

10 STORY BOOK

~ A Magazine for Iconoclasts ~

APRIL 1922

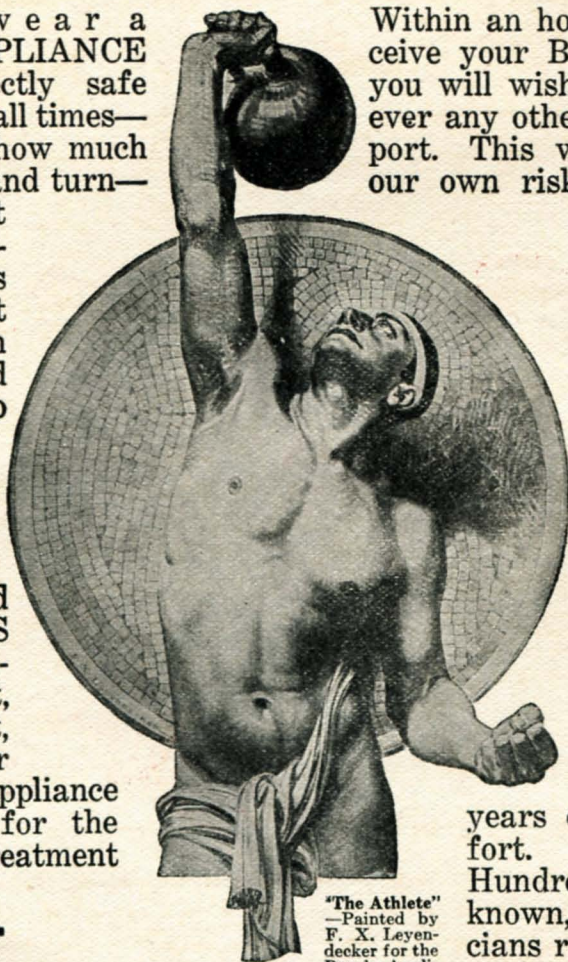


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10 STORY BOOK



Vo. 21, No. 5

April, 1922

Twenty-First Year

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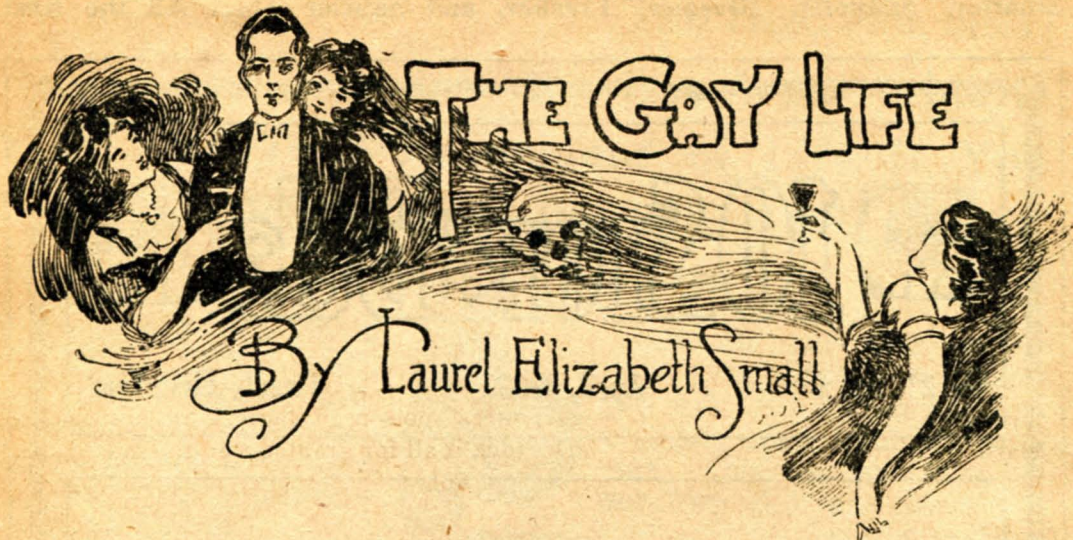
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IF you are a kindred spirit you will understand what sensations would naturally agitate the heart of a little country girl who had run away from home and was speeding to New York on a fast train, in search of gayety and adventure. If you are not that kind of a girl, or boy, then it is quite useless for me to try and explain it to you, for there are no words, in any language, which would commensurately convey the feeling, or shoot those devilish thrills up and down your spine. A phantasmagoria of pleasures to come passed in an endless procession before my deluded mental perception. How I scorned the cheap little home-made dress, the stub-toed shoes and plain, old hat I wore! I pictured myself discarding the hateful things for the ultra-fashionable and conspicuous raiment of the *demi-monde*. I was a little fluttering moth willing to be drawn into the seductive flame of Broadway nights. Mentally I gyrated (with my hips), through all the sensuous twists of the giddy dance; I devoured tons of lobsters and swallowed quarts of champagne and puffed rings of cigarette smoke through my carmined lips into the admiring faces of handsome young millionaires. All these I had learned to be the regular and accepted modes of fascinating millionaires—according to *Racy*

