore the envelope open. Numb with wonder, she read:

"MY DEAR LITTLE WIFIE:

"This is to let you know that I got through all right. I am writing to say also that I met Hovey on Forty-second street while I was running for the train. It seems that Saturday night, when we came down on the same train from Syracuse, we accidentally exchanged rain-coats. You will find his coat in the parlor in the chair where I left it. If he calls for it, please let him have it. Also, I may be home Tuesday night, being called back to the city—"

She read no more. The room whirled about her for a moment as a thrilling realization of her great mistake burst upon her.

The coat was not Ed's, but Hovey's. She had not announced her name when she had called on Carlotta, and had of course naturally been taken for the other wife. Ed was in Syracuse, after all, and it was Hovey from whom she had fled. The truth, coming with a rush, brought vivid reaction. With a wild scream of joy she caught Homer up in her arms and fled to the kitchen.

The afternoon sun was flooding through the western window, seeming to replace latent gloom with the brilliant light of restored happiness. A flock of English sparrows chirped and fluttered on the window ledge, a hurdy-gurdy in the street below burst into melody.

It was all in keeping. The sudden transition slightly weakened her, but she pulled little Homer's chair to the table, ensconced him in it and covered him with kisses. Then she flew for the pans and cooking dishes, the words of a love song trilling on her lips.

"Mamma, is 'oo going to give Homer suffin' to eat?"

"Am I, darling?" she cried, from a fullness of heart. "You shall have everything you want, and Mamma is going to cook some lovely things, for listen, pet, papa is coming home to-morrow night, your papa, and my husband—the best, truest man on earth—my husband."



## AN EYE FOR AN EYE

*By William A. McGarry*

**A**N almost imperceptible zephyr from the elm-shaded avenue eddied through the raised window of Clayton's beautiful mansion, swaying the silken curtains ever so slightly. A little cloud of pungent powder smoke lazily rose, disintegrated and was carried away.

Clayton, in evening dress, stood stupidly over the prone bodies of Marsden, his lifelong chum, and she who had been his wife. The revolver, given him by the dead man on their first trip after big game, was in his hand. It was an automatic, needing but the slightest pressure to let loose its messengers of death.

A pool of blood from the breast of the woman stained the carpet a darker hue. She lay as she had fallen, save her right arm which, thrown up in protection, had limply relaxed and settled to her side. Her heaving breast had grown still and no sound but the breathing of Clayton broke the intense stillness.

Marsden, his features distorted in a death-grin of fear, had not moved; his body lay crumpled as though every bone were broken. A bell clanged somewhere in the house, but Clayton took no heed. It was followed by a crash, and a squad of blue-coats led by the precinct captain entered, with drawn revolvers. The automatic was taken from Clayton's unresisting hand and he was manacled. No questions were asked. They were unnecessary.

Time passed unnoticed, and Clayton sat mute and unseeing behind the narrow bars. He slept and ate mechanically. The protestations of friendship and offers of help which had plenteously at first reached his cell passed without answer, and now he was left severely alone.

Only once did he speak—just before

the jury went out. The unwritten law was his defense. He said but little—a word picture of his life as it had been before his one-time friend stepped in; a sketch of his ideals, the feelings that came to him when he saw his home had been destroyed—that was all. Then again he sank into the chair, silent, morose.

Presently a stir followed by a death-like hush marked the return of the jury. A deep voice sounded unnecessarily loud in the stifling stillness of the court room. "Not guilty!" it said.

As one in a dream Clayton walked from the place. He submitted passively to congratulations. Dully, without thought, he answered business questions from his lawyer—whose face bore a look of conscious pride at the victory. A taxicab, called by a friend, stopped at the curb to receive him. He was sharply reminded that he had not paid the fare as he left the vehicle before the door of his home.

Home! The unspoken word jarred on his nerves. Things were sadly out of place. Why did this picture persist in staring at him? Why this odd Japanese chair, his last birthday gift to her, always bar his way? All the house seemed wrapped in an atmosphere of gloom and despair; voices called from corners, behind chairs, but the suddenly lighted electrics revealed no one.

Petulantly he invaded the upper regions of the house. A drawer in his bureau slid open, creaking, to his pull. A blued, burnished automatic, mate to that other, sparkled before his eyes. Unthinkingly his fingers closed over it.

As in a dream he wandered back to that room he had left months ago, manacled, accused. He gazed unseeing into the chilly, blued barrel of the weapon



in his hand. His eyes strayed around, then fell on the dark stain on the rug. He forced himself to look away—then he found the stain again before his eyes. It seemed to mock him and once he thought he heard it chuckle. His blood froze in his veins as it dissolved, took shape and showed—her face.

For many minutes he gazed into her eyes. They were sad and reproachful. Perhaps, after all, he had been wrong, hasty. He could see her as she looked the first day they met—then as she looked on their wedding day. And he had killed her, perhaps without cause. He forgot that a jury of his peers had acquitted him—forgot everything except that now fear of the death to which he had sent her was on him.

