

10 STORY BOOK

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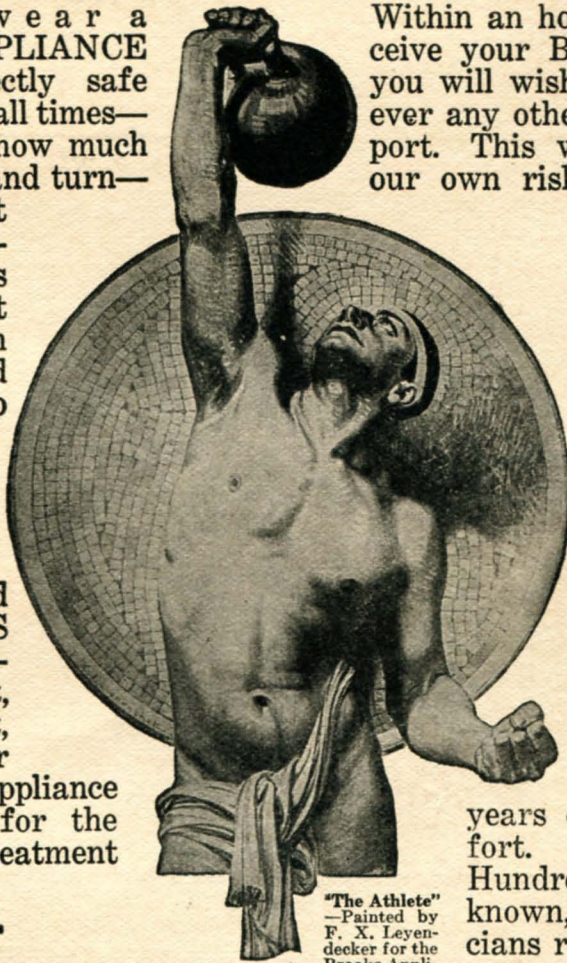
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10 STORY BOOK



Vol. 21, No. 4

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Twenty-First Year

S. KEELER—Editor

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And a few peppy little skits

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Maria Understands Too Late

by A. Elliot Kinkade

MARIA Cabeza had a well defined animosity for all of the seemingly smug, well fed, aloof church people that she had ever come into contact with—accidentally. And it certainly was an unforeseen occurrence when her path crossed with any church member, that is, until she deliberately placed herself in the way of Rev. Ralph Orton. But, wait—

One must admit that, from Maria's point of view, she had little to thank the church people for, and much charged against them in her ignorant little mind. Slumming parties came through San Francisco's Barbary Coast, loudly condemning, or full of lofty and supercilious pity.

At times she would see church papers in the pockets of men who "visited" the parlors of the Coast very regularly, and so she was extremely wrathful when others of that same church would step to the door-way of the parlor and hand pamphlets to the girls, stepping out again as soon as possible. And these propaganda sheets were so unsympathetic and highly condemnatory that they antagonized the ones they were meant to help.

Had Ralph Orton preached in one of the big churches, Maria would never have concentrated all of her venom in a plot against him; but Orton was brought to mind every time she saw the big sign

of his "Life-Saving Mission"—near the heart of what was then known as one of the largest "segregated districts" in America.

Maria used to rage at the Life-Saving Mission, shaking her tiny balled-up fist at it as she passed by on the way to a matinee with some one of the girls.

"The so hypocritical pig-dogs!" she would rant. "Those very lying songs lose to us many thousands of the dollars all the months! *Ollas podrida!* Why, boys come to Frisco from long distance, lonesome for to see us girls, and smell our expensive face powders, and spend much money for the rights to embrace us and be with us.

"The theatres have fine, grand poster pictures of girls with such a nudeness that those mens can hardly wait to hunt us up, dance with us, and spend money here with us," she would go on to elaborate.

Then came the business of waving fists at the Mission, as she attained a climax:

"What have we then? Why, lots of those mens hear the chantings coming up from that most accursed place, and turn to the theatres before they have seen us at all. Sometimes we are left with so small the pickings, after the 'house' takes their share, and our dollars go to the shows and to the saloons."

But the girls would pass on to the

theatre, striving to get a little joy from their "afternoon off duty"; and feeling jaffled at any attempt to take revenge on any of the world that sneered at them and yet used them, that coaxed and tricked them into "the oldest profession" and then ostracized them for following it.

* * *

María was feeling more dissatisfied than usual, the day that her idea come for revenge on a section of society. She had imbibed too much wine, the night before, and awoke to her "day off" with a dark taste in her mouth and dark thoughts teeming in her aching head.

"That's it!" she exclaimed to herself, as the idea came to her. "I'll call Jimmy Gallups up to the telephone, and he will help me fix those so-much-better-than-me peoples. He likes me, and would fix up a little flat for me if he could afford so."

She dreamt a minute over the possibility of getting Jimmy to marry her, if she was very, very nice to him in a little flat of their own for a while. But the aching head was not conducive to daydreams, so she shook herself awake and concluded, as she went to telephone to Jimmy:

"Perhaps this thing shall be what he calls 'great scoop story'; and will give to him the fame and more monies enough so we will have that much to be desired flat. *Quien sabe?* And, anyhow, Jimmy hates peoples that claims to be better than they are so!"

Jimmy met María at Portsmouth Square, and wanted her to talk the story over with him at a cafe. She refused, and they sat down on a bench and watched fat Chinese babies rolling and tumbling on the Square, while she outlined the story.

María's tale was that a certain preacher had made amorous advances to her, and that she expected him to call at the room

she had at All-Nations Rooms on Kearny street. She explained her idea of turning that call into a sensational news story, for the satisfaction of a grudge she claimed to have for that particular minister, and for Jimmy's benefit.

Jimmy was not told the exact particulars of it all, but he enthusiastically accepted the idea—and promised to confide the secret, that there might be "something doing" at All-Nations Rooms, to a staff photographer. The photographer was to take a certain room, and watch for developments in María's room.

With the main details settled, Jimmy rushed away to an appointment and María wended her way to the clerk's desk at the All-Nations Rooms. That worthy was a supposedly reformed pickpocket, having given up the lifting of pocket-books as being too dangerous an occupation—after finishing five years in San Quentin penitentiary. But—he stood in with all of the underworld, and was very willing to help María put her plans into operation.

It was a long, tedious job—the writing of the story to be given to the newspaper—but the clerk finally finished a draft of it which suited María. This was to be held by the clerk until Rev. Orton arrived. Then it was to be given to Jimmy, if he could get over at the right time. Otherwise it was to be sent into the newspaper office by the photographer, who would turn it over to Jimmy Gallups for editing.

* * *

The afternoon service was over, and Rev. Ralph Orton had just emerged from the Mission, when he was accosted by a diminutive urchin.

"You're the guy what preaches at this here place?" came the piping voice, in a tone fondly imagined to be serious and important.

"Yes, sonny," answered Orton; "what can I do for you?"

"Nothin' fer me," said the boy. "But here is a letter that was handed to me in front of a rooming house, to give you."

"Here is a dime for you, young man," Orton said, taking the envelope from the grimy hand. As the boy sped away, he read:

"Señor Ralph Orton:

"I know you do preaching at the Mission, and send this letter by one small boy to ask great favors. Come quick, please, to my room and see me. Maybe I will die soon of a great accident, and you could help. Just you, no one else. Quick.

"María Teresa Cabeza."

Rev. Orton tucked the note in a pocket, and started for the bedside of the writer. Arriving at the rooming house, he found no clerk on duty. After ringing the call bell twice, he started down the corridor, scanning the door numbers as he passed.

Had Orton glanced backwards, he would have noticed the widely grinning countenance of the clerk, who had quickly appeared after the minister had started looking for No. 23. Not having done so, he continued the search until he recognized the right number and then he tapped lightly on the door. No response. He tapped louder.

"Come in," invited a feeble sounding voice.

María lay in the cheap bed, snugly covered. The window was closed and the blind almost touching the window sill; but there was enough light for Ralph Orton to see that her shoes and stockings were on the floor and the remainder of her clothes on the one chair.

María was as pale and sick looking as it was possible to make herself appear. She had used neither face tint nor rouge today, but had been liberal in the use of white talcum. Also, some pencilled lines

and shadows contributed in making her look rather ghastly.

"Shut the door," she commanded; so Orton closed the door, and came over to the bedside, raising the blind.

"I came as soon as I received your note," he said gently.

"Ge me—note—pencil—to write," María panted.

Orton pulled the note from his pocket, and gave it to her, together with a pencil: For a minute she appeared to ponder, then she scribbled:

"Talk low, not so to hurt the poor sick head. Tell me of your religion and your Christo."

Orton stooped over and read what she had written, moved her clothes to the foot of the bed, and sat down—never noticing that she had retained the paper in her hand, or not caring whether she did or not.

Then he began to tell of the predictions of the coming of a Messiah, how they were fulfilled at the birth of Jesus Christ, of the visit of the wise men, of the baptism of Christ, of the selection of his apostles from the poorest of the land.

He told of the temptations of the wilderness, of what Christ had said to those who would have stoned the woman taken in the very act of sin, and of the humility and humbleness Christ taught and exemplified by washing the feet of those who worshipped him.

María listened very scornfully, at first, although she made shift to conceal it. But, as the tale went on, she grew interested and wondering—in spite of herself. Was this really Christianity? Was she making a mistake in plotting against a part of the people holding such a belief, through besmirching their teacher and leader?

There came a reversion to her original plan, before the tale was finished, however. Her thoughts went back to her at-

tempt at turning "respectable," how she had taken a position as cook in a wealthy house, how she had thought those church members would help her grow better, how a son of the house had returned home from a visit and recognized her and caused her dismissal amid violent recriminations. Yes, they were all alike! And all hypocrites! So she gritted her teeth together and strove to close her ears, as she waited for the stipulated time to pass, before going ahead with her plan. Just so he remained in her room for the time that the story stated, and that—

* * *

The last glance at her wrist watch had just told María that it was time for the more active part of the drama. Orton had been telling of the Ascension, when she interrupted:

"No more story, now, please!"

"Then let us have a little prayer together, just you and I," he said.

"You do look so clean and strong," María replied. "Come, put your head by mine, on the pillows so, where I can look in the eyes and feel you to be here more. For, ah, things are blacker before these eyes!"

Ralph Orton bent his head until it almost touched the pillow, and she threw her arms about his neck. He partly raised up, then recalled that he was dealing with a sick woman, and placed his hands on her shoulders, as he said:

"You should not cling to *me*. Throw yourself on Jesus."

She let go with one arm long enough to pull back the covers of the bed. Then she clasped him tighter, as she answered:

"Ah, Señor Orton must let me die in my own way. Yes? And, as my own life leaves me, I so want to feel your strong life very close, and the man feeling of you. Lie for the little bit—with me—and the strong arms holding me

fastly tight. No one can see—us here—as María dies."

María was panting and moaning softly, her eyes closed. But her arms held him and drew him down to the bed, and she moved her shapely form over to give him room.

Orton did not know what to do. The touch of the woman, her supposedly serious condition, the fact that they were alone, and her insidious appeals were more than he could resist. The strength went out of him, and he lay beside her, throwing arms about her in a comforting embrace.

"I would be a poor sort of comforter, indeed, if I refused her strange request, and struggled with a dying woman," his thoughts ran.

Yet, even as the thoughts ran through his mind, he felt as though something was wrong. The form in his arms seemed pulsing with strong life, and contact with the scantily clad woman set his pulses hammering. He was aghast at the riot of passions and impulses that surged through him, and decided he must move away from her—lest he do something that would be a scorching memory throughout the rest of his life.

As Orton stirred, intending to put his latest thought into action, María hooked one leg over him, so he desisted. But, stranger still, she had stopped moaning and panting, and her face assumed a tantalizing, inviting sort of look—while a half smile was on her lips.

Suddenly he became conscious that she was glancing past him in the direction of the window, her leg loosened its hold, and a tragic look overspread her face. Simultaneously there came a blinding glare of light, and an acrid smell met their nostrils.

They seemed to be stricken motionless, for a moment. Then something of the meaning of the whole thing smote him,

and he wrenched himself free and bounded from the bed.

María exhibited a surprising vigor, when she hopped nimbly from the bed and darted to the door. There she turned the key and then abstracted it from the lock, before turning to face him.

"I understand your scheme now, you wretched woman!" said Orton, in very perturbed tones. "You are planning to ruin my reputation. You shall not do it. Give me that note and the door key, or—by all that is holy—I swear I will tear them from you."

"No use of fuming now," she announced, backing away from him, towards the bed. "But you might as well be hung for a sheeps as well as for one goat, so you may come and have the feel you did get somethings from your visit. I perhaps owe to you so much as that, and it will be very easy to pay up, to you."

Ralph Orton took a step towards her, whether to follow her suggestion, or to chastise her, or merely to wrest away the key can not be known. Then he halted, turned and threw himself into the one chair and bowed himself over on the little stand—arms outflung and hiding his twitching face. His lips were moving, but all María caught was an indistinct mutter of sound.

"But you did want to love me and hold me," she accused. "The woman, she can always see and feel when it is so. Well, you can yet. Am I not well formed and graceful? Now that I wipe off this stuff from the face, am I not pretty, *muy bonita*? And I find out now that I have begin to desire that I pay you in the most, best way I can."

"Yes," admitted Orton, slowly, raising his head; "I did want to make love to you, as you understand it. Thank God, I did not!"

María picked up a match from the

stand, and was very evidently intending to burn the note that she still held in her hand; but Orton started up and tried to grasp hold of it.

"You shall not burn that note!" he growled, desperately. "It is my justification to the world for my presence here, to support my word."

He snatched again at the note, but she threw herself across the bed, away from him. He followed, reaching for the hand which held the slip of paper. He did not think of the fact that he was outstretched on her body, but—another person noticed it. Flash! Again that blinding flash from the window.

"Ah!" panted the girl, in a half smothered voice; "they certainly got one grande fine picture of you and the bed, but me was mostly covered up from the sight."

And María laughed maliciously, as a horrified expression swept across the man's face, as he scrambled off the bed.

Orton rushed to the window, the upper sash of which was down. Looking out, he found that the fire escape stairway ran down past the top of the window, to the landing at a hall window. And on that landing a man stood, with a camera and equipment slung over his shoulder. He was rolling up a rope ladder which he had evidently used, or intending using. When he saw Orton he dropped the rope and scurried through the landing window, camera and all.

Orton gave one backwards glance at the girl, and found that she had been burning the note and was now washing the tiny charred fragments of it down the drain pipe of the wash bowl. Then he climbed out on the window sill.

Grasping a portion of the fire escape, Orton steadied himself. Then he took hold with his other hand and swung outwards, clear of the building. His intention was to work to the outer edge of the

stairway, apparently, and then climb over the bannister and escape.

Inch by inch he swung along towards the outer edge. On reaching it he threw a leg up and hooked it, resting a second.

María was now standing at the window, forgetful of her semi-nude condition—or uncaring. She was watching him closely, but without trying to keep him from escape or without saying a word.

Orton had hardly stopped to rest, when he noticed María. That seemed to spur him onwards, and he started to swing out from under, and over (or through) the railings. It looked incredible, but he slipped and hurtled through the air to the paving below.

María screamed, and flew to the door. It seemed to her that her fumbling fingers were all thumbs, but she finally succeeded in unlocking it, and rushed to the desk, crying:

"A man has just fallen from the fire escape. I saw it from my window. Call an ambulance."

Flash! An acrid smell! A blinding light!

It was the camera man, taking the final picture of the disarray of her clothes, which had been torn and pinned up in the preparations for the convincing story. María had forgotten the photographer, and the plot, for the moment. Orton's conversation and Orton's accident had made a combination which turned her against the cherished plan.

"I must stop that story, and those photos, and the affidavit from going to the paper. I must stop the filing of suit against Orton," she decided swiftly, her arm still before her face—where she had flung it after the flash.

She lurched towards the stairway, calling the photographer, who had rushed away. The worthy had the notes of the story in his pocket, and the affidavits,

and was hurrying with proverbial newspaper-man speed. He did not understand what she was saying, merely waving a jubilant hand at her as he disappeared from sight.

María would have followed, but everything grew black—she seemed to be slipping, sliding into the dark. For the first time in her life, in all probability, she had fainted.

* * *

María came to herself, after a long period of unconsciousness, in her own room. The clerk had worked over her a bit, but had been alarmed at her condition. He had called another roomer, a woman, and they had gotten her to the bedroom.

"There, dearie!" soothed the woman. "You'll be alright, now. No wonder that you fainted. But that dreadful man got his anyway—the dirty Pharisee! The undertaker will have him when the coroner is through with him."

"Oh, Madre de Dios!" exclaimed María, breaking into tears.

After a moment, she said:

"Please let me have talk with the clerk. Yes?"

The woman left the room. Soon María's chief accomplice was closeted with her. And it was a very surprising sort of María who met him, shaking him and asking whether the story had been stopped from going to the newspaper.

"No, it was a thriller!" he answered. "See, here is a copy."

He read the headlines to her:

WHITED SEPULCRE MEETS JUST
END!!

Rev. Orton Attacks Working Girl;
And Is Killed Attempting
to Escape

"It's all here, and perfect," enthused the clerk. "It even tells of your inten-

tion to prosecute Orton in the courts, if he had not fallen to death in attempting to escape."

"Ah, me! Listen, I have been the most worst of all my badness in planning this to hurt that man which now is dead. He was really good, and did not make love to me. What the pictures show is but lies, and he resist my charms and hold himself pure as the son of God."

"Well, well!" exclaimed the clerk. "He didn't fall for all of your wiles then? He must have had superhuman self-control. But, anyway, you was hitting at those canting hypocrites that he lead, through him, and this gives their influence a body blow. They'll have to close up the Mission now. If they don't, it won't stop the dollars from coming to you girls any more, anyhow."

"I will then say how much I have tell lies, and help the Mission to be even better help to Barbary Coast than ever before—to help save the ones that sin, and keep the respectable peoples from sinning there."

"You fool!" stormed the clerk. "Did that chanting preacher give you a dose of religion? You can't help matters now if you wished. The story has gone out. A denial would be thought of as an indication that you had been paid hush money to keep quiet. And most people would not believe it, after this story and the pictures."

"Oh, yes; they shall believe that I lied," she said, in a tense sort of tone. "I know the way to make them believe, and understand. Leave me, now, *si quiere*."

Maria pushed the astonished and angry clerk out of her room, and threw herself upon the bed. She delivered herself over to a torrent of grief and remorse.

Presently, she became quieter, and lay gazing at the ceiling as her sobbing subsided to occasional heaves and sniffs, and ceased. Then she arose and procured

articles from the stand drawer, and sat down with them all within easy reach.