Stories, the contents of which I faithfully devoured during my lunch hours at the Hicksville Emporium, not daring to read such literature at home. Oh, I expected to be the talk of New York inside of a week! I was quite certain that there were millionaires just waiting to snap me up—yea, fight each other for me—the minute I arrived at Grand Central Station.

I had been keyed up to this extraordinary pitch ever since I was sixteen years old (I was nineteen when I set out to execute my plan for a sensational descent upon Broadway). For three years I had saved every nickel I could lay my hands on for that trip to New York—and all because, after two years absence from Hicksville Lizzie Dineen, with her name changed to Facile D'Orlette, had returned more gorgeously arrayed than the Queen of Sheba and told tales of her conquests on the Gay White Way which bedazzled the young girls and caused the older women to look wisely at each other and suspiciously at her; but what finally decided me to follow in the footsteps of Li—I mean Facile, was what she said one day, when she caught me staring at her with envy and admiration in my eyes.

"Why do you stare at me so, Letty?" she asked.

I blushed to the roots of my hair and answered:

"I was just thinking what I wouldn't give to be as beautiful and stunning as you."

"Letty Appleworth!" she exclaimed, opening wide her innocent-looking blue eyes, "Why, you silly little goose, you! Don't you know that with your beautiful face you would be a riot on Broadway? Your youth—your rose-leaf skin—your eyelashes—your big brown eyes—God! Child, it will be years and years before you will need a speck of paint on your cheeks; and to think *you* envy *me*. Mph! Lucky for me there are not many like you on Broadway, or it would be back to the mill for little Facile. Whenever you get ready to see real life, kid, just drop me a line and I will give you a chance to profit by my experience."

I profited by her experience later, but not by any means in the way I expected. As she handed me a card with her address (which was the Wintonne Arms, on Riverside Drive), she glanced at my old brown serge dress, and with a curling of her brightly painted cupid's bow lips, said:

"Fine feathers are half the battle on Broadway, kiddo, and for Heaven's sake can that brown rag. Believe me, Letty, brown's not a color—it's a symptom. Every time I see a Jane tagged out in brown I always feel dead sure her tongue is coated."

Mother always told me that brown was a rich and lady-like color, but Facile said it was a symptom—therefore that brown serge suddenly made me sick. Also Roy Banna's opinion dropped one hundred and ten per cent in my estimation, because that very morning in the drug store, while he mixed me a chocolate soda, he had told me how adorable I was in brown—how it matched my wonderful eyes and what not. Roy, who until then

was my criterion of what is known as a swell, immediately became, in my mind, hopelessly provincial and consequently, extremely distasteful to me. Where before I had gloried in his preference of me, I found myself becoming indifferent to it. It was an understood thing between Roy's parents and mine that we were to marry as soon as I was twenty and he twenty-one and until Facile breathed the subtle poison of flattery in my ears, I took it all for granted. In the one related and subsequent conversations, Facile entirely changed my viewpoint of life and I was determined that none but an up-to-date New York millionaire would do for me. Without directly sneering at the marriage institution, she made me think lightly of it, to the extent that I was not very particular whether my millionaire married me or not. The germ which *Racy Stories* had imbedded in me, Facile had nourished with her astute suggestions, until it had become fecund, multiplied rapidly, and now tainted all my visions of the future.