Summoning all his will, he tore his gaze from the dark, ominous stain. Again his eyes fastened on the blued muzzle of the revolver. Nervously toying with the safety catch, his fingers unloosed it. The whirl of an automobile passing on the Avenue grew less distinguishable. Then it took strength and swelled into an eerie moan of anguish. It sounded to him like an accusation. Again he called on his will and unconsciously his muscles tightened, answering the leaping surge of his heart.

The double grip of the automatic released a spring hidden in its perfect steel heart. As quick as thought itself the mechanism obeyed its law; an empty shell flew out with a snap; there was a dull thud—then silence.

Outside, a blue-coat, idly swinging his club and ruminating on the law which allowed a rich man to go free, suddenly stiffened as the hound at bay. All sign of laziness left him and he bounded up the steps of the mansion two at a time. A whistle sounded. For the second time the massive front door was forced open; for the second time a squad of police entered the gorgeously furnished parlor of Clayton's home. An odor of powder smoke met them, strong and pungent. A rapidly enlarging pool of blood was darkening the outlines of an already dark, ugly stain on the rug. Open-mouthed, the blue-coats stood, tense and silent.

A rattling of curtain rings boomed, almost deafening, in their ears. Silently the captain—he who had led that other squad—turned and gestured and the men filed out, leaving one on guard. Again all was silent, save the whispering breeze, fanning the smoke and rustling the silken curtains.

---

## MUTUAL

*By Henry G. P. Spencer*

These lines I write to you,  
 You imp in woman's guise,  
 You'll say unjust—untrue!  
 But, Sweet, I do not rue  
 For looking in your eyes.

With plighted lips you swore:  
*I have kissed none but you!*  
 And then you gave me more  
 Of love's delicious store,  
 And I—but I lied, too.



## GENEROUS GEORGE

*By Townsend Cushman*

**W**E'RE engaged! Maybe it's not just the manly thing for a suffragist to do, but George is as strong on suffragism as I am, and as he's in the soup too, he can't call the kettle black—and—don't give me away—such delicious bouillon it is! But, anyhow, George is too generous and broad to say unkind things about slipping up.

We've known each other so long that we could freely talk over everything and he's going to allow me—I mean I'm going to have perfect freedom when we're married. He says he believes thoroughly in a woman having the equal right of a man to work and I mustn't think of giving up my job pounding a typewriter down at the monopoly Trust. And he's so clear-headed that he sees all possible contingencies. And good! Why, he says my salary may help out like everything at times, for he's selling goods on commission, and when business is poor my fifteen per may be mighty useful to us. Just think of little me being able to lend a hand in dull times, and George says it's nearly always dull in July and August and no use in his even going 'round to call on customers, so he will stay home and look after the house, and, to keep from worrying, will take little runs down to Coney for a dip in the surf, and get home feeling fit and fine when I come up from the office. Poor fellow, he says he can't do that now, because when he's not making anything he can't do these stunts. Isn't he good to let me help out like that?

And he says, whenever I'm tired even-

ings, he won't bother about my trying to entertain him, and I can just settle down in my big arm-chair I bought last year as a Christmas present to myself, and enjoy the evening paper when he's finished it, and he'll go 'round to his little club so I can have a real quiet, restful evening. Think of the poor fellow going out to try and get a little amusement, just so I won't feel the need of any effort to keep up!

Then, too, he says, if any time I'm really sick and not able to be up and around, I can go to Mother's until I feel entirely well enough to attend to my household duties in the mornings and evenings before I go to the office and on my return. I just hate to think of the dear, lonely boy eating at restaurants while I'm at Mother's, but he says I mustn't worry about him, and just hurry and get well, for fear those old Monopoly people might fire me if I was away too long. Isn't he thoughtful, only my welfare in mind and no matter about himself!

And one rather delicate subject we touched on, too, but you know I said we knew each other so long and well, and in these modern broad times what does anything matter, anyhow? Well, I spoke of what I would like our children to accomplish and become in life, and George—good, generous George!—he said he did not want us to have any, as it would add a lot to my work and care, and that anyhow it was so effeminate! Of course, I've always claimed to be a staunch suffragist and I suppose I shouldn't do anything womanly if I can help it—but!