She wrote busily for some time, pausing to look words up in a little *Español-Inglés* dictionary and then continuing her labors. When the missive was written, she carefully re-read it, and made numerous corrections. Then—

Crash! Thur! A loud pistol report, and the sound of a falling body! It penetrated the thin walls, and came to the ears of a number of rooms, as well as to the clerk. They hurried to the door of No. 23.

"The door is locked, but my pass key will let us in," said the clerk.

The crowd entered the room as soon as the door was opened, but drew back at what they saw. For the girl's body lay sprawled on the floor in a pool of blood, the soggy clothing showing it to be a heart wound.

"She made a good job of it," said the clerk, raising up from his position of listening for a heartbeat. "And here is a letter," he went on. "Perhaps she made an explanation."

"To all Peoples of San Francisco:

"This is not to tell of me so much, though I was what you call *tricked* into the doing of the business I keep on doing for money. It was easier so and I made much more moneys for long time, and never wished for to try to be good.

"After whiles, I want to be respectables and good, and find it was hard, that some people's who claimed to be good churches members would not let me. I get one job—but fired out when peoples find who was Maria, and not listen to me that I am reform.

"That make me hate all church peoples, and I see the Mission church peoples keep money away from to be spend on us girls too, and me I am more angry yet. So I try to trick the leader of those peoples to do sin like other mens do, and fix it that newspapers tell crooked story without knowing it to be wrong. For even those much wicked photos lie, and he was try-

ing then to get the note I wrote him that I was sick to come see me, so he could it show.

"I trick him with letter, I tell lies with letter—so now I tell truth with letter that one can not hurt and make discredit those

mean peoples in the church without hurting all. I learn difference between the churchinity and christianity too late. So I prove this is true by killing myself for sorrow of what I do to Señor Orton."

"MARIA TERESA CABEZA."

FUEL ON SUBSCRIPTION

Old farmer Needmore called at the office of the village newspaper one cold winter day and told the editor to discontinue his paper, and gave as a reason that times were getting so close that it was impossible for him to get hold of any money.

"Well," countered the dispenser of deaths, births, and typographical errors, "I don't like to lose a good man from my list. If you are a little short on money, why not bring me a load of good heater wood. I am a little short on fuel anyway."

"No wood to spare," replied the farmer. "Have only just enough to last me through the winter."


"Then how about a load of poles; I can have them sawed up myself."

"No poles either; used 'em all to make cross fences."

"My Lord man $\frac{1}{2}$ Surely you have something in the shape of fuel I can burn. Don't you see that fire is out now? If you can't do any better, bring me in a load of cobs."

"Cobs the devil $\frac{1}{2}$ " snorted the old hayseed, "if I had a load of cobs, what the hell do you think I'd need with your paper?"

H. F. Jamison.



LOVE POWDERS

by Wm. P. Barron

Y ES'M, Miss Lucy, I'se done married fer shore, but I wouldner bin, if it hadn't ben fer them love powders down at Mr. Odum's drug store.

"Yes'm dats so. There am lots of frauds and fakes, but them love powders! They am de hot dogs!"

"You see, me ans Silas Steel, we have been keepin' company ever since dat cotton pickin' time down on Piney Creek. Dat is, off and on, 'scusin' dat time Silas wus in de pen fer killin' dat saw mill nigger 'bout a crap game. When Silas got outen de pen an' come home, he got ter actin' kinder biggerty like; thought he wus somethin' on a stick, 'cause he done killed a lil' bow legged nigger no bigger dan a suckin' baby.

"An den dat yaller gal whut maids fer Judge Lucas' wife, she got ter makin' eyes at him, an' dancin' dat Boll weevil wiggle wid him at de dances, so hit gin to look like All night Isom fer me!

"Yes'm dats so; hit don't do no good ter run atter no man, an' I didn't run atter Silas none. All I done wus ter bus' a lamp offen his head dat night over at de Nineteenth Grounds, atter he had done wiggled twict wid dat yaller hussy,

and set 'em up ter ice cream and sody pop, never mention' me nary time. I done dat jest ter giv' 'em a warnin' like. An' I told dat yaller parler lizard dat if she didn't keep dem slimy paws of hern offen Silas dat she would be on de coolin' boa'd 'bout two hours 'fore she knowd who had put her dere. Den dey pulled us loose, an' all de niggers lef' de Nineteenth Ground, so I cum on home too, my own self.

"Atter de Mill Doctor done sewed Silas' head up, he come on home, an' he shore wus bilen' mad. He 'lowed he warn't gwine ter let no common countrified nigger tell him whar ter head in, an' den bust his head open wid a lamp on top of dat. He jest kep on mouthin' and chompin' his bits whilst I wus gittin breakfas'. But I didn't pay dat nigger no min'. I jest went on fryin' po'k chops an' bilen' coffee, an' singin' "Keep youre lamp trimmed an' burnin'"; jest like he warn't no wheres near. We had bin up all night ter de dance at de Nineteenth Ground, an' I was hongry. So when breakfus was ready I sets down, an' gins ter eat. An' Silas he sets down too an' says:

"Alvirey," he says, "pass dem po'k chops." Jes lik dat! Gally and upitty I calls it!

Miss Luck, I jest looks at dat dagger de way you looked at dat Dago pedler dat time he tried ter sell you dat second han' pink corset; an' I says,

"Nigger," I says, "whut did you suggestiate? Say hit agin," I says. Countrified niggers gits cotten seed in dier years sometimes an' can't hear good. Say hit ergin."

"Woman," he says, an' de whites ob his eyes gin ter git yaller, an' I knowd what dat meant. "Woman, I axes yer who bought dem chops; who paid fer dat coffee settin' on de stove; Is you gwine ter pass or aint yer? 'Cause if you aint, de mill will have to shut down tomorrer so all de niggers kin go ter a nigger woman's funeral."

But he didn't no wyas skeer me! No Maam! He couldn't do no more dan kill me; he couldn't eat me, an' if he had er et me, I'd er spiled on his stomach. So I said,

"Silas, you didn't no ways buy dese po'k chops. Miss Lucy's paw did, and dis here coffee. You ain't spent nary a cent on dis home since you kim back from de Pen, 'scusin' dat nigger scent whut you is totin' 'round all de time. I didn't hear nobody say 'pass de ice cream an' sody pop ter Alvirey las' night over at de Nineteenth Grounds."

Den I went on chompin' on dem po'k chops jest like he warn't settin' dare at de table.

Well, one word brung on anudder; an' den we fit. An' Miss Lucy, take hit from me dat was a noble fite! But no triflin' crap shootin' chippy chasin' saw mill nigger kin hol' a hand wid a farm raised decent gal, who is staid at home at night an' slept stid er gadden er 'bout ter dances, an' shin digs, an' church fester-

vels an' sich. So, whin I got done wid dat nigger, Miss Lucy he looked like he had bin wrastlin' wid dat steam nigger whut rolls dem logs aroun' at de mill.

Den I sont aunt Mandy's lil' gal ayter de mill doctor, an' I lit out ter my sister's home, down on Piney creek, seven miles off. I 'lowed ter stay dere, Miss Lucy, and let dem saw mill niggers go dere own gait, 'cause I had done seed in my own min' dat a decent woman didn't stand no mo' show wid dem yaller mill chippies dan a June bug does wid a turkey gobbler.

But shucks! Miss Lucy, I couldn't no ways git dat nigger Silas outen my min'. I was plum crazy 'bout 'im! I stood hit jest as long as I could, Miss Lucy, but one day I got ter studyin' 'bout Silas, and I jest nathchurly couldn't git him, offen my min'. I was so worritated in my min' I went over 'cross de creek ter Aunt Tressy's house, an' gin her a dollar to conjure dat nigger outen my min'.

Aunt Tressy she set down in her conjure cheer, an' drunk poke berry wine an Jessermine root 'till she got plumb fiittified an' skerry lookin'; an' when she cum to she said,

"Honey, I can't move dat nigger offen your min', no ways I try. 'Cause some-way he has casted a spell on yer. All you can do is ter go to de drug sto' an' buy some lode stone, sew it up in your dress next ter your heart; an' den 'sides dat git some ob dem love powders an' gin 'em ter dat man. An' dats all de way you kin mov' dat spell. You mus' put a bigger one on him, wid dem love powders, and de lode stone."

Dat sounded reasonable, so I went on back ter my sisters an' tole 'em good bye, an' den I went on back ter de mill. De fust thing what I seed when I got dere was dat lil' yaller varmint settin' dere on de po'ch ob Silas' cabin. An'

she was settin' in my willer rockin' cheer too, whut I had bought an' paid for; two dollars down, an' fo' bits a month.

I mus' ter have looked lak death on a white hawse ter dat bunch er nothin', 'cause when she seed me, she jumped up an' run down de street to'rds de mill yellin' "Don' let 'er kil me! Don' let 'er kill me!" I wusn't noways studyin' dat woman. I wus plum ladylike an' dignificated. I jest walked in dat cabin, looked around 'til I foun' de pad lock dat went on de do'. Den I set down an' I writ a note which said, "Anybody whut tries ter bus' in dis do' whilst I'se gone, better repair ter meet dere God." Den I tuk de chain and de padlock an' I locked de do' good an' tite, an' I went over ter your house, and your maw gin me my cookin' job back.

Atter dat I went on ter Mr. Bud Odum's drug sto' an' I bought me two bits wu'th us Lode stone. An' den I said ter Mr. Odum, I says,

"Mister Bud, is you got some ob dem Love Powders?" "Some whut?" he says. "Love Powders," I says. "Powders whut if you put 'em in a man's coffee, makes him love yer. You know what I mean, Mr. Odum!" I says.

Mr. Odum coughed, an' went behine de Prescription counter an' stays a long time. Den he comes out er gin, an' he had a red box in his han'. Mr. Odum say, "Alvirey, here is some powders he says dat would make a man love yer he says, if you had done been dead 'bout a year." "How much," I says. "Money can't buy 'em," he says; "dere is jest one way ter git 'em, an' dats ter trade fer 'em. If you pays money fer 'em, you breaks de spell," he says.

I answered him plum lady like. I says, "Dat leaves me out den, Mr. Odum. 'Cause I allus sticks ter my own color," I says; jest like dat.

"My God, woman," Mr. Bud say. "Hush! My wife's back dere 'hind de pescription counter. Whut I means was you mus' ketch an' cook me a mess uv lil' perch fish some day soon," he says.

I wus plum mollified den, an' sorry I had spoke so suddent, but I was raised respectful, as you knows, Miss Lucy. So I says, "Certain shore, I ketch you dem fish, an' cook 'em too, an' fotch 'em over ter your house, any time you say. Giv' me dem Love Powders Mr. Bud, please sur."

An' so he did. Whilst he wus wrappin' 'em up, he says ter me:

"Alvirey, don't give more dan one uv dese powders at a time," he says. Dey shore is movin' medicine, an' if you gives too many God help you," he says. "Dat nigger mout love you plum' ter death."

So I tuck dem powders home. I 'lowed may be Silas mout come ter de cabin when he come in frum de woods whar he worked, so I cooked a good supper an' waited a long time, but no Silas. He knowed I wus dere I made short, cause dat yaller craw fish eater would have been bound ter tell him. Den I et de supper I cooked fer dat flirtacious nigger, an' went ter bed.

Nex' day Aunt Manday, whut runs de Colored Boa'din' House fer de Mill Folks, tole me Silas an' dat woman wus bo'din' at her house, an' sleepin' at de same place. Aunt Mandy an' me wus good friends, 'sides dat she didn't like fer no New Orleans nigger ter come around bustin' up couples dat expected ter git married 'fore nex' Gran' Jury Time, so she lit in ter help me. Sunday we knowed Silas would be at home. An' we knowd too, dat dat yaller pole cat couldn't cook nothin'. She couldn't bile water widout burnin' hit. So Aunt Mandy 'lowed ter leave Miss Yaller Gal ter do de cookin' Sunday whilst she went ter de Camp

Meetin' down ter Mt. Zion Church House! an' I wus ter do de res'.

I sewed dat lode stone in dat yaller dress what your maw giv' me, jest like Aunt Tressy tole me ter. Den I gin Aunt Mandy de Love Powders an' fo' bits ter put on in Silas' coffee ev'y day 'til Sunday. Den I went down ter de Mill Commissary wif de ten dollars whut your maw let me have, an' I bought lok de niggah bishop wus comin'. I filled my basket plum' full, an' went on back home.

Next day wus Sunday, an' Aunt Mandy done jest whut she 'lowed she would. She lef' dat boa'din' house ter run itself; er jest erbout dat, 'cause, as I said, dat New Orleans gal couldn't fry lard. She could braid white folks hair, an' shine dere finger nails, an' sich like doin's, but dat don't git no where when saw mill niggers is hongry.

'Long 'bout dinner time I seed Silas, and two mo's niggers comin' in from de Nineteenth ground whar dey had been shootin' craps all mornin'. Dey went in de house; I could see Aunt Mandy's house plain from de crack in my do'; hit wus jest acrost de street.

Den wus my time. I had done all dressed up in dat yaller dress your maw giv' me, wid de lode stone sewed in. I put a cake uv sweet soap in my bosum so I would smell sweet. Den I moved a table out on dat front po'ach next ter Aunt Mandy's, an' I put er dinner out der on dat table, Miss Lucy, dat would make a preacher lay his Bible down. Yes'm I shore did! An' you knows honey dat I is a kitchen queen; God knows I is.

I had cooked all dat mornin' an' laid a heavy han' on de seasonin. I had po'k chops, fried brown, and garlic rubbed on strong. I had de bestest sardines, an' fried liver an' onions, an' ice cream, an' red sody pop, an' a frosted cake wid candy h'arts stuck in de icein, an' a can

uv peaches. An' I had coffee wid your maws percolatum, an' eggs, an' oysters, an' apple fritters, an' pie. Miss Lucy hit wus shore some spread.

Purty soon, bout de time I got things all fixed, Silas, an' de res' ob de boa'ders cum out on Aunt Mandy's porch, an' set down. An' I set down too over at my home. And dere we all set, an' set. Aunt Mandy's stove pipe in de kitchen wus pourin' out de black pine wood smoke, but nothin' didn't 'pear ter git cooked. Dem men sot dere an' smoked an' talked an' sich like 'til nigh about a year. An' I sot on my po'ch an' rocked in my willer rocker, an' sung. I sung, "Don' be lak de foolish virgins when de bride groom cums." I 'lowed dey could a heard me plum out in Piney I sung so loud.

I didn't let on I wus payin' dem niggers no min', but whilst I wus singing' I seed dat yaller gal cum out an' set down her ownself. An' she wus cryin'. She an' dem hongry men had some words, but I couldn't hear nothin', 'cause I wus singin. All de boa'ders 'cepen Silas got up an' marched off down tow'ds de Chili Stan'. I knowd den she had gin up cookin' dinner, jest like I 'lowed she would.

Miss Lucy, believe me or no, but de truf will shine in glory. I could jest natchurally feel dat lode stone drawin' Silas. It jest stirred an' fluttered nex' ter my heart 'til it 'gin ter drawn dat nigger offen dat other po'ch right tow'ds me, an' my po'ch. 'Cose Silas let on like he wus lookin' at dat good grub; but shucks I knowd better! It wus de lode stone an' de love powders drawin him back; fust one an' den de other, or both pullin' at once. I could'nt tell which, but I could see 'em workin'.

Whilst dat yaller gal sot dere wif her ap'on flung over her head cryin' 'cause she couldn't cook dinner fer dem men, Silas kinder eased hisself offen de po'ch,

an' siddled 'crost de street. He cum up bashful an' shamed faced like, an' said, "Miss Alvirey," he says, "seems like you is expectin' some body." "I shore is," I say quick, lak dat, 'cause I had studied my talk all out, jest what I wus goin' ter say to dat nigger, when de lode stone brung him back home. I had jest opened my mouf ter say my speech, when Silas made a big sighin' heave, an' says, mournful like, "He shore will be some lucky nigger," he says, an' Miss Lucy, I jest couldn't talk ter dat nigger like I lowed ter talk! I felt dat lode stone drawin', an' a shakin' an' a quiverin' nex' ter my heart. My breast jest natchurally shook, date lode stone was drawin' so hard.

Silas edged his foot up on de po'ch, an' den, slow an' gradual like he hefted hisself up; den he slid inter de cheer settin' by de table. "Shore is some lucky nigger," he says, kinder slow an' lonesome like, scratchin' his chin. Den dat little yaller buzzard bait, called out, "Cum on Sils, les go ter de chili stan' an' git some chili ter eat." Silas looked at me, an' den at de flo', an' den at dat grub. Den he looked over towa'ds Aunt Mandy's. "Can't cum," he says. "I'se got a date ter eat here wif Miss Alvirey." I didn't say nary wo'd myself, Miss Lucy, but my heart sung Hallelujah. It shore did! I had dat nigger back ergin. Dat man sot dere an' chomped his jaws over dat grub, til' he licked his plate. I wus so happy I didn't notice nothin' till he got thru, an' den he got up an' said, "So long, Miss Alvirey. Thankee Maam fer your nice dinner." Jest like dat he said it, an' den he marched right 'crost de street, an' inter dat yaller varmint cat's room, 'fore I knowd de time o' day.

Whut did I do? Miss Lucy, I don't know what I done. I went in de house slow an' dignificated, so dat gal couldn't have nothin' ter laugh over, an' den I fell down on de bed, an' I rared an'

charged. I bit an' tore dem bed clothes, an' tore dat silk dress off, an' I flung dat sweet soap at de lookin' glass, an' broke hit, an' den I tore my clo'es all off. After I done dat I fell back on the bed, an' cried an' I cussed, an' I laughed an' I hick cupped, 'til I went sound ter sleep. All I done wus wrong; 'cause while I wus cussin' dem love powders, an' de lode stone, an' had done giv' up hope dey wus a'workin, an' a'workin' strong. But I wus asleep an' didn't know nothin' 'tall 'bout it.

Long 'bout midnight I woke up. Somebody had been bangin' an' kickin' at de do' loud 'nough ter wake de dead. Dey had done kicked hit plum open. An' Miss Lucy, dere stood Silas in de do', an' de moon shinin' in. Dat nigger didn't hav on no cl'oes a tall. He wus jest as naked as a young jay bird. An' I didn't neither, cause I had tore 'em all off like I tole you, whilst I wus so mad. In one hand dat nigger had one dem sugar cane kinves, whut de Mexicans call Mee-Shet-Ums, an' in the odder hand—Well, Miss Lucy, you mus jest guess at whut he had in de odder hand.