Roy's father, who owned the drug store and all the worth-while buildings in Hicksville, was known to be the richest man in the town, but Facile's stories of her wealthy "Johns" made Roy seem an awful "piker" in my eyes. During the three years that followed, I led Roy a merry dance, saved most of the slender wages I earned as cashier in the "Hicks-ville Emporium" and kept my own counsel. The demon which Facile had awakened within me had been most active in the interim. It prompted me to resent the way in which our parents had conducted, what was supposed to be, our courtship. Roy mistook my coldness and indifference for maidenly modesty. If he could have read my thoughts in those days he would have found them anything but maidenly or modest. I was a worshiper of my own beauty; I would com-

mercialize that beauty; I was not the kind of a flower that was meant to "bloom and blush unseen" or waste my beauty "on the desert air" of Hicksville. I was cunning enough not to let my intentions leak out in any way, for if my strict Methodist parents had ever got an inkling of the plans lurking in my mind, goodness knows to what lengths they would have gone—perhaps they would have thought me stark mad and put me in a straight jacket.

Realizing that the time was drawing near for my marriage to Roy (I was then, to be exact, nineteen years and six months old), I decided to act quickly, and wrote a long and confidential letter to Facile. I described in detail the humdrum existence I was flying from, such as my marriage to Roy and the endless stretch of drudgery to follow, as Roy's mother and my mother and all the other mothers of Hicksville have meekly submitted to since time immemorial. My pen wept ink freely as if expanded upon the injustice of forcing a young girl possessed of ambition and the desire for life, from the cashier's cage of the Hicksville Emporium, into the prison of Roy's old fashioned home, which we were to share with his parents until some future time when his father saw fit to trust us with a home of our own. I eulogized upon Facile's true American spirit, which enabled her to break the narrow bonds of custom and strike out into a life of freedom, independence and pleasure.

Two days later I followed my letter.

II.

As my train sped New Yorkward, I diabolically wished that I could make a part of myself invisible and send it back to Hicksville, to gloat over Roy's chagrin and the babbling of the village gossips. I will never forget the wild suppositions they launched when Facile ran away

years before. They even fine-combed the village to see if there was any man, boy or idiot missing, with whom they could have coupled her name. I think the most unpardonable part of Facile's disappearance, in their eyes, was the fact that she left all the married men intact. If she had only skipped out with one of the pillars of the Hicksville Methodist Church, what a choice morsel of gossip they would have had to chew on for years to come! But she left them guessing, and they never forgave her. I was only a child then, but old enough to understand. I exulted in the thought that I would be the talk of the town for quite a while, even as Facile was then. Of course, I felt sorry for my parents, especially my mother. I almost dropped a tear when I remembered how Facile's mother took the blow. She finally died—of a broken heart the doctor said; but then, I consoled myself, Facile's mother was always sickly and Facile was an only child, while my mother was in robust health and had three other children.

My first disappointment came when I arrived at Grand Central Station. The rushing, unfriendly, ill-mannered people who jostled me in that enormous and amazing place certainly did not give promise of the sycophancy Facile had given me to understand awaited one of my incomparable beauty in New York. I hardly got more than a glance of annoyance from a hurrying commuter, while I stood in his way wondering how to find Facile's address, and maybe a smile or two of amusement from some of the young men who had time to notice my old-fashioned clothes and general air of bewilderment. Soon a porter came to my rescue. He asked me if I wanted a taxi, in a way that left me no choice. At the Wintonne Arms, which I found to be a huge and pretentious structure, a very superior, brass-buttoned person, curtly re-