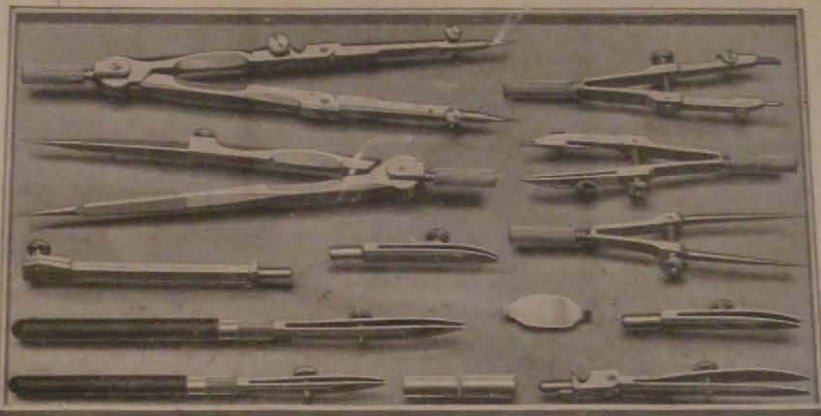




# Free! \$15 Draftsman's Working Outfit

**YES, I will** give you this complete set of drawing instruments absolutely free. They are regular working instruments—the kind I use myself—

and they do not cost you a penny. And besides the instruments in this exquisite plush lined leather case, I will give you absolutely free a 20 x 25 inch drawing board, a 24-inch T square, a 12-inch rule, a supply of drawing paper, 2 triangles, a French curve, pencils, erasers, thumb tacks, etc. A complete draftsman's working outfit. And I give it to the men who get my personal instruction absolutely free.



## Draftsmen Are Needed in All Lines of Business



### "Your Salary is Raised 50%"

"Through your knowledge and skill this magnificent structure was made possible. Because your working plans were absolutely accurate in every detail we have finished it successfully. We are proud of you. Your salary is raised 50 per cent."

That is the praise a trained draftsman heard the other day. He had learned drafting and designing in the practical way and his work was right. The president of the big construction company recognized the value and vital importance of the draftsman's work and raised his salary from \$200.00 to \$300.00 a month. Send the coupon today for the new book about the drafting profession.

THE draftsman holds a responsible position in almost every line of business. Manufacturing, machinery, construction, designing—choose any line of business that appeals to you and there you will find the man with the draftsman's knowledge holding the position of power—with the high salary. The profession offers almost unlimited opportunities. Skilled men are in demand and always will be. Send the coupon now for the book that tells about the achievements that are within your reach.

### Chief Draftsman Will Instruct You Personally

In my position as Chief Draftsman of a large company, I know the kind of training that is necessary for the men who hold the highest paid positions. You can get it. During my spare time I am training ambitious men in their own homes. They are getting practical, thorough training in those departments of the profession that will qualify them to accept responsible positions. Send the coupon at once for the new book that I am sending free.

### Send the Coupon for Big New Book!

Put your name and address in coupon or on a letter or a post card now and get the new book on drafting that I am giving away free. No obligations of any kind. You should read this book carefully. Don't delay. Write for it right now. Your copy is waiting for you.

**Chief Draftsman Dobe** Engineer's Equipment Co. Div. 1523 — Chicago, Ill.

**Chief Draftsman Dobe**  
Engineer's Equipment Co.  
Div. 1523 Chicago, Ill.

Without any obligations to me whatever, please mail your book "Successful Draftsmanship," and full particulars of your liberal "Personal Instruction" offer to a few students. It is understood that I am obligated in no way whatever.



Name.....

Address.....





# 3 $\frac{1}{3}$ ¢ a Day

Pick out one of the glorious radiant Lachnite Gems—set in solid gold and get it on **ten days free trial**. Wear it to the ball—to the opera—on the street—to work—everywhere—for 10 full days—then decide whether you wish to buy or not. If you are not fascinated by its radiance—if you consider its splendor one trifle less than that of a mined diamond—send it back at our expense. You don't pay us a penny for the trial. If you decide to keep it, pay the rock bottom price (1-30th as much as a diamond costs) as you can afford. Terms as low as 3 $\frac{1}{3}$ ¢ a day (50¢ a month), without interest. No red tape. Your credit is good with the great House of Lachman. Send coupon for new jewelry book,

## Marvelous New Discovery

A problem of the ages has been solved. Science has at last produced a gem of dazzling brilliance. They are called Lachnites, and resemble mined diamonds so closely that many people of wealth are preferring them. Lachnites stand fire and acid tests and cut glass. Get one on trial today. Wear it before you decide to buy.

**Set in Solid Gold** Lachnites are not imitations. These precious gems are the master products of science—the realization of the dreams of centuries. They are never set in anything but solid gold. Write for the new catalog and see the exquisite new settings for yourself. All kinds of rings, bracelets, LaVallieres, necklaces, scarf pins.

## Send the Coupon for New Jewelry Book

Put your name and address in the coupon and send to us at once for the big new book of exquisite Lachnite Gems. Read the fascinating story of how at last Science has conquered Nature and has produced a glorious radiant gem. They cost but 1-30 as much as diamonds and wear forever. Do not delay an instant. Put your name and address in the coupon now—get the free book immediately while this great offer lasts. Do it today—right now.

### Harold Lachman Company

12 No. Michigan Ave.—Dept. 1383 Chicago, Ills.



### Harold Lachman Company

12 No. Michigan Avenue,  
1383—Chicago, Illinois

Gentlemen: Please send me absolutely free and prepaid your new Jewelry book and full particulars of your free trial, easy payment plan. I assume no obligations of any kind.

Name.....

Address.....