Me? I wus so skeered I didn't know whut ter do! Den I wus shamed an' flusterated, naked like I wus! I jest grabbed dem bed clothes an' wropped 'em 'round me, an' I said, "Go 'way from here, nigger whut you mean, bustin' in my do'?"

Silas, he didn't pay me no min'. He kep' comin' right on. Den he say, "Woman, git yourself in shape, fer I'm kwine ter stick one dese here things in you, an' I don't keer which one." Miss Lucy dem Love Powders wus makin' dat nigger plum wil'. I foun' out next day Aunt Mandy gin him a double dose. Whut could I do wid dat man? Hit wus in de middle uv de nite—Miss Lucy I'm comin' clean wid you honey. I jest natchurally loved dat nigger—I wus plum crazy over

'im. So I says, "Nigger, Nigger," I says, "throw dat knife down!"—an' he did— an'—you know de res' an' now I can't drive dat nigger outen de house long enough to git hem ter do a day's work fer de white folks at de mill—An' dat yaller gal, she done gone back ter New Orleans."

DELICATESSEN REPARTÉE

She was a fragile, pampered city reed; he a husky bunch of cactus from Dead Man's Gulch. She gave her order; he followed:

"Oh, waitah; bring me a half cup of coffee as mild and fragrant as the morning breeze, with the tiniest bit of sugar therein. Also a drop of cream from an inoculated bovine which is kept in sanitary pastures. Add to my order the tender wing of a spring, female chick, served with a dainty morsel of lettuce; a dessert-spoonful of your famous gravy on a quarter slice of the Staff of Life as light as the foam of the sea. Then lastly, I desire but three puffs from an Osiris-Egyptian cigarette, dipped in Maderia wine,—and say, waitah,—what ill-appearing specimen of near-manhood might that be sitting ovah thereh?"

"Waitah! You damn black African sample of illegitimate Simian ancestry: tote me out a powder-keg full of Java as hot as galvanized hell and boiled over a volcano with a lump of sweetenin' in it as big as a horse-apple. Throw in it a snort of clabber from a cow with a spoiled bag sixty-five years old that has been fed all winter on excelsior and gimpson-weed; and bring with that, the left hind leg of a louse-bitten old hen that died with the cholera, cooked over a fire of old socks and served on a bale of crab-grass hay. Add to my order about a gallon of Naptha oil poured over a pone of stale cornbread, and lastly fetch me an asbestos stogie dipped in vinegar and turpentine. And say, maiter: what redheaded, sore-eyed old dame from Beal street is that cocked up over thereh?"

H. F. Jamison.



Fifth on the List

by Harry Stephen Keeler

EDDIE the Strangler was broke again.

It seemed as though nothing could be done to relieve this condition of impecuniosity—except, of course—another “job” like the previous ones. After all—why work for a living? It was so easy for one to come silently through the window, approach the bed in stocking-feet, and then quickly fasten one’s long steel-like fingers about the neck of the sleeper. To be sure, it required steady nerve—particularly during the short struggle that always ensued in the darkness—but there was little chance for one to fail if one took sufficient pains to get one’s thumb in the proper position on the windpipe. Then, too, although becoming less so each succeeding time, it was still rather unpleasant to have to view the purplish-black face of the dead person after the “job” was completed, the

tiny pocket light turned on, and the search for the valuables begun. However, one had to endure these little trials for the sake of the recompense, since always—if one did not take it upon oneself to endure them—loomed up the dread possibility of having to earn one’s bread by manual labor.

Thus reflected Eddie the Strangler as he leaned against a convenient lamp post with his hands sunk deep in his pockets and his hat pulled down over his forehead, waiting expectantly.

Apprehensively his eyes glanced toward the clock, visible through the glass panel of the corner near-beer saloon door. Eleven P. M.! She certainly ought to be along soon. It was here that he had first seen her, a number of evenings before, as she strode briskly home from some place or other.

Finally she passed. Again Eddie looked her over critically. Not only the diamond



hanging from each ear lobe but the rings on her hands as well, showed conclusively that she must possess other jewelry of value. Well—it might as well be tonight as any other time. No use of following her night after night.

A half block behind her Eddie fell in step. This would be the last time that he need trail her to the place where she lived. His previous shadowing had shown him that she invariably proceeded to a rear room on the first floor of a theatrical boarding house up near Washington Square. By making his way quickly around to the alley, after she closed the front door behind her, and watching her windows as she turned on the lights, he had learned that she lived alone.

This pink-and-white girl would be an easy victim. The very first one of those that went before had been a woman. She had died with but a few impotent thrusting motions of her soft white arms. The next three, though, had been men. They had required more skill, more coolness, especially that huge German ex-bar-tender out in Engelwood. However, one ought not to confine one's attention to the masculine sex alone; one should be more universal in one's calling. This handsome creature would help to even things up.

As she ascended the front steps and shut the door behind her, Eddie shrugged his shoulders and laughed aloud. Long before this time tomorrow, the newspapers would be out with their glaring headlines reading: "The Strangler Works Again" and "Young Woman Found Murdered in Bed. Valuables Missing." And he, Eddie, the cause of the extra editions, would be laboriously figuring out the value of the haul at so much per carat, in his tiny room in that great jungle, Chicago's West Side.

Swiftly he departed for the alley where he secured a position of vantage between two ash cans and watched her while she entered the room, switched on the light, and drew down the shades. Then he waited patiently until he saw the lights suddenly go out, the shades raised, and one window opened wide to admit the cool breeze from the lake. That, in itself, was luck. He had liked that phase of the situation from the very first moment, a week before, that he had begun to collect data on the coming affair. It obviated the necessity of bringing along a glass cutter and a cumbersome ball of putty.

An hour passed.

It must be the right time now. Before removing his shoes and climbing up on the fence that separated the two back yards he exercised his fingers vigorously for a few minutes. One's fingers must not be stiff at the crucial moment.

It required but a few seconds to climb from the fence to the sill and to step lightly in through the open window to the floor of the room. For a very short while he stood motionless, listening to the regular breathing of the sleeper.

Then it was that he heard footsteps coming down the hall. Bah! Some fool perhaps about to knock on the door, awaken the girl on the bed, and ruin everything.

Well—there was no need for everything to be ruined. With cat-like tread he crossed the floor to the opposite wall.

Good! It was exactly what he had made it out to be in the semi-darkness—a square trunk. He raised the cover and as he did so a tiny block of wood tumbled to the carpet. With his hand he groped within. Excellent! No tray—and empty as well. This would be a safe refuge while the fool outside should either knock or go on about his or her business.

He stepped in with his right foot and followed with his left. Then he sunk to his knees and allowed the cover to drop slowly till an opening of only an inch in height remained. He listened.

"Rap-rap-rap," came from the panel of the door. Then a voice exclaimed, "Estelle? May we come in a minute? Have you gone to bed yet?"

No answer.

"She's asleep," continued the voice to someone else. "We'd better not disturb her. It's late."

The footsteps left the region of the door. "Better to wait two or three minutes," thought Eddie, "till everything's quiet again, before tackling the job.

These fools might change their minds and come back." He let the heavy lid rest on his shoulders and altered his position a trifle.

"Click!" went the spring-fastening on the "trunk" as the upper half of the mechanism came in contact with the lower half and locked the cover shut.

"Oh—Oh—God!" screamed Mademoiselle Estelle Le Comte, snake charmer at the Hippodrome, next morning as she went to examine her newest python and found him coiled tightly around the neck of a little man whose face was unrecognizable on account of its purplish-black hue, its bulging eyeballs, and its protruding tongue.

OUR STENOGRAPHER RESIGNS

Our stenographer quit, and I asked her the reason.

We hated to lose her for she was a jewel.

"Dear girl, you are leaving in our busy season."

"I can't help it, Boss; I am nobody's fool."

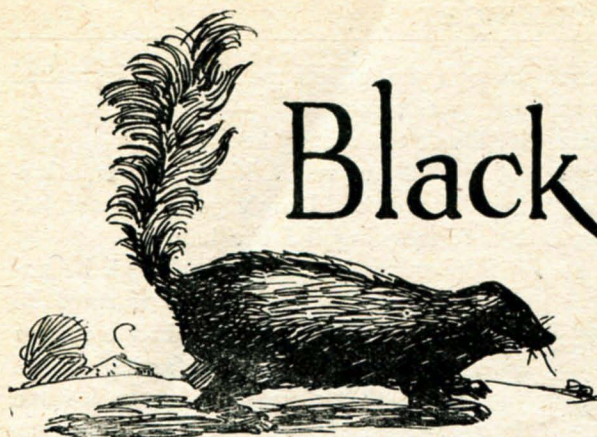
"Miss Gladys," I said, and my tone was insistent,

"Tell me who is to blame, and I'll get 'em, dod rot 'em!"

"That fresh office boy in a manner persistent,"

She replied, "always greets me as Miss Happy Bottom."

—James B. Starr.



Black Knight

by Leon W. Dean

I.

BOW! Wow! Wow! Yip! Yip!
Yelp! Help!"

It is a dog making that noise. I made him do it. My name is Black Knight. A lady called me that. I do not know what made her do it. That dog would have shaken the daylight out of me if I hadn't seen him in time to turn loose my atomizer on him. It hit him in the eye. I know, because that's the way they always sound when I hit them in the eye. They make queer motions with their paws, and sometimes they stand up right on their hind legs and act as though they didn't have any front ones. They rub their noses in the dirt, and yell like anything, but that ain't nothing as to what they would do to me if they ever caught me. One caught my father once, he says, and most broke his back. He managed to crawl home, and thought he was going to die, but he didn't, for he was alive when he told me about it.

I don't know whether he is alive now or not. It is a long time since I have seen him. He went off one night and didn't come back. My mother didn't seem to mind, though, so I didn't know as I should.

"Maybe the farmer up the road could tell something about him," I heard her say to a neighbor.

"Oh! Oh! Mrs. Skunk, you don't say!" wailed the neighbor.

It didn't sound very good to me either, but mom just sniffed her nose a bit and said, she guessed she could get along very nicely without him if he had gone and been so careless—that she had always warned him his absent-mindedness would get the better of him sometime.

I guess pop was kind of shiftless. Far back as I can remember it was mom who did the providing for us—leastwise most of it. They quarreled some too—mostly when he would come home with the smell of chicken on his breath. He didn't pay much attention to us youngsters, but occasionally he would shuffle over and give me the once over.

"Son," he said, mournful like, on one of these occasions, "it's a skunk's life you've got before you!"

It was just after a fuss with mom. She heard him and drove him out.

"A skunk's life, indeed!" she hurled after him, smelling the place up so that even I noticed it—"Get out, you old vagabond!"

Maybe that's the last time I saw him. I'm not sure. I wasn't very old then, and things are kind of mixed and hazy. I've met some folks since that knew pop. They called him a philosopher and didn't seem to mind so much about his shiftless ways as mom did. According to

them, he must have been a pretty smart man, but given to absent-mindedness, as mom had warned him about. If anyone wanted to know anything, all he had had to do was to go to Henry—that was my pop—and he could tell them. Mom says he was very properly named for one so dissipated about chicken.

One day he said to me, says he: "Young Skunk, you're an antithesis!"

I thought perhaps he was making fun of me, for I had never heard of an antithesis. He was a droll sort of fellow, pop was, and you couldn't always tell whether he was fooling or not. He would say the funniest things, but I never saw him smile—except once. That was one night when mom fell head-first into a garbage pail up at the farmer's. Pop had to push the pail over before she could get out. I was pretty scared when I saw her go in, but pop took his time about tipping the pail over, and that sort of steadied me. My! But mom was a sight! And what she said to pop for not getting there quicker made the milk-pans rattle! He was meek about it as ever, and tried to excuse his tardiness, and I thought I had never seen him more mournful looking and apologetic, but while mom was cleaning herself up he slid out of the door with his hand to his mouth. As I didn't like any too well to be around when mom was feeling as she was just then, I went out too after a little spell. I thought probably he would be just outside, but he wasn't, and I had to hunt quite a while before I could find him. Then a sound from around the corner of the woodshed like an old hen trying to cluck attracted me, and there was pop sitting by a stump most splitting his sides with laughing. Somehow I felt I had better cut and run, but he caught sight of me. It was awfully queer the way he looked, and stopped himself up short. As soon as he recognized me,

though, he called me over. He looked pretty anxious.

"Don't tell mom," he said.

"No," I answered, kind of sympathizing, "I won't. I ain't going to see her before morning if I can help it."

Pop grinned at that, as though he understood, and somehow we warmed to each other as we had never had a chance to do before. But I was starting to tell you about that time when he called me an antithesis. It isn't the first time that that thought of mom in the garbage pail has made me forget what I was going to say. Pop must have seen that I looked kind of puzzled about the antithesis.

"Yes, son," he said, "you're an antithesis. You are going to be so popular that everyone will want to put an end to you. First place, you're a skunk, and I'm not calling names when I mention it. It wouldn't be seemly. Second place, you're black. The unluckiest kind of a skunk is a black skunk. Folks will take such a high-priced fancy to you that life won't be worth a farthing, and all that will be left of you will be draped around some woman's neck. Men of a good many different kinds will want you for a good many different things; and the more they want you, the more you had better keep away from them. Fight shy of the man-smell, son."

If I had been old enough to give a little more credit to my father's wisdom I would have avoided a good deal of trouble, but I was young, and I have read in a book that I found one day out in the field, where I think someone had hurriedly dropped it, that the young are adventuresome. You see I was born under a porch in a place that was occupied part of the time, and wasn't occupied part of the time. It was what folks call a cottage. That's where my mother made a mistake for all of her nagging of pop as though he was the only one who ever

made them. The floor above was empty when she moved in below. By the time we had come along, however, there was someone living there, and I guess it made it pretty lively for mom taking care of us. We had to be pretty careful, and didn't know enough to know it, as pop would say. About the first thing I can remember after being able to crawl about is of lying out under the porch and listening to the sound of human voices overhead. Sometimes I would forget and begin to chatter, then mom would cuff me and warn me to keep still if I had any love for the family. One day the people heard me, and thought it was a squirrel, for you must know that a young skunk makes almost identically the same kind of a noise as a squirrel. They peeked down through the cracks and tried to see me, but mom hustled me off under the house out of sight.

But to come back to pop and his advice. I gradually forgot it. I forgot a good deal of it the day I got a chance to slip out on mom. My legs had grown stronger by that time, and the wanderlust came upon me: I listened for voices up above, but all was silent as the Sabbath. So I went out by way of a hole that was too small for mom, and waddled away as fast as I could across the grass. Since then I have seen man-children do the same thing, their mothers come running after them just as mine would have done if she had known I was gone—only more reckless.

A road ran past the front of our cottage, and I made for it at the best speed my still rather wobbly legs would allow, thinking that if I could get across it I might be safe, and wouldn't have to come back. There was a great big black thing standing there, and, as I came near it, I detected a terrible odor. I thought that it must be a member of my family—the biggest one I had ever seen;

so, though I was afraid, I went on toward it. Then some men came. They were what you call working men, and they had sharp things on their feet by which they climbed telephone poles. Many of these things I have learned since—and more. I know now that the big thing with the brotherly smell was an automobile—also of the worker kind—a truck.

I was so near that I couldn't run away. I tried, but one of the men saw me. I humped my back and spat at him, and tried to work my atomizer, but it wasn't ready yet. He laughed, and picked me up, and showed me to the other men. One was for throwing me into the lake, saying that I would grow up to be a pest, but the one who held me said something about letting the little beggar go, and set me one the ground again.

I tumbled off the bank and down onto the road, and was making across it when one of the big things like the truck, only this time smaller and more shiny, and with a woman driving and other women in back, came along. This one was moving, and it came right at me. I sat up and hissed at it, and one of the men hollered and pointed at me, and the woman stopped.

"What is it?" she asked, looking around the wheel-thing at me.

"A baby skunk!"

"Oh! Oh!" she screamed, kind of low. "Will he—will he—?"

"No ma'am," said the man, "he won't."

He came and lifted me up and put me over in the grass out of the way, and I went on.

"He's a Black Knight," I heard the woman say. Or she might have said, "He's as black as night." I like to call myself the Black Knight, though. The book that I found in the field that time tells all about a Black Knight. Anyway, what the woman said reminded me of what my pop had said, and when I con-

sidered how everything was coming out just as he had warned me I began to get frightened and to wish I was back home. I didn't go much farther, but crawled under another porch out of sight and stayed there. That night my mother trailed me and found me, and I almost wished I had gone on, but she took me back home, and there I stayed until after pop disappeared.

I am a big skunk now, several months old, and I am writing down these things as perhaps of interest to other young skunks. I stuck pretty close to the house for a few days, and didn't go out any more until after dark, and tried in all ways to be obedient and a joy to my parents—or rather my parent. It was only a short time after pop left that mom told me I was big enough to get out and hustle for myself. All my brothers and sisters had gone by that time except one. She and I went with mom to the farmhouse, but there mom left us, and we couldn't find her, and we got separated, and I didn't go back home that night, but slept under an old barn out in a field. When I went back the next night—I had learned not to travel by day—everything at home seemed cold and deserted, and I didn't stay long, but went off again, and have never been back. Something tells me I would never see my people again if I did go back. I have learned that my father was right, that my life is to be a skunk's life. I sometimes wonder what will become of me.

II.

I know what is to become of me. The end is very near. I was traveling through a field last night where I had been several times before when I saw a box. I had learned when very young to beware of strange objects that suddenly appeared when none had been before. Such objects, when judiciously investigated, as father used to say, usually bear the man-

smell. All things with the man-smell should be carefully avoided unless one is certain of his ground. But I am still young and inexperienced. I understand that now better than I did last night. Last night I was pretty confident that I knew what was best for me and how to take care of myself, but when one is a skunk it does not pay to be too sure of oneself. I remembered my early teaching, but persuaded myself that there could be no harm in a box, even if it had not been present before, and bore the man-scent. I had seen many boxes previously, but none that had done me harm. Hung on the inside of this one was a chicken's head. I am very fond of chicken, and must admit that the temptation had something to do perhaps with setting aside the results of a "judicious investigation." In short, I took a chance—and this no skunk can afford to do. The cover of the box was up, and, treading as gently as I could, I entered—ready to retreat at the slightest alarm. The chicken's head did not yield as readily as I had expected, and I had to tug rather hard in order to dislodge it. I heard a twang and a noise overhead. The cover of the box had shut down on me. Even then I thought that it might be an accident, but I soon discovered it was not. I am here yet. I have tried to gnaw my way out, but it is useless. There will not be time. A man of some kind has got me. I hear him coming. These are perhaps my last words.