ferred me to the telephone operator inside, in answer to my query. Under the insolent scrutiny of the colored elevator-man, I felt as though I was treading miles and miles of oriental rugs to reach the telephone operator. That nonchalant person pushed her gum over into her left jaw long enough to inform me that "Mademoiselle D'Orlette" had left the Wintonne about eight months ago. She gave me an address on West Thirty-seventh street, where, she said, I could learn something of the Mademoiselle's whereabouts. On my way out I could feel her cool, critical eyes on my back. Not knowing anything about taxi rates, I had told the chauffeur to wait. At the Thirty-seventh street address, the woman who answered the bell, told me that "Miss Darlitt" lived there, but "was not home from work yet." As we talked, the chauffeur ran up the steps with my suitcase and demanded six dollars. I thought there was some mistake and told him so; to which he replied that it would cost me more if I kept him waiting any longer. I paid him quickly and smiled to myself at the thought that soon such sums would seem to me as trifling as a five-cent piece.

I was astonished to find Facile living in such a shabby old house—a furnished-room house—after the showy elegance of the Wintonne Arms, and wondered what adverse fortune had compelled her to give up her luxurious home in the other place for such mean quarters. And working! A lady of leisure and pleasure working? It was unbelievable. I had always thought of Facile as one of the scarlet-lipped adventuresses who fascinated men, to their utter undoing, between the covers of *Racy Stories*. I had dreamed of becoming one of those irresistible creatures myself—under Facile's tuition. Now it seems I was being awakened wink by wink. The landlady broke into my

reverie to ask if I was the young lady from Hicksville whom "Miss Darlitt" expected. As soon as I convinced her that I was the very one, she took me upstairs to wait in Facile's room. The room was a hall bedroom, very small and poorly furnished. There was a little steamer trunk under the window, an old kimona hanging in the closet, the door of which was open, and a comb and brush on the dressing-table—these were the only personal things in the room. I could not help wondering what Facile did with all her wonderful gowns, as I felt sure they could not have been stuffed away into that one small trunk.

I was rocking myself nervously in the only chair in the room, when I heard a slight sound. I looked sharply over my shoulder and saw, framed in the open doorway, a pale, plain, tired-looking woman of uncertain age, her left hand resting on the knob of the open door as if she leaned on it for support. A shaft of light from the uncurtained window fell directly upon her, accentuating her ghastliness and giving her a ghostly look. I would sooner have believed it to be the ghost of Facile, than Facile herself. It was a very different girl from the one who spoiled my taste for Hicksville and Roy and sent the desire for excitement coursing through my veins. Her extreme pallor (her face was quite innocent of paint or rouge), gave her the look of one wasted by a long and lingering illness; the vivid, carmined cupid's bow which I remember smiling so audaciously, disclosing her perfect teeth, was now a pair of dry, blue lips, compressed with a little show of determination and a great deal of resignation; the long, dark lashes, which used to fringe her shining eyes, were now bleached and scrimpy hirsute growths, unwillingly encircling a pair of lack-lustre gray-blue eyes, unaided by the deft application of the *magique mas-*

caro; her bleached hair was combed straight back, showing dark at the roots—a few loose strands, hanging down over her ears, added to her general dejected appearance. The *chic*, bejeweled and bedizened Facile had completely disappeared and in her place stood plain, unadorned Lizzie Dineen, true daughter of Mary Dineen, who was known as the most ordinary woman in Hicksville.

III.

She stepped forward, noiselessly, in her large shoes, which being almost heelless, gave her shabby, black serge skirt a forlorn droop in the back. The door, as though glad to be rid of its burden, swung to swiftly, with a loud bang. The sharp sound jerked me out of the trance into which this unexpected apparition had thrown me.

"Why, Liz—" involuntarily the name Lizzie came to my lips—Facile seemed a misnomer then. She did not allow me to finish.

"I knew you'd be surprised, Letty," she said with a colorless smile, "And I'm sorry to disappoint you, child, but it's all for the best."

"What's wrong?" I asked. "Can I help you?" I was thinking of the two hundred dollars, a small fortune in my estimation, which was tied in a handkerchief and sewed into a pocket in my pefficoat.