III.

Well, now, I wonder if you can beat it! Here I am alive and kicking, and after so peppering a man with my atomizer that he danced like a leaf in a hail-storm. There was a time when I thought he would let go of me, but he got me by the tail, and then it was all up with me. When my tail is seized I am helpless. I am helpless anyway now. That man got

even with me. Sometimes I think it must be all a dream, and I wonder what my father would say if he could see me. I was shut back in the box and carried for a long way, not knowing where I was going, and considering all the time what was to become of me. I grew very old and thoughtful during that journey. There were several little holes in the cover of the box, and after a while I could tell by the air that came in through them that we had left the fields and come to a place where there were a great many people. Also the feet of the man who carried me sounded differently, making a clicking noise as he walked. Some of the people uttered a familiar expression that I had heard several times before, which sounded like "whew!" I do not think that they cared to have much to do with the man, and sometimes he said things, as though talking earnestly to himself, but I could not understand.

At length we stopped at a house, and went inside, and I was more frightened than ever, for houses are dangerous. It reminded me of the box, only it was larger. There was a person there whom the man called a doctor. They talked quite a while, but I couldn't in any way make out what they were saying, only they talked a lot about a lady. Then when I wasn't expecting it a rag was dropped in beside me. There was a smell to the rag. It made my head feel light and queer. That frightened me, and we had an awful time together, that rag and I. I don't know which would have won, but I began to grow sleepy and sleepier, and couldn't help myself, and that was the last I knew until I woke up and found myself free. The man and the doctor were sitting near-by, and didn't see me. I felt stiff and sore, and had a headache.

"Just wait!" said I—"Just wait!"

As quietly as I could I got to my feet.

I was feeling a bit dizzy and unnatural, but I got a good aim, and then—nothing happened. They turned and saw me, and it made me mad, and I did my utmost, but it was of no use.

"I guess he'll do," said the man.

He took me out-doors again, this time without the box, and you should have seen people look at him, as though he were crazy—and at me too. Some of them went away out in what I have learned that they call a road. I began to think that there must be something very unusual about us and that I was quite a distinguished skunk. So I took heart. But I was still pretty much excited, and might have used my atomizer a few times if I had been able, for I was suspicious of so many people around. It wasn't working, though. They had done something to me, I know now, from some talk that I heard the other day, that it was an operation.

The man took me into another house, with a large room, and a girl came and looked at me. I knew her at once for the girl who had been in the automobile that day when I was a cub and came so near getting run over and was saved by the telephone man. She must have sort of recognized me, too, for all that I had grown so.

"Why," she exclaimed, "he looks just like my little Black Knight!"

Then I knew that it was Black Knight that she had called me, or else she had thought it up since, or maybe read the same book that I had, and I liked it right away, and I wouldn't have acted badly if I could.

"Ever since I saw Black Knight that day," she went on, "I have wanted to own one for a pet, and I really do believe that this is Black Knight. Where did you say that you caught him?"

The man told her. Then she was more certain than ever, and if I could have

spoken I would have told her that she was right. Even as it was, I went up to her and rubbed against her, and tried to show her how pleased I was. She seemed a little slow to get acquainted with at first, but then she picked me up, and gave me a sort of hug, but not very hard. I think she was afraid that it wouldn't do to squeeze me real hard, but she has learned since that I am absolutely harmless.

"You are a little dear," she cried, "and I am going to love you!"

I like it here in my new home very much. People call me a fad, and some Natalie's freak, but that is no worse than the way in which I used to be referred to as a skunk. I miss the old wandering life, but there are compensations, as pop would say, and I couldn't bear to leave my kind mistress. We have great fun together, especially when there is company. Some day I hope to meet pop and mom and the others, and tell them all about it.

OH ! THAT DANCE!

Seven veils; then the Eastern tricks,
A little shimmy now leaves but six.

Six filmy coverings—sakes alive;
We look again and see but five.

Five's quite oppressive, to the floor
Another drifts and we count four.

Veils drop like leaves from autumn tree,
Our interest quickens; only three.

One more for doffing's overdue,
Away it goes—my stars; just two.

Another drops; don't we have fun?
Just one is left; o-n-e one.

The climax nears; much is at stake;
My glasses fall and—heavens—break.

Thomas J. Murray.



Sweet Papa

by Will H. Prestor

ARRIVING late at night at their hotel, the door shut on the pen-sive bell boy, the Hon. Horace took his child wife in his arms, then on his knees in the deep chair before the fire. Married at noon, after a tiresome journey, they were glad to be alone in the warmth, silence, perfume of roses, shaded lights.

Dark, lean, distinguished, the Hon. Horace knew women; all the appoint-ments of love; a couch here, shaded lights there, deep rugs, soft colors; all that stirs their senses.

From fashionable house parties and week ends to houses where girls in nighties or less receive male callers, he knew the game; he had been around.

And because he had been around, when he married, desiring an heir, he chose the nurse girl to his sister's children, young, sweetly innocent, of poor but honest par-ents, sure of her virginity.

The marriage had caused a sensation, reading which in the evening press, the Hon. Horace smiled, giving the bride a respectful kiss, fearing to alarm that deli-cate modesty.

He felt her weight on his knees, the warmth of her body in the low-necked, short-sleeved gown, anticipating the stages of undress, the shiverings, burn-ings, reluctance, perhaps tears. What does a young girl imagine; anticipate?

What is it looks from the eyes, flavors the kiss, breathlessly conceives?

Noting how late it was, they arose by a common impulse. At the portiers to the bedroom, Louise suddenly darted from his embrace, her laughing face ap-pearing a moment later at the opening.

"Your Majesty!" she mocked, tossing a kiss. "You must not come in—yet!"

His blank dismay caused ripples of girlish laughter. Smiling indulgently he remained standing, hearing a rustle of female garments, protesting he was tired, lonesome; besides, might he not be of as-sistance?

But the door to the bath clapped shut, followed by vigorous splashing. He pictured the tepid water tested by a foot, then rising to the knee, thigh, suple and exquisite body, racing like pearls over the rosy skin, arms raised to the hair, re-garding mirrored perfections.

"Louise," he called, "I'm catching an awful cold!"

How absurd! She knew it's cozy and warm in the sitting room.

"None of your impudence, Sir!" re-plied a breathless voice as if toweling was in progress.

"All right," he returned, "I'll go down and see to the trunks. I'll be right back, my darling!"

Before reaching the elevator he ran into Jim Burns and an elderly uncle, in

town on business. Burns, an old acquaintance, insisted that the Hon. Horace go along to their room, which he reluctantly did, resolving to keep secret his own affairs.

There, following some casual remarks and liquid refreshment, the farmer uncle, who had lately struck oil, felt a sudden, overpowering love of mankind. He embraced his nephew. He beamed on the Hon. Horace, finally imparting that, a continent bachelor all his life, he had recently married a "chicken" a new arrival in the village, and at sixty had started out to enjoy life.

His portly frame set off by a checked suit and red vest, excepting teeth which he placed in a glass of water, he deemed himself superior as a male to his two companions, and said so.

The Hon. Horace, though mildly congratulatory, was not interested. Mindful that he was expected in another room, he started for the door, but was detained by the beaming benedict, who insisted on telling a funny circumstance of his wedding night. The very recollection of it convulsed him with glee. Finally after a breathing spell he proceeded, toothless, in a cloud of vapor.

He had brought his girl bride to the city, to this very hotel in fact, and she had gone to undress and get into bed while he went down to the office to telephone. When he returned and lover-like took her in his arms he found her asleep.

"And what do you think she said in her sleep?" His face wrinkled. This was the funny part, the point to his story, recollecting which he let out another roar.

"I'll bite," murmured the Hon. Horace. "What was it?"

"She said," the farmer confided, "she said 'Sweet Papa—be a sport—buy a drink before we go upstairs!'"

Followed a prolonged guffaw echoed presently by the other two.

"Imagine her saying that!" he tittered. "I—her papa—He! He! Besides—we were already upstairs. Ha Ha!"

Ridiculous indeed! All joined in a hearty laugh followed by recourse to the flask. The uncle continued to radiate. On the rug the nephew refought the battle of Chateau Thierry. Finally, after many loving embraces, the Hon. Horace broke away and regained his room. Noiselessly he undressed and got into gown and slippers, sitting a moment in reverie before the fire. How jolly the old uncle! How droll his story!

But suddenly a memory—out of the past—an electric piano grinding; maudlin laughter of men with girls on their knees; thick cigarette smoke with painted faces appearing and disappearing; in his own ear a girl's drunken breath and the very words of the farmer's "chicken"—words of evil invitation!

And the dotting spouse, never having been around, would go on repeating that phrase of a soiled past! The Hon. Horace turned pale. What if the same thing happened to him. Roused suddenly from sleep Louise might say something that would mark her as impure!

He really knew but little about her. She was young, only eighteen, but not so plain as he had wished. Her blonde hair was too fine and thick, lips too red, features too ardent. She was too well developed, too hot, tense, breathless when they kissed. What if she knew too much; what if in boys' and girls' games some male cousin had trespassed; what if in the initial embrace there were no awkwardness, pain or tears.

But even if vanquished by nature her body had yielded, might not her soul still be worthy of love? And the old man, wasn't he happy not knowin? Nonsense! In these days a man must take

greater precautions! White, trembling, still half-reluctant, he approached the portiers, determined to rouse Louise and listen to what she might say.

Stepping within, he made out the white bed, the form of the sleeper, the shoes, stockings, undergarments as she had placed them. A fragrance of female youth met his senses, the lashes on the flushed cheeks childlike and appealing. Above one exposed knee was still the imprint of the stocking.

Advancing softly he took the girl in

his arms. She stretched and yawned, about to speak.

His heart stopped. What would she say; what glimpse into the past; what effect on their future?

Whispering, she raised her arms. He saw the whites of the eyes, the tongue against the teeth.

But he could make out nothing she said. The experiment was a failure. He did not know—never could know—what after all must ever be more supposition than certainty.

Oh! Barbara is very chick,
And wears dresses to her knees.
Betty rolls her stockings,
And always tries to please.
Helen kisses like a dream,
And Beatrice hates not sin,
But, oh! my heart goes out to Rose
Whose daddy has some gin.

D. C. F.



By Ray St Vrain

MONSIEUR Paul Rollier, even with his millions, had never lost his fondness for the goldsmith's art. It had fascinated him when a boy; and in his father's palatial establishment in the Rue de la Paix he had learned to make the most exquisite things with fingers of preternatural delicacy and skill.

Rollier was handsome, good-humored, a devotee of pleasure, yet there was iron in his soul—so his intimates declared.

Quite naturally he had fancied many women. These fancies had at last culminated in a strong—and prospectively abiding—love for the beautiful Inez Lazaro, an actress of great vogue. "Yes," Rollier was wont to say at the Garacallan entertainments he gave in honor of this ravishing Spanish girl, "I shall love Inez always. De Musset was right in declaring that love is eternal, but wrong when he insisted its objects change. One love, one object! One adoration, one altar! That is the law of my heart."

The day came Rollier was called away from the glittering delights of the *grands boulevards*. Diamonds were becoming scarce and he journeyed to a certain remote part of Brazil to appraise some recently discovered mines of startling promise. He was gone several months.

On the night of his return to Paris Inez Lazaro was found a suicide in her apartment in the Boulevard Raspail. An

actor popularly known as the handsomest man on the French stage, a "heart-killer," Jules Sartout, was implicated in the tragic affair. Rollier called at Inez's rooms for a welcoming kiss and found the loved lips blue. On her engagement finger was the heavy plain gold band ring he himself had fashioned from the virgin metal in his Rue de la Paix shop. With a fantastic impulse he took it from her finger.

They carried him from her apartment prostrated with grief.

He was ill for months. When he left his bed he was a greatly changed man. He had adored Inez Lazaro and it seemed that the tragedy of her death had marked him forever. He erected an odd monument on her grave, one more bizarre than Guy de Maupassant's in the Parc Monceau. On a Parian marble pedestal stood Inez in bronze. At her feet were two symbolic figures, Life and Death. Life was represented by Rollier himself—a perfect likeness. Death, hollow-eyed, malevolent, was Jules Sartout, on whose account, report had it, the girl had committed suicide.

People expected that Sartout would demand the removal of this effigy of himself or bring suit for damages against Rollier. He did neither. He was not seen on the stage for some time, then returned and scored a brilliant success in the title role of a new drama of eroticism,

"*L'Amour Rouge.*" But his admirers noticed a latent nervousness in his manner—a fear? Was he afraid Rollier would kill him? At the height of his triumph he quitted the stage abruptly and immured himself in his little country place up the Seine.

II

Adjacent to Sartout's modest stucco house was the large estate of Paul Rollier, with its extensive park of plane trees, peach orchard, and picturesque old reconstructed *moyen age* chateau.

In the narrow road that separated the two places grew an ancient elm of majestic beauty. One moonlit night a man sat in the hollow of the tree's huge trunk. Some distance away in the shadow of the long line of Lombardy poplars that formed the boundary of his estate stood Paul Rollier pointing a pistol at the figure.

Two shots rang.

Rollier had shot only once. He looked around, astonished. Nimbly leaping over the paling fence was a woman. He followed just as nimbly and joined her in the moonlit road, recognizing her as the well-known actress, Mademoiselle Euphemie Bruniere.

"Mademoiselle!" he exclaimed.

"I was the one who shot, monsieur."

"It seems we both missed the mark," he said grimly, pointing at the figure which still sat upright.

They hurried to Jules Sartout and found him dead, the tree holding him up. The bloody wound over the heart told the story.

"He loved me," said Euphemie Bruniere, "or pretended to—before he met Inez Lazaro. I lured him here to kill him. I telephoned him to come and talk things over, threatening to shoot him on the stage—before the audience—if he failed. He was naturally a coward. He

knew I was desperate and so was afraid not to come."

"A rather interesting coincidence, mademoiselle, that we both told him to come here at the same time," commented Rollier. "He was afraid of me. He proved that by doing nothing regarding the monument I erected on Mademoiselle Lazaro's grave."

Mademoiselle Bruniere half smiled. "Some people would call us very un-sportsmanlike, monsieur. We didn't give him a fighting chance."

Rollier shrugged. "A stupid view. I was out to avenge the woman I loved, you to revenge yourself. Fighting chance? Nemesis knows no such thing."

"You must have loved Inez Lazaro madly."

"Yes, mademoiselle. We can love only once. She was my fate."

The face of Jules Sartout's other victim was a pale patch in the shadow. "And yet, monsieur, when you went away Inez immediately—"

"No," interrupted Rollier calmly. "I investigated everything. She never loved him. She became involved, yes—innocently. She feared I might misunderstand and so took her life."

"Monsieur is an idealist," murmured Euphemie Bruniere after a silence. "Had I known you perhaps I would not have wasted my priceless bullet on Jules Sartout."

III

At the words *priceless bullet* Rollier gave a start.

"Mademoiselle! What sort of a bullet do you mean?"

"A diamond one. It was a glorious diamond, big, gouged out of the heart of the sun itself. He had given it to me. So I made it into a bullet—melting, fitting and welding the cartridge around it."

"You made it?" he cried incredulously.

"Yes; I learned how. All things are possible to love—and hate."

"True — Mademoiselle, your bullet was even more idealistic than mine."

"Idealistic—?"

"I love the goldsmith's art; it was too bad I was born rich. I made *my* bullet out of the engagement-ring I gave Mademoiselle Lazaro."

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Euphemie. "You did a beautiful, sinister thing. We are both tremendous idealists . . ."

He smiled and changed the subject. "Are you not afraid someone will come by and discover you?"

She threw back her head. "I want to be discovered—tried—convicted. I want to pay the penalty—to let the world know who killed him."

"This is a rather unfrequented road," said Rollier, "but sometimes a motorist or a pedestrian short-cuts it this way. We will wait . . . I shall insist it was *my* bullet that made the wound over his heart—and that you're a madwoman."

She held out her hand. "We are idealists," she repeated, "poets. We both loved madly and are willing to give our lives for our exalted conceptions of revenge. The world can ill afford to lose such as you and me . . . and why should we lose each other? Love? Absurd! We could never love each other; but we can be wonderful friends, kindred spirits Why give ourselves up to the vulgar, degrading, inquisitorial law—and the newspaper headlines? Why not bury the secret of Sartout's death—forever? You have avenged Inez Lazaro; I have revenged myself. Come, shall we be friends—and go away together?"

He took her hand, gazing curiously at her blond beauty, so strangely blond as to seem almost self-illuminated in the shadows. "Yes," he said. "But the body—? They will find the bullets—and will know who shot them."

She leaned toward him. "Dispose of the dead man. You have imagination. How shall we do it?"

He thought a moment. "It will be easy. Wait here."

He crossed the quiet moonlit road, leaped over the paling fence into his park of plane trees. Ten minutes later he returned with a spade.

"The ground is soft," he said, beginning to dig, "there have been so many recent hard rains. It will be no job at all."

"You're not going to bury him where he sits—? Why not carry him over into your park?"

He shook his head.

The soil was soft, as he had said; and inch by inch Jules Sartout slid down into the earth his mother.

After awhile it was done. The body had disappeared as effectually as if it had been interred in a cemetery. Then Rollier tried to make the soft sticky soil look natural—unspaded. Euphemie brought some sere leaves and dead twigs of the ageing autumn and arranged them cleverly over the grave; then the new friends, the idealists, left.

And nobody had gone down the road.

IV

Monsieur Paul Rollier, who had run the gamut of pleasure and drunk of the cup of life, and who therefore was weary of both, decided to give himself over wholly to the quite exotic joy born of the thrilling memory of his vengeance, a memory shared with the one who of all the world was worthy of sharing it, one whose revenge had been as unique as his own.

So he sold his jewelry palace in the Rue de la Paix, his mansion on the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, his various country places; and with a fabulous fortune in his pockets he left Paris—with

Euphemie Bruniere, whom he had married secretly.

"Yes," she had said immovably, "we must be married. It will be more regular—and may save us much trouble in the end."

Jules Sartout? His disappearance had not caused any particular stir. People said remorse had driven him mad. Perhaps he had run up to Ostend and drowned himself in the sea: he had always been fond of surf-bathing. The newspapers featured him with ever-shrinking headlines, ever-diminishing space. As for the police, when did they ever miss a meal or lose sleep? New sensations developed, old ones were forgot.