"Let me explain, Letty—" A pause, a sigh, then she continued: "I have given up the old life; I have given up everything—a luxurious, comfortable home, servants, a ten-thousand-dollar imported limousine, gowns, jewels and . . .," she bit her lip, then added: "For this—" with a gesture that took in her entire surroundings and even her personal appearance, "And a clean, honest life."

I swung the rocker around and faced her.

"Lizzie Dineen!" I flung the name in

her face, and gloried in my cruelty as I saw her wince. "Have you suddenly gone crazy?"

I was angry—unreasonably angry. How dared she lure me to New York with the promise of untold pleasures and a life of ease, only to tell me—this? I felt like shaking the life out of her and dashing out of the place to—the Lord knows where.

"Poor child! But you will understand when I've told you all." She dropped down on the little white bed, with a weariness that made me pity her, in spite of my anger. I turned my head away to hide the pity I felt. That drab-looking figure, with its hands piously crossed on its lap, looked as though it could never smile again.

"You are so young," she was saying. "I too, was a fool at your age. In fact, I was a fool until a few months ago—until *she* went—then I saw the folly of it all. Now, I earn eight dollars a week in a department store and make a few dollars extra, doing needlework in my spare time—and find it quite enough to satisfy my humble requirements. Letty, do you know who paid for the wicked extravagances in which I indulged during the past two years? A married man—a man with grown children and a good, trusting wife. Before him there was another married man. He was a young man. The pace was too much for him—he died—in a sanitarium—his brains a mass of rotten pulp . . . I helped kill him—do you understand me, girl? I helped kill him! I laughed and shrugged my shoulders; one fool less, I said, and went out to look for another. He left a widow and two young children. There were others, too, before him. Not steady ones, but they were rich and the life paid well . . ."

She never once looked at me, while talking, but *beyond* me—as if unconscious of my presence. I almost felt like an eaves-

dropper, even though I knew her words were meant for my ears. Her voice flowed on in a low monotone, while her restless fingers worked unceasingly against the palms of her hands. She paused and all was silent in the room but the rocker, with its little reiterative squeak as I nervously rocked it back and forth.

"Well!" I broke the silence abruptly, "The fact that the life paid is hardly any excuse for leaving it. You promised that I would profit by your experience that day in Hicksville, didn't you? Do you think I ran away from home just to come here and hear you tell a sad story?"

She gave a start and looked at me with astonishment, which was quickly followed by a softening expression of pity in her eyes.

"The innocent ignorance of youth," she said in the same monotonous voice, "is sometimes harder than the bitterest cynicism experience ever produced. You are too young—too innocent to understand. But I will make you understand. I *must* make you understand!"

"What *must* you make me understand? I know one thing I'll never understand—and that is your attitude. What could have changed you so? You said before, 'until *she* went'; who is *she*, and where did she go? Do clear up this mystery, Facile, it's making me nervous. I hope I'll wake up to find that I've been dreaming or else you have been joking."

"*You are dreaming*, Letty. We are all dreaming through a life-time (that is, those of us who are not struggling in the throes of a nightmare), until the moment of the awakening, when the curtain is parted and we pass through it, into the Great Mystery. I have been having a nightmare; but that is past. I am now dreaming again—maybe a little fitfully—but dreaming, nevertheless. Listen, Lett! *This* is the 'sad story.' *She* was thrust through the curtain—into the Great Mystery, while still in the throes of