First Monsieur and Madame Rollier went to Nice, where they leased a white marble villa amid emerald green trees, the Mediterranean with its unreal painted waters conducing to dreams They talked—little; slept—little; motored—little. Mostly they sat and gazed out at that tranquil sea. They hung over their silent meals, vainly trying to prolong them. Sometimes they spoke of Sartout buried in the earth

"It was beautifully done," Euphemie would say with very red lips in the diaphanous cloud of her golden hair, beautifully done—with my diamond bullet."

"With my golden one, you mean," he would answer with weary iteration. "I shot first. I killed him."

"No," she would laugh, "you buried him. I am willing to accord you the honors of a grave-digger."

His sombre eyes would rest on the Mediterranean. "Why did we marry? We didn't love each other. My heart is dead."

"Perhaps; but your mind is not. You recognized in me a tremendous idealist, just as I recognized one in you." Then she would rest her pink chin in her cupped hand. "Maybe I'm not as ideal-

istic as you think. What if I married you for your money? Women have married for money before."

And the idea sank in his mind, merged with it, became part of it, as Sartout was becoming part again of his mother the earth.

His money? Why not? And he began to notice her eyes that were a bit too small or set too closely together; her nostrils that were a trifle too tight; her chin that was somewhat too sharp; her ears (whenever he spied them under the diaphanous cloud, infrequently) that seemed to have little ape-like points at the top; her temples which seemed rather narrow; her forehead which sometimes showed, under a careless arrangement of the brought-down hair, ghastly high and incredibly receding; her fingers always bent in—acquisitively.

His money, that was it. She was an adventuress. She had thought him a madman; and now that he was not quite mad enough to please her, she would drive him to a madness that was real and stark.

He smiled grimly.

They left the white and green and blue impressionism of Nice and went to Monte Carlo, where he lost enormous sums of money at play.

"But," she cried, "you'll impoverish us!"

V

They went everywhere, impelled, pursued by what? Venice, Rome, Madrid; some of the prim cities of the North, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Rotterdam: these places—and others—saw them. Why did they come? Why did they go? It was a nightmare chase of unrest, she pursuing him—and what pursuing her?

And always their low-pitched talk would be:

"I killed him; he was my victim."

"No, I shot first; he was mine."

At last Rollier grew tired of Europe with its stale sophistications. "The Orient!" he cried. "Maybe inspiration waits there." So down the Danube: Constantinople; Stamboul; all the glitter and tracery of the Near East; then Siam, India, Japan

Euphemie was growing thin, losing the glint of her hair, the pink of her chin, the brickdust color of her lips. Vague anxiety haunted her eyes; the upcurve of her smile was not so spuriously, malevolently amiable.

"What is it, madame?" laughed Rollier. "My money? It is a difficult proposition, *n'est-ce-pas?* I'll never give it to you because I don't love you—and you are afraid to kill me?"

Japan was languishing but dull: they sailed away—and away—to South America, to Ecuador, to Guayaquil, Ecuador's hell-port; then Rollier, half made in his whimsies, led his pursuer into the hot and humid interior of the country on slow relayed mules to a cacao plantation, to a white ginger-bread bungalow on stilts, built thus to defy the inundating rains, a picture-card house in the midst of vivid green trees alive with the strident chatter and song of huge birds. And here on the wide screened porch, in the wilting yellow days and stifling black nights they sat or lounged or lay long hours thinking, thinking—and at last talking.

"Why are we here in this impossible place?" she questioned him one day. "Why are we wanderers over the earth? It must be we are fleeing from something."

"We are," he said. "It is the Fear."

"The—fear?"

"We murdered a man. That's why we are always fleeing"

She looked at him steadily. "You mean you killed him. You shot first."

He smiled. "Time was when you insisted *you* killed him How we hate

each other!" he mused. "It is magnificent. I almost believe I hate you more than I ever loved Inez Lazaro; and there is no doubt your hatred for me is far deadlier than that you felt for Sartout."

Presently Euphemie sickened in the malarial lowlands and she expressed the desire to go up to salubrious Quito for a month or so.

"Certainly, madame," agreed Rollier. "It's a good idea."

Two of the coolies set out with her on mules for a point where she could take the curious little railway train for the mountain capital. Rollier bade her a feeling adieu, even kissing her smooth cheek.

"Quito!" he laughed to himself as he watched her disappear down the cacao lane. "Quito! She will never see it. Guayaquil—a boat—then back to France—to Paris—for her!"

So immediately he himself set out by a roundabout route for Guayaquil. They met there—quite composedly—and boarded the same boat.

Landing at Havre, they went to Paris together, then drove at once to the Prefecture of Police. She accused him of the murder of Jules Sartout. He accused her.

The police dug up the body. Near the mass of corruption which had once been Sartout's hand they found a small black enameled pistol. The bullet in the heart was a lead one.

"Suicide," said the police. "Evidently he was afraid of both of you and while waiting for you on the fatal night suddenly decided to end it all and so killed himself just before you arrived on the scene. His hand must have been behind him clutching the gun when you buried him and you didn't see it."

Two bullets were found in the tree in the hollow of which Sartout had sat, one made of a diamond, the other of gold.



A Prisoner of Propriety

By Halward Wilkins

PROF. ASHLEY TREVORS, youngest member of the faculty of Windhaven College, stepped into a closed car at the side entrance of Science hall, where he had delivered his address on "Dual Personality and Its Relationship to the Subconsciousness." He had allowed himself nineteen minutes in which to catch the train which would bear him away upon the initial stage of his honeymoon, and with the intention of dressing while being driven to the depot.

Five minutes after he had entered the car and drawn the curtains, Professor Trevors found himself being whirled rapidly down a paved highway in a direction opposite to the station, clad only in a silk shirt, knee-length summer underwear, shoes and socks, and a silk hat.

The Professor's first impulse was to make known his predicament to the chauffeur. That impulse was smothered in its infancy when he raised the curtain and gazed upon the slender feminine back of his driver.

With a gasp, Professor Trevors sank back into the cushioned seat of the car. His intellectual countenance registered acute dismay. He glanced down at his

well-shaped, but scantily clad, limbs and shivered, although the afternoon was warm to the point of sultriness.

It was a situation that called for action and rapid thinking, and Professor Trevors had always prided himself upon having a resourceful mind. But the effort to solve his present predicament resulted only in impressing him with his helplessness. He had not recovered from his paralysis of mind when the car swerved out of the main road and came to a stop. The door handle was turned.

Too late, Professor Trevors made a dive for it. Through the narrow opening he caught sight of a flushed feminine face. A startled cry, and the door was slammed shut.

The face was that of a very young woman—young enough to have belonged to one of the Professor's college classes, and he had an indefinite impression that she did. Somewhere, he had seen those wide, questioning eyes. A serious, intent expression that went with the eyes now vaguely seemed to haunt him.

When she spoke, her voice betrayed a very natural alarm.

"Don't you dare come out!"

Professor Trevors had no intention of disobeying. He opened the door a bare half inch to facilitate conversation.

"My dear young lady," he began, "I can explain—that is, I cannot explain—"

"Put on your clothes and come out at once," she dictated.

"Very well," he responded meekly. It got him nowhere, but it postponed the ordeal of putting the awful truth in words.

"I can't understand it," the girl went on. "When you got in you were fully _____"

"I put them out of the window to my man," he explained miserably.

A moment of silence while she seemed to be reflecting upon this astonishing statement. "It was his idea," added Trevors. "You see, the train was due _____"

"You need not explain," she interrupted with hauteur. "I do not consider it a subject that a gentleman should discuss with a lady."

Trevors flushed to the roots of his close-cropped hair. "What did you do with the suitcase?" he asked in an aggrieved tone. "It was to have been in the machine."

"Oh!" in a tone of enlightenment. "It—I told the driver of your car to go on to the station," she confessed. "Its number was 749."

"Then I insist that you drive there at once," demanded Trevors, in his most austere pedagogical tone.

After a moment's hesitation, she climbed into the driver's compartment. Not until she had started the car did it occur to him that she had not enlightened him as to her reason for kidnapping him. As he raised the curtain to bring up the subject, his eyes became riveted upon the number plate of a taxicab that was speeding past on the main road.

Instantly galvanized into activity, he rapped on the window.

But she, too, had seen it and turned into the main road in full pursuit of the vehicle. Regardless of traffic laws, they sped on. It would have been an easy matter to catch up with the other machine had the road been clear; but it was thronged with motorists and the taxi driver was clearly more skilled at making time under difficulties than the girl. Finally, a particularly annoying congestion delayed the pursuers so that they lost sight of the other car.

Trevors, peering forth anxiously from behind the curtains, had begun to despair of overtaking his precious suitcase and wearing apparel, when they came in sight of a little wayside store. A machine was parked before the building. It was—no!—yes!—it was taxicab number 749!

The girl made a sharp turn and drew up beside it. Both the driver's seat and passenger compartment were unoccupied. "I don't know what I can do," she commented through the tube. "There's no one to ask."

"Look inside," urged Trevors. "The suitcase must be there. Charles was to leave it so that I could change on the way to the train."

She alighted and, rather reluctantly, opened the taxicab door. From within she drew forth—the suitcase! Hastily shoving it into the driver's seat, she scrambled in beside it and started the car forward.

He tapped on the window.

"Thank you very much. And now if you will kindly let me have the suitcase——"

She appeared not to hear. He raised his voice and repeated the hint. Still she was oblivious.

It was beginning to dawn upon him that she did not intend to hear, when she turned from the main highway. Applying his eye to the window, he saw that the new road she had chosen was intro-

duced by a signboard reading, "To Shady Rest."

Dim foreboding swept him. Shady Rest was a name surrounded, in his mind, by lurid associations. The ministers were wont to make periodical demands for the "cleaning up" of Shady Rest. He didn't want to go to Shady Rest, anyway. He wanted to go to Weymore and get married.

"Please," he urged, in a despairing effort to pierce her obliviousness, "please give me my clothes!"

She condescended to respond.

"You may have them——" a pause—"on condition——"

"Yes!"

"That you promise not to carry through this heinous crime."

"Heinous crime!" gasped Trevors. "My dear young lady—I—there has been some mistake. I contemplate no crime."

"Weren't you expecting to marry Elizabeth Larned?"

"Certainly—but there is nothing criminal in——"

"There is!" she retorted with feeling. "It is a tragic devastation of a woman's hopes—though personally I cannot understand what any girl would see in Bud Summers."

"I—I don't follow you," confessed Trevors. "But, my dear child, I have no wicked intentions toward Miss Larned. I only expect to marry her."

"And you insist, in spite of my appeal to your better nature?"

"I—I suppose I do."

"Very well." She appeared to consider the subject closed.

"But my clothes!" he persisted.

"Will you promise not to leave the car?"

"My dear young lady!" He was trying hard to be patient. "That is just what I want them for."

"You can't have them," she asserted

finally. "Not until it is too late for you to keep the appointment."

He fell back helplessly.

"Please," she added tensely, "please don't think I enjoy this. Cruel fate could not have imposed a more relentless task. But I must count my own feelings as naught when saving a friend from life-long misery. I, too, have known the blight of unrequited passion—not but what Elizabeth's case is different, because Bud is simply crazy about her."

As an explanation Trevors found this very unenlightening. She seemed to be talking about something with which he ought to be familiar but wasn't. Worst of all, time was passing.

Under the arrangement he had made with Miss Deborah Peyton, Elizabeth's aunt, the ceremony was to take place during a pause between trains at Weymore. He was to have joined them at Windhaven station, but even now, with good luck, he might make it by automobile.

Miss Peyton, by the way, was to have been the third member of the bridal party, and Trevors had anticipated several long, pleasant chats with her on scientific and literary subjects of mutual interest. He sighed at the inexplicable interference of this young person. And yet, at the same moment, he smiled. Drawing aside the curtain, he absently studied the alert tilt of her head. The setting sun had surrounded her with a halo, as it pierced the edges of her hair.

He lowered the window a discreet few inches.

"May I ask a question?" he called diffidently.

"You can't have them," she responded, "unless——"

"I'm not ready to promise anything," he interrupted. "What I want to ask is: Who are you?"

"And you don't even know that!" Her

tone was tragic. "I'm Irene Madsen, Elizabeth's chum. No doubt you have heard her speak of me, little dreaming that—but I have vowed never to unburden the secret of my heart."

"Oh!" he responded vaguely.

"I attended your psychology classes last year," she added. "You never noticed me, of course——"

"Ah! but I did!" he exclaimed. This accounted for his impression on first seeing her. "So you are interested in psychology?" he added beaming.

"I adore it!"

"It has always been to me a source of regret that my fiancée cares nothing for these deeper subjects," he confided. "I supposed all girls of immature age were alike in that respect."

"To me," she assured him, "frivolous pursuits count as nothing compared with intellectual attainments."

"This is most interesting," declared Trevors sincerely. He began to approve highly of his captor.

As the conversation progressed, he forgot the passage of time. He found himself expounding his pet theories. He could not recall when he had found so responsive an audience. Even Miss Peyton's homage had lacked something of the mysterious zest that accompanied this conversation. Perhaps it was the play of the girl's animated features in the twilight.

The twilight brought reminders.

"Miss Madsen," said Trevors seriously, "why did you prevent me from going to Weymore? I assure you that I intended no wrong to your friend."

They were entering hilly country. For a moment the girl made no reply. Reducing the speed of the machine, she drew a letter from her bodice and passed it ominously to him through the window.

"I would have spared you the ghastly

truth," she said in tragic accents; "but it is inevitable. Read that."

Doubtfully, he accepted the missive. The handwriting seemed familiar. Turning to the last page, he found his fiancée's name signed to it. The first words on the page caught his attention, and he read to the conclusion:

for next week I come to Weymore to meet my doom. Poor Bud—he can't understand that my sense of duty to Aunt Deborah forces me to go through with this sacrilege. She has her heart set upon it. But oh, Irene, think of something—anything! Kidnap him, vamp him—I'm not particular what—only save

Yours in despair,

ELIZABETH LARNED.

It was, as Miss Madsen had anticipated, a shock. Several moments elapsed before Professor Trevors again presented himself at the window.

"Don't you think," he questioned, a trifle severely, "that this was written in a spirit of frivolity? It would hardly seem——"

"Perhaps," she replied with candor, "Elizabeth did not really expect me to kidnap you. However, she little knew my true mettle."

"But suppose I had not suffered this mischance with my—er—clothes?"

"I had a plan," she assured him darkly. "Fortunately, fate played into my hands, and it was not necessary for me to fall back upon the last resort."

He consulted the letter.

"This document contains a term with which I am not familiar. What does she mean by 'vamp'?"

She glanced toward him appealingly, and the machine swerved.

"Please," she quavered, "please do not press me to tell. Are you sure it means nothing to you?"

"Perfectly sure. Why"

"Because it was the plan I had in mind if driven to extremes."

"Oh!" gasped Trevors, while visions of poison vials and deadly weapons flashed through his mind.

He lapsed into thoughtful silence.

"We seem to have reached some sort of a hotel," she observed presently, bringing the car to a stop in a grove of trees. "Since it is now too late for you to keep your appointment, I will let you have your—your suitcase. You can get it while I see about something to eat."

Trevors brightened. But his relief changed to dismay when, on peering forth, he saw an illuminated sign that read, "Shady Rest Inn."

All the sinister impressions connected with the name again leaped into vividness. "Don't go in there—not alone!" he called in alarm, as she started toward the entrance; but she paid no heed.

Haste was demanded if he would follow and protect her from the terrors he vaguely suspected of lurking within. He lowered the window and dragged the suitcase from the driver's compartment. Switching on the interior light, he unstrapped the leather case. A garment that he failed to recognize lay on top. It was soft and filmy to the touch. He drew it forth—a gay-figured crimson kimono.

A startled survey of the articles exposed to view beneath it revealed nothing that remotely resembled male attire. Laces, satins, sheer silk stockings, toilet articles—in his agitation, he tumbled them out ruthlessly upon the seat. It was the wrong suitcase!

Worse than that, it was a purloined suitcase.

At the sound of another car approaching, he hastily switched off the light. The new arrival rolled to a stop a short distance further on, and several persons alighted. After

a short conference, the ladies apparently went toward the hotel entrance, while the men remained behind, talking in low, excited tones. One of them approached the machine in which Professor Trevors sat, registering propound discouragement.

"She's it, sure as you're alive!" came the excited exclamation.

Something seemed to tell Trevors that retribution had come upon him for the filching of the suitcase. A wave of unhappiness swept over him.

In a moment he would be revealed in all his unconventional scantiness of attire. Instinctively seeking cover, with the only materials at hand, he drew over his nether limbs a green satin garment that bore a certain frilly resemblance to a pair of pajamas.

It reached halfway between his knees and his ankles. For further camouflage he donned the silk komono. It was a tight fit across his broad shoulders, but he made it. Doubtless he would have continued to array himself in the contents of the suitcase had he not heard a stifled scream.

"Caught the girl herself!" came a triumphant voice. "She's the trick I saw doing the job, when I looked out of the window."

Trevors was not conscious how he got there, but he found himself in the roadway, bearing down upon a heavy-set young man in chauffeur's uniform, who was holding Miss Madsen by the arm as he forced a flashlight into her face.

"Take your hands off that girl!" shouted Trevors savagely.

The flashlight dazzled him for an instant. He knocked it from the other man's grasp. They went down together, exchanging blow for blow, struggling and kicking. The sound of cries and running feet accompanied their fall.

It was Trevor's first physical battle, but he was equipped for it with an ac-

cess of indignation that gave his muscles unwonted strength. His antagonist slipped from his grasp, and he struggled to his feet to find himself confronted by half a dozen where there had been but one. Undaunted, he rushed to renew the attack. A solar plexus blow doubled up the nearest of the half-dozen. The others closed upon him, receiving indiscriminate buffeting from a pair of arms that seemed endowed with the power and motion of a windmill. A heavyweight landed upon his back as he grappled with two assailants, and all went down together in a seething heap.

Trevors—gasping for breath—found himself pinned beneath the weight of numbers.

"Disarm him," came a terse command from the mass of beef and bone that occupied the region of his thorax. "He's a desperate character—we can't take no chances."

While Trevors strained to escape, exploring hands were passed over his body.

"I can't disarm him," came the querulous response. "He's wearing some kind of things—he ain't got no pockets."

"Take him inside, then. We'll hold him there while I put in a call for headquarters. Don't let the girl get away."

Five minutes later, under the firm guidance of two officers and several small boys and men who had joined the first reinforcements, Trevors was led toward the hotel entrance. His captors elbowed through a short hallway filled with excited spectators. With Miss Madsen, he was pushed through a doorway on the first landing and the key was turned in the lock.

Professor Travers glanced down apprehensively at his silk-clad person. The gala attire was not enhanced in appearance by the rips and stains that had resulted from his encounter—but he was at least under cover.

"I'm very sorry—" he began humbly. "Don't apologize," interrupted Miss Madsen. Her face was glowing with excitement. "You were wonderful—splendid! But we haven't a moment to waste." She made a quick survey of the room. "There's only a skylight here, but perhaps the bedroom has a window."

Their prison apparently was a reception parlor with a sleeping-room separated from it by a curtained archway. Trevors followed as she brushed aside the curtain and hurried to the window.

"It doesn't look very hopeful for escape," she announced. "There's nothing but a central court here, with walls on all sides."

"But why escape?" demanded Trevors. "When we explain—"

"We can't explain!" she responded half-hysterically. "Don't ask me why, but we must think of a way out. Help me think!"

In vague alarm, Trevors recalled the notorious character of the place. What if he should be seen and recognized—in that garb?

He sank weakly upon a divan.

Suddenly the girl turned toward him with a gesture of appeal.

"Do you still insist upon marrying Elizabeth?" she demanded.

"Not if she wishes to be released. If her aunt should request me to withdraw my—"

"But she won't," said Miss Madsen with conviction. "She has set her heart on this marriage, regardless of torn heart-strings. That leaves me with but one alternative."

A creepy feeling assailed Professor Trevors at the intentness of her gaze. Slowly, she drew near. Two spots of color in her cheeks deepened. She seemed to have intentions that he could not fathom.

She opened her lips as if to speak—

then, suddenly and without warning, threw herself down on the divan beside him and buried her face in a pillow.

"I can't do it! I can't do it!" she moaned. "I thought I was equal to it, but I can't! I can't!"

It was the most astonishing of many astonishing things that had happened to Trevors that day.

A wave of tenderness surged over him. He patted her shoulder gently. "Don't," he protested. "Whatever it is, I am sure it will come out all right."

His arm encircled her and he drew her gently toward him. The act was wholly involuntary.

"You're so good!" she sobbed. "But you don't know—you don't know what I meant to do. I was going—I was going to vamp you—to save Elizabeth."

That ominous word again—with all its sinister suggestions. Involuntarily he straightened up. She drew away.

"No! No!" he whispered hoarsely, while his arms tightened around her slender figure. "Whatever crime you contemplated, you are too fine—too wonderful—to carry it through!"

Then, as she raised her tear-stained face, he bent down and crushed his lips to hers. . . .

"So!"

Like a bolt of lightning, from the curtained archway, came the interruption.

Travers looked up. In his eyes was a dazed expression. The girl struggled to free herself.

"So!" the syllable was repeated. Miss Deborah Peyton, erstwhile admirer of Windhaven's youngest professor, stood in the archway, a picture of outraged virtue, while within the protection of her arm was Elizabeth Larned—her gaze fixed in horror upon the scene. Behind them were two grinning officers, a swagger young man, and the chauffeur with whom Trevors had first grappled.

"I would not have believed it!" announced Miss Peyton sternly. "I could not believe it if I did not see it with my own eyes." Her lips were set in a firm line as she turned to her niece. "I am indeed glad that I insisted upon alighting from the train and looking up to this—this disgusting rouse!"

The chauffeur edged forward.

"I spotted him for a bad one the minute he—"

"Be silent, sir!" commanded Miss Peyton. "This is a family affair." She swept her companions with a glance that ignored the abashed chauffeur. "Mr. Summers, will you lead me away from this shameless sight?"

"With pleasure, auntie." The swagger young man solicitously took her arm. Elizabeth hung back. She was staring in unbelief at her chum.

"Irene!" she gasped. "And I thought I could trust you!"

Wilting before this new attack, Miss Madsen made but weak defense.

"But—but you have Bud—and you told me—"

"It makes no difference who I have!" Elizabeth's indignation was superb. "The fact remains that you are deliberately vamping my intended husband. Don't ever speak to me again!" With head erect, she turned to follow her aunt.

"Wait a minute," called one of the officers. "You was going to identify this here kimono and things."

She paused. "Let him have them—he's welcome—false creature!"

The officer scratched his head. "Well, if there ain't no one going to prefer charges against you," he commented to the two on the divan, "I ain't going to make a fool of myself by holding you no longer."

The chauffeur alone lingered.

"If you're the bird that belongs to that other suitcase," he observed cheerfully,

"I left it at the station check stand when I picked up this bunch. Some terror, ain't she?" He jerked his head significantly toward the departing Aunt Deborah. "So long."

Irene buried her face in her hands.

"It's always the way," she moaned. "Whenever I try to help, the object of my sacrifice shows nothing but base ingratitude."

Trevors allowed his arm to creep around her. It seemed the natural thing to do.

"And worst of all," she continued, "I've bared my bleeding heart to you—when I intended to suffer in mute secrecy."

"Don't—Miss Madsen—don't!" he protested tenderly.

"All I can do now—in reparation"—

she sobbed—"is to take you home to your c-c-c-clothes. Perhaps if you never see me again you can forget this—this awful experience."

"Never see you again?"

"Not unless you w-w-w-wish to," she said, looking up with trembling lips and tear-stained cheeks.

"But I do!" he blurted. "I wish——" He broke off suddenly, and a riot of crimson, rivaling the hue of the kimono, spread over his face.

"I—I—I seem to have discovered the use of a new word," he said haltingly.

"If you—I wonder—would you mind——"

"Yes——" she encouraged breathlessly.

"—if I asked you to vamp me again?" he finished, suddenly gathering her in his arms.

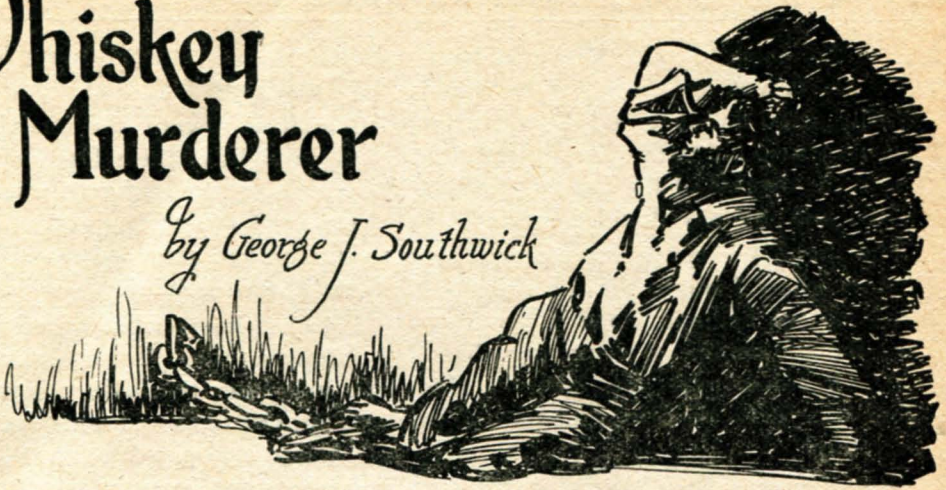
1860 AND 1922

Grandmothers who used to maintain a four-poster with a trundle bed attachment for the children, now have granddaughters with twin beds but no twins.

Wm. P. Barron.

Whiskey Murderer

By George J. Southwick



WHISKEY brought me here—made me what I am—and yet I've never tasted of the damned stuff. You smile; you stare; you think me crazy. Well, maybe I am—but hear my story. I'll make it plain—and brief. I'll crowd years into minutes, for time, endless, wearying, valueless to me, must be precious to you.

Let me see. It was three years ago. Strange—I began to think it as many score. Were years computed by sorrows, Methuselah would be as a child compared with me, though I to-day am in the prime of life.

In a little town in Pennsylvania—the name doesn't matter—there is a quarry, employing many men. That's where I lived and worked—and met Maturella. She was the daughter of the boss of our gang—a gruff fellow when sober, a beast of Satan when drunk. Prohibition, though a Godsend to others, was Bill Tomley's curse. It gave him an opportunity to store liquor away—to keep it where he could get it often—in his own home.

Maturella was not a Venus-beautiful, but she was good, and pure, and unaffected. I made up my mind to win her for my wife, and did succeed in getting her promise, for, though I say it myself,

I was a likeable chap then, fairly good looking and morally clean. I asked Maturella to name the day, but all she would say was "Wait." Finally I learned why she kept putting it off. Her father hated me. By my hard work and steady habits I had quickly advanced into the front of the men. One day Tomley accidentally overheard two of the owners praise me and censure him and, seeing the inevitable, it made him furious. He treated me absolutely abominably and assigned to me the heaviest and the meanest tasks.

I never grumbled, never gave him a harsh word. I knew he would have given anything he owned to have been able to drive me to some extremity which would have occasioned my discharge. When he discovered my passion for his dear, motherless daughter, he became openly antagonistic. He forbade me to come to the house. He circulated lies about me, tried to hound me from the quarries. All useless.

Maturella used to meet me now and then by the little brook when her father was in drunken sleep. She was often in tears, and when I put my arms about her frail form in speechless, silent adoration, she trembled as a fluttering dove. I pleaded with her to go with me—to leave the place forever. I had money—not

much, but enough. No; she would not leave her father, for she knew he would speedily go to the dogs and die a pauper. I even went so far as to offer my resignation to the owners of the quarry. It was refused and my pay doubled instead.

One night I crept up to the cottage window where I might see the woman I loved—to see her and worship her from afar, though denied to cross her threshold. I stood near the lattice. Her father was there with her, and they were quarreling.

"But, father, I love him," I heard the trembling girl say, and my heart was on fire. How did he answer? With renewed growlings and curses. "I learned where you were last night," he said. "Mark you, if I ever catch you together I shall kill him. Do you understand?" This seemed to enrage the little woman beyond endurance. She straightened with rigidity, her face marble white. I do not know what words passed her lips, but no sooner had she uttered them than the beast rushed upon her and struck her down with a single blow.

To say that I had all I could do to keep from crashing through that window and killing the monster then and there little expresses it. I saw him kneel beside the still form and then, as she recovered from the shock, lift her into a chair. I caught a glimpse of his face. It was swollen with liquor. Leaving her there to care for herself, the brutal father put on his hat and left the house. I waited a time, then went to the door and timidly rapped. Maturella knew the signal. "Wait a moment," she said; and soon appeared in the darkness from a side door, her face hidden in a shawl to conceal the marks of the blow. Her heroism was something sublime. I gave her a kiss, the tears rolling down my cheeks—tears of pity, of adoration, of rage and shame

unutterable. I started away, for I dared not trust myself at that moment.

I walked toward the quarries. As I came in sight of them I saw a man staggering along the highway, muttering between puffs of a strong cigar. He turned to the left and ascended the hill. Then I knew it was Tomley.

I do not know what impelled me, but I followed him. To my amazement I saw him enter the little magazine where we kept our tools and where several tons of blastering powder was stored. I knew he must be very drunk to go into that place with a lighted cigar and that such a thing would mean instant discharge if discovered by the company. I waited a long time but he did not come out. Then I crept to the door and peeped in. There he lay, dead drunk, a bottle at his side and, to my horror beyond words, his coat was afire. I watched the man for a moment, a hideous delight seizing me. I saw he would soon set the place afire and then—remembering what he had done to me—and her—I did not try to save him. No—I merely closed the door and flew down the road, as if pursued by demons. To my amazement, as I turned into the main street of the village, I ran into Maturella.

"Where have you been?" she said.

"To the magazine," I replied.

"Is father there?"

"Yes."

With my arms about her, we plodded back. "I will go with you to-morrow," she told me softly, "to the end of the world if you wish." Her words found me suddenly chilled. "Why don't you speak?" she asked. "What is the matter? Why, you are as pale as death. What has happened?"

"Nothing." I choked.

Then from the village way I heard a terrible cry. "The magazine's on fire!"

Maturella gave a scream. She seemed to understand. As for me, panting and distraught, I sank by the roadside, creeping into ambush. Then came the noise of a thousand hurrying feet over the rocky road. Where was Maturella? She had fled toward the magazine. I tried to get up, but my strength was gone. Then I heard them shriek out, "Hold her back! Hold her back!"

There was a flash, an awful roar. I fell in a heap, losing consciousness.

The next morning I learned everything—that Maturella was ill even unto death,

and that between wild ravings she had told that she had seen me running down the quarry road. Two days later she died. They arrested me. "Do you deny that dead girl's statement?" they asked. "If you do it is as much as to say she lied." "No," said I, "Maturella told the truth. Whiskey was Bill Tomley's murderer—whiskey and fire. I was but an accessory." Then I told everything. They would not believe. "Ten years," said the judge. Yes—whiskey brought me here—made me what I am—God, how I hate the damned stuff!

SOME LETTERS TO OUR EDITOR WHICH WILL REMAIN UNANSWERED

Dear Editor: I started in to reduce a pimple on my nose with liniment, but got the bottles mixed and used a bust developer by mistake. My nose is now a sight for the gods. What would you advise?

Sarah Soarface.

Dear Editor: My intended husband is inclined to be economical. He bought me five cents' worth of candy for a birthday present, and then suggested that I save some for the coming children. Instead of taking me to the seashore in the summer he filled my shoes with sand, took all my money away from me, and blistered my nose with a sun glass. How can I cure his meanness?

Ida Ratherwaite.

Dear Editor: On several occasions I loaned my wearing apparel to a young lady who wanted to attend masquerade parties. Since then I've been having all sorts of queer feelings. When a young man smiles at me I want to go and have my fortune told. My desires range from taking in washing to posing for living pictures. Can you lend me any assistance—or carfare?

Adam Phool.

Dear Editor: My sweetheart is a very tender-hearted girl. While her mother is doing the family wash she tries to cheer her by playing the piano, and whenever her mother asks her to fetch up a scuttle of coal she bursts right out crying. What shall I do with her?

Welland Careful.

Dear Editor: I'm in love with our hired girl, but I don't like some of the stunts she does. She uses a hairpin to pick her teeth, button her shoes, clean her finger nails, scratch her head and punch bedbugs out of cracks. And she always spits in the frying pan to see if it's hot enough. Shall I buy her a book on etiquette.

Littlebit Fussie.

Dear Editor: I am so modest I cannot go to bed with a copy of *The Christian Observer* in the room. Even when I'm undressed I have to put on airs. What shall I do?

Ima Baer.



MAGDALENE OF MICHOACAN

BY CARLTON BEALS

HE stole silently through the half-opened door, passing in her black dress and *tapalo* as a shadow across the sunlight checkered on the floor. The only touch of color on her person was the red carnation, shyly hidden in the rout of her dusk south hair. It contrasted strangely with the natural sorrow of her full, dark *mestizo* eyes.

General Magnifico Galvadón de Sayula, chief of the forces of the state of Michoacan stroked his thick, beetle-black moustaches, turning to stare at his visitor with the stern gaze of one who has many things to do—important things.

She slipped noiselessly into the seat opposite him with a slight, swaying, flower-like motion. Her breast was heaving, and quite unexpectedly two huge tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Pardon, *Senor*," she said in a low, throaty voice, "I have come to ask you to help me. I have heard that you are very good and have much influence."

She paused, while the General's appraising eye examined the carnation in her hair, her European-like face, the swell of her *tapalo* above her neat, small breasts, her tremulous, leaf-like hands.

"A friend, a very dear friend, has been thrown into the guard-house by one of your officers with whom he quarreled over the

sale of a gun. He is a good boy. Surely you can release him."

"Is he a relative of yours?" smiled the General.

"No, but—," her voice trailed off faintly.

"Ah, I see," exclaimed the general, and he stared at her until her blood mounted to her temples.

"Yes, he is my sweetheart," she answered quietly. "Surely you can do something."

"Of course I can do something," he replied rather importantly. "But naturally I must look into the matter."

Her face clouded.

"Will that take long?"

"I shall inquire immediately. Probably, if all is as you say your *querido* shall go free within a week. If not—"

He shook his head ominously, watching her through the slits of his eyes.

"I must back up my officers, you know," he continued. "What is your name?"

"Magdalena of Michoacan."

"And that of your *querido*?"

"Pedro Esperanza."

"But when shall I know?" she whispered, her black eyes swimming with sudden tears.

The general assumed a thoughtful attitude, carefully adjusting the finger-tips of his two hands together. Again he examined her person, less speculatively, but more minutely.

"You had better come tomorrow," he answered. "I may want to ask you some questions. Meanwhile don't worry."

He patted her hand with his thick pudgy one.

* * *

Two nights previously a number of men had stolen into a certain low, adobe house in the outskirts of Uruapan, their *sombreros* drawn to their eyes, their *zarapes* wound about the lower parts of their faces. It was the home of Don Enrique and Magdalena.

For two hours they talked in low whispers, their animated faces lit by a flickering, smoky *ocote* torch. Magdalena would pass around the tall mugs of white *pulque* and then would rejoin the circle, where the discussion grew ever more loud and acrimonious.

"We must act within the next week," Don Pedro, a tall, proud young man, was insisting, his arm about Magdalena's waist. "We were never stronger. Our men are full of enthusiasm. The sympathies of the people are with us. Obregón will join us soon. Galvadón, the Porpoise, has only about a thousand men, and can't get recruits. Now is the time to strike."

"No, no! We must be patient. We must be sure of our ground," protested cautious old Enrique. "We must wait until we are sure that the revolution in the north is winning."

"Winning! It is winning, and in any event it is our duty to help it win, not to wait until it is won—or lost," cried Don Pedro angrily.

The sentiment was all with Don Pedro, and finally the older man had to yield.

It was finally determined to bend every effort the next few days to ascertain the exact plans of Galvadón. If he meant to move into the country against the rebels in the adjacent hills it might be possible to fall upon the small garrison he would leave

behind and hold the town against him on his return.

The next day Pedro, in peon dress, had slouched over to the barracks to get some information from a fellow rebel in the Carranza ranks.

The night previous, however, one of the soldiers had been found dead with a bullet-hole in his temple. Since then the Captain of the company had established a restricted area of fifty yards' radius.

Pedro did not know this, and slipped past the guards unseen.

The Captain, himself, accosted Pedro with harsh words.

"What are you doing here, you *puerco*," he brawled.

"I merely came to try and sell my gun," replied Pedro quietly, pulling out his pearl-handled revolver.

"Let's see it," demanded the officer. "Ha! Where did you steal this?"

"It is mine," responded Pedro.

"You lie, you dirty —," cried the officer. "Get off the reservation," and he started to thrust the revolver into his pocket.

Pedro's half-Indian, half-Spanish blood boiled to the surface.

He leapt at the officer's throat, but his own gun was in his face.

"Officer of the Guard," called the Captain.

And so Pedro was arrested.