the awful nightmare! *You shall* profit by my experience, Letty. I don't expect your gratitude . . . now, but you'll understand—all in good time, you'll understand . . . She was a beautiful girl, twenty years old, *petite*, dainty and full of life. I met her in a manicure parlor in a department store. She envied my flashy clothes and evident prosperity just as you did in Hicksville. The poor little thing was not making enough then even to buy good food. She came to New York from a small town as you and I and many others have done. I saw her often—where she worked and while she manicured my nails, I talked to her, as I talked to you in Hicksville—I infused the poison of my own diseased morals into her, as I infused it into you. I was lonesome for the companionship of one of my own sex, and she was a nice jolly little thing to go around with; besides, she was pretty . . . and would attract the men—a companion and a business asset all in one. Soon I began taking her to the resorts I frequented, introducing her to the kind of men I knew. She made an instantaneous hit with them. I didn't realize the wrong I was doing that girl! I thought I was giving her an opportunity to see and enjoy the good things of life. I *thought* they were the 'good things,' but I was wrong—wrong! How wrong, it remained for *her* to show me—at what a price! What a *tremendous* price! . . .

"She gave up her job and came to live with me. Shortly after that I met the man I told you of before—the married man with grown-up children and a trusting wife at home. He had more money than brains and furnished the swell apartment in the Wintonne Arms for me. Madge (that was her name—Madge Tyler) induced the young man who was paying her attentions then, to furnish up the apartment adjoining mine for her—it happened to be vacant at the time. I was at the height of my infamous career then, and thought I was having a won-

derful time. In fact, I even looked upon good women with a certain amount of scornful pity. 'Be good and you'll be lonesome!' 'I should worry!' "A short life but a merry one!" 'When you are dead you're a long time dead!—those were the 'gems' of the Red Lights—the phraseological draughts I imbibed and dispensed daily, to intoxicate and befuddle conscience. I understood and applied them to suit my own frame of mind. They were the articles of my belief. I pounded them into the ears of little Madge Tyler until she, too, adopted them as her slogans. To them I added one of my own composing: 'Get all you can while the getting is good!' for Madge's especial benefit—she was not a good business woman. She never had a steady caller—grew tired of them too quickly; but she was so young—so beautiful—she never had any difficulty landing them. And she went the pace! . . . I could tell you tales which would make your hair stand on end. And it is the wealthy men—men who hold high positions in society—men whose families look up to them with love and respect—who make such a life possible. The poor man cannot afford it, and in that poverty is a blessing.

"I looked at things in a more business-like way than Madge; she liked the life for the 'good times' it afforded more than for the money that was in it. When a girl insists that champagne is 'Joy Water,' who's going to stop her from imbibing it freely? Liquor and vice are twin procurers of death, but I did not know it then. Madge was not the kind of girl who'd do thing by halves, so she went the limit. One of her 'Johns' taught her to sniff cocaine and she became a regular fiend at it. I tried to make her stop it before it was too late, but the man who taught her the habit, told her it would make her complexion beautiful, so she

laughed at my advice and kept on using it . . . Experience has taught me that the one great crime is ignorance. There are a lot of things besides geography and arithmetic they should teach a girl in school . . . but they don't and some of us pay an awful price for their prudery . . .

"After several months of this sort of thing, I noticed that Madge was becoming more and more despondent. After a while, she got so bad that even the drug could not enliven her drooping spirit. One minute she would talk of suicide and the very next minute she'd be 'damned' if she would—swearing to live for spite. She tried to avoid me as much as she could, and I knew that she was keeping something from me. She hardly ate; she just drank and drank—and smoked and smoked—and sniffed and sniffed. God! the sight of her when she wanted the dope was horrible to behold! At times she would try to bluff me by a gay and boisterous manner. She would not let my doctor treat her! she had a quack who she claimed was a friend of hers, and who kept her supplied with the dope. I watched for my opportunity and one day when she was out of the drug—and going mad for want of it—I 'phoned for my doctor and told him to find out what she was keeping from me. It was necessary for me to know in order to help her. What the doctor told me after he saw her, filled me with horror. Other things beside dope had worked havoc with her. I wanted to send her away to a sanitarium, but she would not hear of it. She would not shut herself away in a sanitarium—she would enjoy life while she had the chance. And all the time she was growing worse. All her 'friends' gradually ceased calling on her. As soon as they found out or suspected her trouble, they fled—horrified.