* * *

Magdalena returned as the General requested her. From the first moment she had taken a deep dislike to him, realizing that her mission was well-nigh hopeless. With true instinct she had divined that her one weapon would be flattery. More than ever now she was thoroughly aroused to the necessity of a blow being struck for the rebel cause. With Don Pedro locked up the matter assumed a big personal importance. She determined to play a double role: seek for the release of Don Pedro and

at the same time gain the necessary information for a rebel *cuartelazo*.

This second time the General proved even more polite.

"It is very good of you to come," he purred. "I have been very busy, but I have been finding out the truth about the matter." It was a lie. He had done nothing.

"How kind you are," answered Magdalena. Yet she sensed his hypocrisy. She would use her one weapon. "I realize you must be very busy; such a grand man as you must have many, many things to do. Few people who are busy know how to be generous. You are one of the few, Señor General."

He basked in her words.

"Yes, I am very busy these days. But I am never too busy to care for the rights of my people."

"It must take much ability to handle so many men, and to plan your attacks against the bandits."

And so she led him on from topic to topic, but always to something connected with the suppression of the rebel movement.

He patted her hand again when she rose to go, and walked with her to the door, where he put his arm about her waist. She did not resist, and smiled up at him. She only slipped away when he attempted to kiss her.

The General sat smiling for a long time. Then he sent for the Captain of the Barracks.

The Captain said the revolver had been stolen. It belonged to one of the lieutenants in the company. This Don Pedro was a worthless peon, sullen and defiant. He advised the General to have him shot.

The General smiled again.

"She will return tomorrow," he mused.

* * *

She came, even as he had predicted.

"I am sorry, *chiquita*—little one—" he cried, extending his hands. "Sorry, sorry," and actual pathos quivered in his voice.

"Your man Pedro is plainly in the wrong. He was trespassing on the military confines—an offense in itself punishable by death."

He paused, watching the fear course through her face.

"Furthermore," he continued, "there is something very peculiar in his having a gun belonging to one of the officers.

"But you can do something," quavered Magdalena.

"You must realize that I have to back up my officers," he replied with a tone of finality.

Magdalena recoiled from him in horror.

"You won't let him die?" she cried.

"No, I shan't permit him to die, but I must take some steps."

"But he is above that charge of theft," she pleaded, "and you, you could be so good and generous. . . ."

"I shall look at it as far as possible from your point of view. This afternoon I shall question him myself. You must have faith in me," he insisted pressing her hands. "You will, won't you?"

"Yes," she answered weakly, and passively let him put his arm around her and kiss her.

"That is better, my dear," he exclaimed. "I am very fond of you, and will do all I can."

They talked of many things after that—about the rebels; the conversation always drifted to that topic.

Galvadón kissed her again when she left, and he thought she returned the pressure of his lips.

* * *

"I am sorry, *chiquita*," he exclaimed the next afternoon, and he immediately put his arm about her shoulder. "I have not been able to do anything yet. The bandits are very active, and I have had many orders from the capital . . . you understand, do you not?"

He pulled her down to his lap, although she resisted slightly.

Within her heart was a new fear. In the General's evasions she clearly saw that Pedro's imprisonment was but a means by which he hoped to force himself upon her and ultimately bring her to return his caresses. Should she refuse . . .

Again they talked of the bandits. Each day she was piecing out her information. But as yet she had learned nothing sufficiently important.

The general sought to detain her longer when she would have gone.

"When shall I know about Don Pedro?" she begged.

"Come to my offices tonight at nine o'clock. We shall have a little wine . . . Then I shall tell you."

"No! No! No!" she cried no longer able to hide her fury, and flew from the room.

The mystified General thought he had been making sufficient progress.

The next day he determined to force the issue, and sent her a note ordering her to come and see him without delay—"a matter of life and death," he put it.

"My poor child," he mourned as she entered. "How can I break the news to you?"

She sat sullenly silent, divining what he would say.

"Your Pedro has been proved guilty of killing the soldier last week near the barracks. He has been ordered—SHOT."

She sank into a chair, her hands over her face. She saw too clearly that the General would carry out his edict ruthlessly, unless . . .

"So you are going to let him die!"

"My dear, dear child, what can I do? I am as grieved as you. Duty compels me to stifle my instincts. I cannot block the military law. He is guilty of a crime that is punishable the world over by death."

"But you—you could save him if you would. Tell me, Oh, tell me that you will save him."

"Tell me that you love me," he rejoined, "tell me that you will come to me this very night."

Unconsciously she recoiled from him, although she had not intended betraying her real feelings.

"Very well, then," replied the General, "you can scarcely expect me to interest myself in the matter. We have important business for tonight that demands undivided attention. I must settle this affair promptly. This afternoon, immediately after siesta, your Don Pedro will meet his penalty."

"You won't," she cried shuddering. "No, no! I shall come tonight if you will only save him."

At least she would gain a few hours.

"That is more like it, *chiquita*," he cried and pressed her in his arms. "Tomorrow morning he shall walk forth a free man. We have many things to do this night, as I said before, yet I shall leave them to my officers, for is not my *chiquita* coming to pay me a visit? Can anything be more important than that?" he cried in ecstasy.

"What is so important this night, dear?" she wheedled.

"Tonight we wipe out the bandits."

"Tonight!"

"Tonight! This afternoon 800 of my men take to their horses and ride to Barranca Grande. The betrayer of the bandits stands ready to lead us to a surprise attack over one of their own trails."

Magdalena listened in fear. Some one had played traitor. The whole rebel force might be wiped out. The 800 men were to slip away in small groups at four o'clock. It was a good five hours' ride to Barranca Grande. If her friends could be warned in time, however, they could fall upon Uruapan while the Carranza troops were in the field. It was the great chance to strike the premeditated blow.

Yet there was not a man in town suited for such a mission. She alone would have

to go. In the meantime the General would be waiting. What would he do if she did not appear? She could not get back before midnight. Would he order Pedro shot before that time? To stay was to pay the price and save Pedro's life. To go was perhaps to save the lives of the rebels and the cause. She must escape into the open air where her head would not throb so terribly.

"I shall come tonight," she said in adieu to the General, turning her lips to his. "At nine thirty."

"No, *chiquita*, at eight."

"At nine thirty," she called back, smiling, though her heart pounded furiously and hate coursed madly through her veins.

She hastened blindly through the twisted streets. One minute she could see Pedro erect before the firing squad, or his body riddled with bullets. The next, the Federals sweeping down upon the unsuspecting rebels, massacring them without pity. The next she would see her Pedro walking forth a free man . . .

Fifteen minutes later she was home. She had decided. She had decided as she knew Don Pedro would have her decide. Calling her pony from the *corral*, she flung a blanket on him and was off like the wind, through the fields and down a mountain trail. Soon the way became difficult, and much of it had to be taken at a walk. But at every level stretch she applied quirt and spur . . .

Many times she had wandered leisurely along this same trail. Many times she had halted to rest from the hot, tropic sun, beneath the cool leaves, arched above some brooklet. How often she had stood with her hand upon her pony's mane, gazing out across the miles of rugged mountains stretching to the distant, hazy sea. An empire it was, noble and rugged and untouched, a country made for big men with brave hearts, not for ragged peons and down-trodden half-breeds. The peons

themselves knew that they should not be in rags in such a land. It was for this reason that Madero had so easily overwhelmed Diaz, that Obregón was now finding such enthusiastic backing against the bandit-government of Carranza, that the rebel ranks in Uruapan had swelled so rapidly. It was for this reason that General Magnifico Galvadón de Sayula, one of those typical products of Mexican anarchy, had been sent southward through Michoacan; and that Magdalena now found herself plunging along a dangerous mountain trail.

This day she gave no thought to the beautiful scenery. Her eyes were strained upon the way ahead. Her lips were tense with determination, even though her mind was still being shunted back and forth between the thought of her martyred Pedro and her martyred *compañeros*.

It was just at dusk that her pony picked up a stone. He began limping immediately. Magdalena found it wedged too tightly to be easily removed. She tried the only tool she could improvise a sharp stout stick, but the stone refused to budge. She remounted and rode on for several miles. But the pony limped more noticeably at every step. Frequently he stumbled, and Magdalena began to fear that he would plunge her over the cliffs. When it finally became impossible to go faster than a slow walk, she determined to abandon him.

It was six-thirty. She had ridden three and a half hours. On horseback she would still have an hour and a half. On foot it meant about two and a half hours. She would arrive at the same time as the Federals!

She could not run in the dark. It was even dangerous to walk. A misstep might plunge her over a thousand-foot cliff, or send her rolling down a steep slope to her death. But her only hope was to go on. Perhaps the Federals had not left on time. They would ride very cautiously. Before

they arrived at Barranca Grande they would leave their horses and proceed on foot. These things might delay them fifteen minutes, half an hour, even longer.

Full of renewed faith, she pressed on, stumbling over sticks and stones and exposed roots. Twice she pitched headlong, bruising her side and scraping the skin from her knees. Once she heard a shot in the distance, and she stopped short, clutching a low-hanging branch.

Had she been too late?

But no other was heard and she hastened on. Suddenly a heavy body crashed through the brush. As she drew her revolver, a huge mountain lion crossed her path. But he did not offer to molest her, and again she rushed on.

She noted each landmark, each familiar stone, the white face of the chalky Sierra, the dip of the trail by the great lone pine, EL SENTINEL, that lorded it over the descent to the ridge, the long, black trail along the divide, arched over by mammoth trees and heavy tropic vegetation—a long fearful tunnel—endless—then the steep dangerous descent to Barranca Grande. Still no sign of the Federals.

Suddenly she reeled back against a tree with a half-suppressed scream. A riderless horse loomed up on the trail. A thousand conjectures harried her mind, but fright hurried her on.

Out of the darkness a harsh voice cried, "Halt, Hands up!

"Advance. Who are you? What is your party?"

She recognized that voice.

"It is I, Doña Magdalena," and she gave the rebel countersign.

"Doña Magdalena," he said affectionately for every man knew her. "What news?"

"No time," she cried breathlessly, and was gone.

"Where is Don Enrique?" she demanded of the first man she met.

A moment later she was pouring out her story.

"There is only one thing to do," she continued. "We must make Uruapan while the Federals are out of town. We can take the short trail—it is fearful by night—but we can make it in four hours. The people will rally to our support. Then when the Federals return we can cut them to pieces from ambush."

"We cannot make it over the short trail tonight," was Don Enrique's answer.

"Father, Don Pedro will be shot before we get there. I have sacrificed him for the cause. Will you throw this chance away?"

"It is madness to take the short trail without a moon," he reiterated obstinately.

"Very well," she flung over her shoulder.

"Don Juan, Don Juan!" she called through the dark.

"Here, here," came back the cheery reply.

She told him her story, and of Don Enrique's stubbornness.

"We must lead the men to Uruapan this night," she insisted.

Don Juan, second in command, agreed.

"We shall be gone by the time that Enrique determines that he will not permit it."

They were soon busy shaking up sleeping forms, interrupting a twanging guitar, stopping a fireside conversation, to tell the men to jump to their horses.

Still no sign of the Federals, and ere they appeared the rebel troops were off on their long ride through the pitchy dark beneath the pines; a ride that was as good as a man's life even in the daytime.

* * *

Back in Uruapan, General Magnifico was pacing the floor of his room. For a long time he had been nervously expectant. Constantly he consulted his watch—nine o'clock, nine five, nine ten, nine fifteen, finally nine thirty, then nine forty-five, ten,

ten thirty—still no Magdalena. He became angry. He raged. Eleven o'clock passed. He alternately swore and prayed that she would yet come. At twelve he began to lose all hope. At twelve fifteen he ordered his servants to get up and prepare him a drink of hot *tequila* and lemon. At twelve thirty he bundled up in his great coat and passed into the quiet, starlit night.

At the barracks he routed out a sleepy captain:

"Pedro Esperanza is to be shot at one o'clock," he commanded crisply. "Send an orderly to call me when preparations have been made."

The Captain went in and routed out a lieutenant. The latter stretched himself a long time, and then growled under his breath.

"What fools," he said to himself. "Why didn't they shoot him yesterday? Why don't they wait until tomorrow? Now they want him shot within twenty minutes in the dead of night. Bah!"

In the due course of time a firing squad of some ten men was assembled. Don Pedro was led out.

Then they sent for the General. He came ponderously to survey the arrangements. He turned to the assembled group.

"I, General Magnifico Galvadón de Sayula have ordered this man, Don Pedro Esperanza, to be shot at one o'clock, this eighth day of May in the year of our Lord, 1920. He has been guilty of theft, trespassing on the military confines and of murder."

"Now," he said, turning to the Captain, "send three of your men to search for the wench, Magdalena. She shall see her dear beloved shot."

A full half hour elapsed before the three returned.

"She is not to be found," they declared.

"Very well," replied the General, "save her the empty cartridges."

The General stood off to one side.

The Captain order his men about, now fully alive to the gravity of the situation. It was not often one was ordered to have a man shot in the dead of night.

A priest had been brought to receive Don Pedro's last confession, when suddenly a spatter of rifle shots sounded from the outskirts of town. The General and the Captain looked at each other inquiringly.

"Go on with your shooting," commanded the General grimly.

A second and a stronger volley was heard.

Two soldiers came running up.

"The rebels are in the town," they cried, "in full force."

As they spoke the full moon poked above the barracks, lighting up the tense figures.

"Get out your men," bellowed the General. "Send two hundred men to the west side of town. Hold the rest here for further orders. Captain, I shall see to the shooting of this man."

In the excitement the firing squad had become become disarranged and panicky. Three or four officers had run out between them and the prisoner. The General lost his temper completely trying to straighten things out. Finally, however, preparations were again made.

Suddenly a clatter of hoofs sounded upon the stones, and some twenty-five men dashed into the open space before the barracks. Magdalena was at their head.

"Stop them," she cried, a horrible fear clutching her.

The General turned calmly towards Don Pedro and fired his revolver at him. Pedro crumpled into the grass.

A lieutenant dashed into the barracks. Firing began from the windows. Five men on the green fell from the rebels' shots. Magdalena spurred her horse to the General's side. He fired his pistol in her face.

A sudden lunge of her horse saved her. "You cur!" she cried and her gun blazed. He staggered back, spun around and collapsed like a punctured bag.

In ten minutes the rebels, reinforced had cleared out the barracks . . .

Don Pedro was sitting up, a temporary bandage on his shoulder, his head on Magdalena's breast, when the operator from the office came running up.

"The cause is won," he shouted. "Obregón has entered Mexico City."

A MATTER OF LEGS

Jim had just arrived from France, safely through the war without a scratch.

Faster and faster he drove the roadster, for he felt much of the same excitement that had come to him in the zero hours when in the trenches. Loui would be waiting for him—Loui, the dearest, sweetest girl in the world. They would be married at once.

A delay in the traffic, a face in a window—the window of his club. It was a boyish, haggard face; Ralph Gill, the friend of his pre-war days. Instinctively he drew up to the curve and climbed quickly from the car.

A moment later he was shaking hands with his friend—the left hand for Ralph had lost his right in the war.

The haggard look was explained: Ralph came home with an empty sleeve and the girl he had placed among the angels had married another.

Jim's face clouded at his friend's misfortune. Then came the thought. Would Loui have treated him so if—if things had been different. He drove the thought away, yet he knew there would always be that feeling that she might. He wondered.

Five minutes later he returned from the telephone ashamed of his suspicion. He had told his first lie to Loui. Told her that his right leg was gone, below the knee. She was startled of course, but then—

"How wonderful," she said. "My husband will have done something for his country." She went on to comfort him with stories of many boys who had lost their limbs—of the wonders of artificial legs. "They can even dance," she finished, "and none the wiser."

Jim continued his limp, as they stepped into the waiting car and were driven away from the church, amid the shouts of friends.

"My husband!" she placed a tiny hand in his.

"My wife!" he leaned forward and kissed her.

Deciding to confess his deceit he drew away.

"There is something I wish to tell you," she spoke before he. "It's about that afternoon, when you called me up and told me of your leg. I was going to tell you I wouldn't—couldn't marry you."

"Why?" he asked perplexed.

"Because!" she leaned her head upon his shoulder. "While you were overseas I met with an automobile accident—I, too, have a wooden leg."

—Carroll John Daly.



THE LAUGHIN'EST GIRL

by Jane Hicks

JIM and Tissa were going to marry each other because they thought that then they'd be as happy as could be.

Jim's idea of happiness he'd explained to Tissa many times.

"Aw gee! After a feller's worked hard twelve hours in that engine-room he don't want to have to walk two miles to get home and come home to a row and always fightin' like it is at my house. And with all the kids there is there my mother don't have time to get dressed of evenin's, half the time it's no clean shirts nor nothin' and the buttons off my suit o' clothes. And it ain't everything that I likes to eat and sometimes it ain't a thing on the table that I likes. And if it was just two of us we could have just the things we like and my clothes could keep ready to put on and you could wash 'em and sew 'em, and gee! Tissa, to have a swell little kid like you to do it all for me and to meet me smilin' at the door and glad to see me. Gee, baby-doll, it's nothin' like it! And I'll bring you home my pay envelope and you can buy for just us two, and every other feller in town jealous o' me 'cause I'd got the classiest little girl o' all of 'em, always happy and all. A feller'd have to be happy with you, Tissa. You's the laughin'est girl! I haven't never seen you mad or any way you ain't laughin'!"

Tissa's ideas of happiness were expressed mostly in joyous squeals and light laughs and dreams of romance.

"I'm gunter get married!" she'd say as veritable rays of happiness seemed to flash from her sunny blue eyes and light curls and joyously smiling lips.

Tissa had been raised to think that to get married was the only way to live happy ever after! And because girls that get mad and sulk and cry never have anybody to want to marry them, her creed from early years had been, "Laugh, laugh, laugh, and then I'll get married!" To get married! The ambition of her childhood, the dream of her teens—as far as she went in them before she did get married! To be loved and carried off and worshiped like girls in stories!

"And Jim says he'll give me his pay-envelope"—this was the height of worship—"and I'll have my little house all my own and you-all can come to see me," she'd tell her six younger brothers and sisters with such beaming that they'd look at her as at a fairy princess. They all loved her "to death," anyhow, as their mother said, adding, "I'm 'fraid she'll be awful lonesome way out there to the country. She's used to the town and so much folks about and she never was one to stay to herself."

"But I won't be lonesome," Tissa would

correct her, "'cause Jim's to night work and he'll be home all day and when he's to work I'll be asleep and won't know it. And from the time he goes to work till bedtime ain't long. I won't mind that."

So in the spring they married and moved a few pieces of furniture from each parental home out to the little old shack in the field beside the railroad that led to the lumber mill about half a mile away.

"And the boss says," Jim told her, "that as soon's ever one o' the houses at the mill's empty, we can have that."

Never was working a garden more fun. Their very own! Tissa laughed as Jim pushed the plow thru the flat, sandy soil; she laughed as she came behind him leveling and chopping with the hoe; she was gay as he opened the rows and she followed, dropping in the seeds. This between 3 in the afternoon, when Jim woke up, and a quarter of 6, when he left for the mill. Then Tissa would walk with him along the road or the track past the fields, past the mill negro quarters, laughing as she swung his dinner bucket and exulting over the blossoms on the black-berry bushes along the ditch.

"Won't they make good old jam and pie? You like 'em?" she'd ask.

"Do I like 'em? Man!"

"We'll pick 'em together afternoons—Ay?" she planned, laughing some more as Jim declared that they would, and as she handed him his bucket and told him what to bring from the mill store as he came home in the morning, and kissed him quickly so nobody would see and then looked around to see who had seen. Then, singing and clapping her hands, first in front of her and then behind, she'd walk lightly back to the shack and she'd work in the garden till bedtime, singing softly to herself because Jim was getting

the things he wanted to eat, and had clean clothes and mended clothes when he needed them, and didn't have far to walk after twelve hours in an old hot engine-room, and because he always told her how nice it was to come home to laughing instead of to fussing, and to his little girl that all the other fellers wanted. And she'd lie awake planning what she'd get with the next "pay-envelope." She'd already had two! Gee! It was fun being married! And soon's ever they could move to the mill and get acquainted with the folks there, Gee! wouldn't it be fun!

For Tissa, be it remembered, was used "to lots o' folks about," and out here in the field her only neighbors were the negroes in the mill quarters in one direction, and down a quarter of a mile in the other, in a red-painted shack, a colored woman named Mary and her large family. Mary had worked by the day for Tissa's mother. So one evening when there was nothing to do in the garden, Tissa crossed the ditch on a plank and walked down the track toward Mary's.

"You don't be's lonely out here all by yourself?" Mary asked.

Tissa hesitated, then laughed and answered, "No, indeed. I have a good time."

She'd never been known to admit having anything else, this little optimist by nature and by creed.

"Wonder what they-all's doin' home. We cert'ny did used to have fun. Was you there lately?"

No, Mary had not been there lately. Then Tissa, clapping her hands front and back and humming, "Smile, Smile, Smile," walked on down the track to where it crossed the road to town.

"I could get home 'fore dark all right,

but I mightin't could get any way to get back. Wonder what they-all's doin'!"

* * *

Still wondering, she walked back to her little gray shack.

"Wisht I had papa's graphophonolia out here. Gee! Believe I'll get one on time with the next envelope. I sure do love music. Anything just so it's music."

The next morning Jim agreed to the purchase of the "graphophonolia," and that afternoon they "dressed up" and hurried to town to order it from the catalogue at Tissa's mother's.

"Why don't you stay on till dark?" her mother asked her. "I'll give Jim some dinner for the night. Long's you're here, no use to stay just five minutes. We haven't seen you in so long. We'll find some way for you to get back by bedtime."

So Tissa walked a little way with Jim and went back to spend the evening at her old play with "the kids."

The next morning as he ate breakfast before going to bed, Jim wanted to know:

"How'd you come home last night?"

"Well, papa fixed up to come with me and we was goin' on up Main street and Harry Smith passed in his auto and said he was comin' on out this way, he'd bring me. So papa was so tired and all, he said it wasn't no use for him to walk two miles out here and two back, tired like he was, so I just hopped in and Harry brought me."

"How far?" Jim asked, frowning.

"How far?" Tissa repeated, laughing. "Why, clean here. Sure."

"Did he get out o' the car?"

"No, indeed."

"How long'd he set here?"

"Just a few minutes to ask what we's doin' in the garden and like that," laughing.

Jim said no more, but he went to bed with a frown on his wide, blond face.

Tissa straightened up two rooms and was thru by 8. She'd made all the "tidies" and covers she needed and the mending was all done.

"If it wasn't so far so's I could get to stay a while fore ever I'd have to come back to get dinner, I'd go home and see what they-alls doing'. Reckon I'll put me on some other clothes and go up to the mill; see what the folks up there's doin'. Get some bacon at the store."

Quietly, so as not to waken Jim, she cleaned her white shoes, put on her pink and blue lawn with the pink and blue ribbons at the waist, and her floppy white hat she'd gotten to be married in, pushed her feet into her wet shoes, and left for the mill. The housekeepers were all out in their gardens talking to each other, but none of them talked to Tissa. They asked each other who she was, so "dressed up and so smiling," but they didn't return her smiles. They weren't lonely.

She went on to the store where the two clerks, one married and one a boy, were sociable. The clerks in the office just opposite the store had seen the "dressed-up little girl" go in, and they came over, one by one, to "get a look at her."

As Tissa talked to Oscar, and drank "a dope on him," she was very conscious of the looks that the others were having at her and it made her laugh more than usual. It was lots of fun—so much that Tissa stopped asking Jim to bring things home with him as he came in the mornings and went for them herself while he slept. And always she dressed up and smiled at the women as she passed, and always they looked back at her and talked to each other, but they weren't lonely.

And in the evenings, now that there was nothing to do in the garden, she very

often crossed the ditch and walked down the railroad track to talk to black Mary. She'd talk about home and town and wonder what every one was doing. Then she'd talk about Mary's chickens or children or garden, and wonder again what "they-all" were doing at home. And at dusk, she'd walk back to the little gray shack. That "graphophonolia" certainly did take long to come! And she did love music! Anything, just so it was music! Music and laughter—and having fun!

Then, one evening, she walked down the track and saw the little red shack deserted, empty. Mary had gone. Without singing, Tissa went on to the "big road" and stood and looked toward town.

"Wonder what they-all's doin'!"

Then she went back and because there was nothing to do in the garden and the "graphophonolia" hadn't come, she sat on the doorstep and hummed while the silent darkness settled about her.

The next morning, she met Jim half way home. She laughed.

"I come to meet you. I wanted to see you so bad."

"How come?"

"Nothin'. I just wanted to see you. It ain't no house to the mill vacant yet?"

"No. Why?"

"I don't know. Reckon you could get a daytime job stead o' night, Jim?"

"How come?"

"Nothin'. But I just was thinkin' that I don't see you none in the day nohow, you's sleepin', and seems like it 'ud be nice if you was to be home along 'bout after supper till we goes to bed. Seems that's the lonesomest time o' the day."

"What's the difference?" Jim wanted to know. "It's just like bein' here from 3 till 6. No different! Reckon I could get a day job; they're lookin' for a day engineer now, but the work's so hard in the daytime, I sleeps half the night,

but daytimes, it's hard. You has to be on the job every minute keepin' up that steam. I don't want it."

* * *

That evening as Tissa walked back from the mill gate, she heard some music—a guitar! She did love a guitar! Anything just so it was music!

"Sounds like it's over to the track. These old bushes and all's so high, I might could see——"

At a break in the bushes she waited. Pretty soon the attractive sounds were just across the ditch, and, why, it was Oscar and another feller, only the other feller was playin' the guitar.

They saw her.

"Hey!" Oscar greeted her. "Tissa, meet my friend, Bill Lush, he's to the mill, too—inspector."

Tissa laughed and acknowledged the introduction.

"I was wondering who was the music," she said, laughing again.

"You didn't know we'd moved out?" Oscar asked, leaping the ditch, followed by Bill. "We're batching it in this little red shack right crost the track. Gee, it was so far to come clean from town in the mornings by 6 and so far to go of evenings, we wanted a place closter to the mill."

Tissa laughed and said it was nice as she looked at the guitar.

"I just love music," she said. "Anything, so it's music. I wonder could I learn to play one o' them. Is it hard?"

"Golly, no. I'll learn you all I knows. I just picked it up."

Bill was slender and blonde and wore his hair in a slick wet pompadour, but "he ain't as handsome as Jim," Tissa noted, with a thrill of pride.

Then they walked along the road, Bill strumming his guitar and all three singing. Gee! It was fun. When, on the

way back, they came to the path to Tissa's shack, she stopped.

"This you-all's place?" Oscar asked
Tissa laughed that it was.

"You stay here all by yourself while Jim's to the mill nights? Gosh, you must get lonesome. We'll come in and stay with you a while."

So they sat on the doorstep in the blending twilight and moonlight and played and sang and laughed.

"I wisht Jim was here," Tissa said once, looking off wistfully toward the mill.

"Ain't this him comin' now?" Oscar asked.

The figure turned into the path and Tissa recognized his walk.

"Well, reckon we better be movin' on," Oscar said, uncomfortably, as he and Bill rose and started down the path.

"What's them fellers doin' here?" Jim demanded of Tissa when he reached the steps.

"They just come in. I met up with 'em on the road. They was playin' their guitar and they just come in and set on the steps. What'd you come home for?"

"Wasn't lookin' for me, was you? Huh-huh! I thought so. How many more times they been here? Every night?"

"They ain't never been here before," lightly. "They've just moved to Mary's house. What you act like you's so mad about?"

"'Cause I don't want no other fellers comin' here to my house. You hear what I'm a-tellin' you now. What's it look like, me gone off, and folks passin' on the road sees them other fellers here!"

Tissa laughed. "I never saw nobody pass on the road yet since I been here 'cept timber cart in the daytime. Don't nobody pass."

"That's all right! If I finds them fellers here again, somebody'll be to shoot. Where's my wrench I had fixin' that plow?"

Tissa found the wrench for him and stood on the doorstep and watched him go off.

"The first time I ain't went a piece with him," she said with a laugh that had a new note in it.

When Jim came to breakfast he was still cross. Tissa tried to talk to him but his answers discouraged her. Then she tried laughing; that was the way to make people like you.

"For the Lord's sake, quit laughin'!" he ordered. "Giggle, giggle, giggle, all the time. You's the laughin'est girl I ever saw. Maybe you think it's funny what you done last night. You wont think it's funny again. Laughin' so big!"

So Tissa stopped laughing and eating and after Jim had gone to bed and she'd straightened the house, she began to change her dress. Suddenly Jim's voice startled her from the bed.

"Where you fixin' to go?"

Tissa laughed. "I thought you was a-sleepin? I gotter go to the store for some coffee."

"Gotter go see that feller, have you? That's how come you ain't asked me to bring nothin' from the store of late. You want to run up there to talk to him. Take off that dress. If it's things to bring from the store, you ask me to bring 'em!"

"But it ain't no coffee for dinner," Tissa said with a doubtful smile.

"That's all right. Then we won't have none. Or, I'll go out after I gets done sleepin'."

So Tissa took off her pink-and-blue dress and worked in the garden. When Jim woke up, she went to sit with him as usual while he dressed.

"Are you goin' for the coffee 'fore dinner?" she asked him.

"You ain't goin' a-tall. I'll do the tradin' at that store. You stay here where you belongs at."

Immediately after dinner, he went off. Tissa watched and waited and walked back and forth on the path from the shack to the road, but Jim didn't come till just in time to get his dinner-pail and get back to the mill by 6.

And from then on, every afternoon in his free hours—the three hours when Tissa had had him to talk to—he went to the mill and stayed.

"How come you stayed so long?" Tissa sometimes asked him.

"Talkin' to some o' the fellers," he'd tell her.

One day at dinner, she said, "The blackberries is ready to pick."

"Well, pick 'em!" Jim told her.

And several mornings she rushed to town and back in the hot sun to try to find something at home that she hadn't read and to try to coax one of the children to come and visit her. But, like Tissa, they were used to "lots o' folks about," so they wouldn't stay with her long. And in the evenings, she tried to avoid Oscar and Bill and the music and the fun of singing and laughing with them. Whenever they did join her on the road, she'd look nervously toward the mill every few minutes and would leave them as soon as she reached her gate, never asking them in. But one evening, Oscar greeted her with:

"My guitar come today. I ordered me one. Man, it's a beaut!"

"Oh, did it?" Tissa asked wistfully.

"Come on. I'll show it to you," Oscar offered. "I didn't bring it because I can't play yet. Bill's learning me. Come on, lemme show it to you."

With several backward glances, Tissa

walked with them, past the plank across the ditch, on to the little red shack.

"Oh, ain't it a beauty!" she cried when Oscar had laid it in her hands where she stood at the foot of the porch steps.

She caressed it, she picked one of the strings and laughed delightedly at the reverberating sound, for she did love music!

"Hold it like this-a way," Bill told her, fixing it in her arms. "You can't play it standin' up. Set up here." Tissa sat on the steps. "Now, put your fingers here."

And so, Tissa started her first lesson—a lesson so fascinating that she forgot everything else. She did not see that twilight had changed to moonlight, that it was late. She could play the first line of "Smile, Smile, Smile."

Suddenly, with low exclamation, Oscar and Bill leaped up the steps and into the house, and Tissa looked up from her guitar to see Jim standing on the track shooting thru the door that the boys had slammed behind them.

"Jim! Quit!" she cried as Jim, leaped up the steps and, with his body, broke open the door. She heard him stamping thru the two rooms; she heard him curse as he threw open the shutter of a back window and shoot out into the cotton-field behind the house. He ran out past her and across the field a little way, stooping to look up the alleys and shooting up them. Then he came back to Tissa. She laughed nervously, laying Oscar's guitar on the step.

"I wasn't doin' nothin', Jim. Bill was just learnin' me to play."

"I don't want to hear nothin' from you. You can go back to your mother where you come from. Come on here. I got no time to waste away from the mill."

He caught her arm and pushed her

roughly along the track toward the road to town, refusing to listen to her when she tried to explain. At the road he stopped.

"Now you go home and don't you never come back to me! I'm done with you. I got no time to take you home. A woman like you's got nothin' to be 'fraid of, nohow."

He turned and left her. She called him once, tremulously, but Jim did not turn. She stood and watched him till he'd melted into the moonlight, then, with a strange little laugh, she started the two miles to town. When she reached home she laughed the strange little way again as she told her mother:

"Jim sent me home. I didn't do nothin'." * * *

It was many days before Tissa's laugh sounded like a laugh, and before she'd go out, even on the porch; it was many more before she'd go into the yard. She was always looking nervously up and down the street. The first time she saw him coming, she ran into the house and peeped thru the parlor curtains while he passed. He didn't turn his head. Then, every day, he passed and gradually, both grew bolder, till one day Tissa stayed on the porch and Jim turned his head.

"Come here," he called her to the fence, but could say nothing when she got there. After a few minutes. "The graphophonolia's to the station," he told her.

Tissa laughed weakly, but said nothing.

"What's to do with it?" Jim asked, frowning.

"I don't know. It's your'n, with your pay-envelope. They might take it back."

"I don't want it to my mother's house," Jim told her, "all them kids to break it up. If you wants it, you can come back.

Them fellers are not apt to bother you again. Come on back if you want to. You can go on out with me now," as Tissa picked at the fence with one fingernail. "Why don't you say nothin'? I says you can come back," Jim repeated.

"Out to the little shack?" Tissa asked.

"Sure. That's all the place we've got yet, ain't it? All our things is there, and——" his voice softening. "Come on. Got a hat?"

"I ain't a-goin'," Tissa said softly.

"You—how come you ain't?"

"I'm afraid, Jim."

"'Fraid? You wasn't never 'fraid before. What's to hurt you? You got a gun, ain't you?"

"It ain't that-a way. I'm 'fraid—it's so lonesome, Jim. I might go to their porch again, or they might come to hear the graphophonolia."

"They ain't comin'" Jim told her, "and what if they does? You's all right, Tissa. I knew it even that night—but you's mine and—you comin'? Say? Tell me, baby-doll."

"I can't talk," Tissa said tremulously, wiping a tear off her cheek.

Jim jumped the fence and led her into the house.

"It's just like gettin' married all over again," Tissa laughed when Jim stopped kissing her. "But you better hurry to work; it's 6 and after."

"I should worry!" Jim answered, holding her close. "I've changed to day work. And I got my name to a house around the corner from here for when the folks move out of it next month. It'll be more fun for you."

"But, Jim—the long walk and the hard work on the day job?"

"Hang the walk and the hard work! What's that to me? What's anything, just so I got you and you're laughin', baby-doll!"



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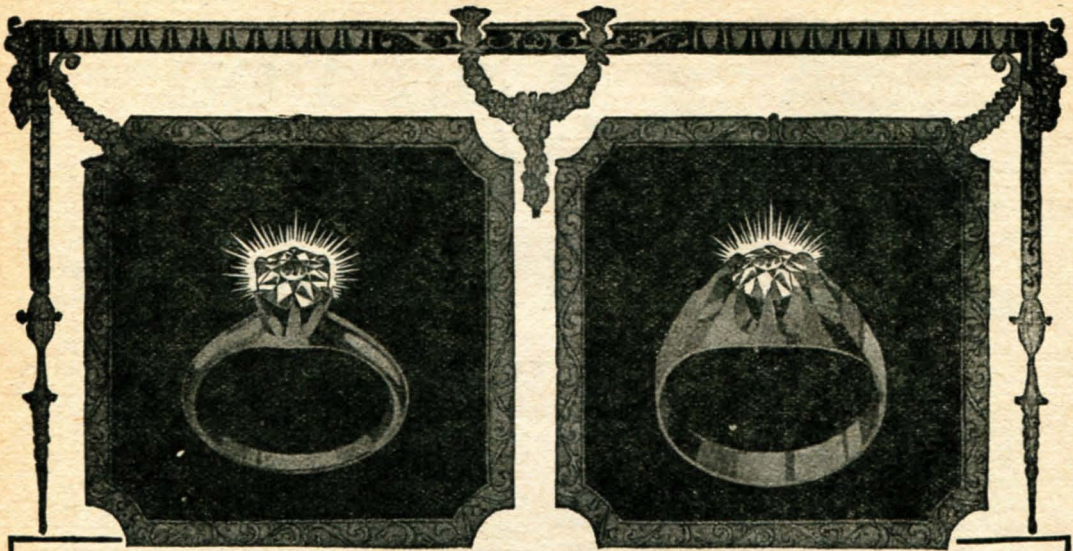
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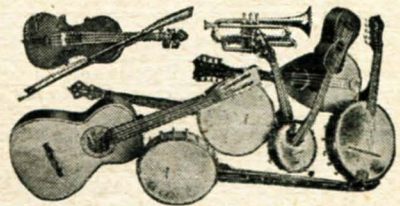
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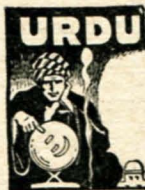
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