"Then, an insane notion took possession of her—she accused me of being jealous of her popularity, to the extent of disclosing things regarding her, thus driving away all her 'Johns.' They were the 'friends' she spoke of—the 'friends' I had then began to see in their true lights. In course of time, her legs became paralyzed. For months I cared for her as though she were my own child. I paid all her expenses and even hired a trained nurse for her. She was confined to her bed and could not even sit up to take food without assistance . . . All this time she continually reproached me for being the cause of the plight she was in—for having lured her into that way of living. She was right—" Facile tried to swallow a sob and broke off to brush away a tear. "I deliberately lured her into it, but before God, I did not foresee the end. I was ignorant and saw no harm in that sort of thing . . . At last, she would become so violent at the very sight of me, that the doctor made me keep away from her, as my presence only made her worse. By this time she had become a living skeleton—a human bag of bones—with the festering skin over the bones forever twitching—twitching—all but the paralyzed parts—they only rested. Merciful Father! When I pictured her as she was, the beautiful, jolly, innocent little thing I met in the manicure parlor—and saw her then, a despicable object, yet passing pitiful in its despicableness—I would have killed myself a thousand times, if by so doing I could undo the wrong my evil influence had done.

"One day the doctor came to me and said there was nothing more he could do for her, as she was beyond all hope. She was a difficult case, as she did not care whether she lived or died, and made no effort, mentally, one way or the other. As long as they kept her supplied with

the dope, she did not care what happened. *She could not live and she would not die.* The doctor expected the end any minute, and yet, she dragged out that awful existence for six months before it came."

IV.

Facile buried her face in her hands for a few minutes, as if to shut out some dreadful vision, before she continued:

"If I live to be a thousand I'll never forget it. Learning that she had become unconscious, I crept in to take a last look at her. I had hardly entered the room, when she opened her eyes—her great sunken eyes, and fixed them on me with frightful intensity . . . and then . . . her faltering tongue denounced me bitterly:

"'Look at me!' she said, 'You brought me to this, damn you, you brought—me—to—th—.'"

"The last words were spoken with the death-rattle in her throat, and the very last word was swallowed up in the final rattle. As I fled from the room—I saw—the whites of her eyes—that's all—just the whites of—those—great—sunken eyes . . . The nurse and the maid superintended things in there, while I locked myself in my apartment and refused to see anyone. That night I could not sleep. Those eyes—those dying eyes—whether mine were shut or open, I could see them. God help me! I can see them now!" Her voice rose almost to a shriek, and again she buried her face in her hands.

I had been picturing each scene as she described it, with horrible distinctness. I never stirred nor uttered a word, but silent tears flowed down my cheeks. I was deeply touched by that gruesome tale. When Facile lifted her face, there were no tears in her eyes, although her body had been shaken as if by sobs; but her face was as white as that of the corpse she had pictured to me. After staring into space for a few minutes, she

again picked up the broken thread of her story:

"I thought I would go crazy. When I could stand it no longer, I 'phoned the doctor. It was nearly three o'clock in the morning, yet in an incredibly short time he was at my bedside. I told him I was going mad. He gave me morphine and left me. When the maid came into my room at eleven-thirty the next morning, I was already awake—lying there, looking up at the ceiling—thinking—of the *thing* which was stretched out next door the *thing* which was once that beautiful, vivacious, little slip of a girl—Madge Taylor. I sent for the nurse and told her I wanted her to make arrangements for the burial that very day. I was too weak and shaken to get up—I remained in bed, but could not sleep—could only listen—and see—the eyes . . . After what seemed to be an eternity of time, I heard the elevator stop at my floor. I heard footsteps in the hall and knew instinctively that they would ring the bell next door. They had brought it—the wooden kimona they would put her into for her long sleep. Then—I heard them going out—they were now in the hall—they were passing my door. There was a loud thump on my door. The maid told me afterwards that the foot of the box had swung around in the men's hands, as if by some supernatural power, and struck my door, as they passed it. There was no need for her to tell me—I had known it would happen—I don't know why, but I had expected it—and when I heard the 'thump' I knew what it was. As I heard the sharp click of the elevator gate, the truth struck me with sudden force: that was the inevitable end—sooner or later—which my sort meets—untold suffering, a living death, then—the black box. *That's* what the gay life and Death holds in store for the pitiful members of the 'oldest profession.' They

were maddening—the thoughts which crowded my brain. I wanted to get away from them. I began humming a popular tune and lit a cigarette to regain my nonchalance; but the thought of *her* made the cigarette sicken me. Its malodorous fumes became poignantly suggestive of all the evils in the world—its insidious synonyms of mental and physical decay and—death. I flung the cigarette from me in disgust and decided at that moment, to turn over a new leaf, and—here I am. . . . Letty, you must return to Hicksville—if not willingly, then by force!"

I cannot describe my feelings at that moment. Facile had torn the veil away and disclosed to me a phase of life, the hideousness of which I had not dreamed. I looked into her pale, determined face and answered submissively:

"You will not have to force me. I will go of my own accord—gladly—and I am thankful to you that I can go before it is too late."

She pressed me to her and cried on my shoulder a little, then pushed me gently away.

"Go home, child," she said, "and marry that young fellow, and bless your stars for the clean, true love of a good man."

"Roy never looked better to me than he does right now," I told her, "Will you grant me one favor, Facile? I have two hundred dollars which I have saved up for this trip. Will you accompany me to the stores in the morning and help me select my *trousseau*? In the meantime, I am going to send a telegram to mother and one to Roy, so that they won't be worrying about me."

V.

Roy and I have been married now nearly a year and we have been ridiculously happy. Since little Roy came, we have been even happier if such a thing

were possible. Roy alone knows the truth of my trip to New York and his love was great enough to understand and forgive. As far as the gossips of Hicksville are concerned, I went there to buy my *trousseau*.

The apple tree in front of our beautiful new home is in full and resplendent bloom. Yesterday, I wheeled the baby carriage out there, as usual, and sat on the sun-flecked bench, beneath that bower of apple blossoms. I felt bathed in an atmosphere of peace and beauty, as I sat there sewing, and watching the sweetest baby in the world kick his chubby legs, chew his little fists and coo to me in the language which only a mother can understand. And then, somehow or other, I found myself thinking of Facile, and the story she told me. I caught up my baby and hugged him close as my eyes clouded. Just then, the postman came up the walk and handed me a letter. It was postmarked New York and written on

the Wintonne Arms stationery. It follows: Read it and judge for yourself:

Dear Little Would-be Adventuress: I have been keeping my eyes on you all during the past year. Never mind how I did it. I wanted to be sure of you—of your happiness and your love for your husband, before I could bring myself to make this confession.

When I told you the story of Madge Tyler, I did it because your mother was the only woman in Hicksville who had a kind word for me when I visited there last. All the other women snubbed me. When you wrote me that you were coming to New York it occurred to me that you had taken seriously what I had told you jokingly that day in Hicksville. My conscience told me that I would be answerable for you. Maybe, if your mother had snubbed me, like the rest of them, my conscience would have kept mum. Because she was kind to me I invented "Madge" and killed her off for your especial benefit.

I rented the room on Thirty-seventh street just to act my little play in. But, you see, my young adventuress, "Marge" might have been *you*—perhaps, *would* have been, if I had not staged my little play. Perhaps, if there had been someone to stage and act a little play for me when I first came to New York, I, too, might have been saved from my foolish young self. As it is—well, God bless you and yours—if blessings count from such as I.

Truly your friend,
FACILE.

THE TELEPHONE GIRL'S REVENGE

A man had a business deal to put through which demanded quick action on his part. He had to get his party at an early hour in the morning, over the telephone. Rushing into a private booth in a near-by drug store he took down the receiver and tried in vain, for some time to get "Central;" when his patience was finally exhausted "Central" very sweetly inquired—"Number, please?" The angry man burst forth, instead of giving him the required number, "What sort of a girl are you?" he cried. "You must be the kind that stands on street corners 'till morning with your sweetie after the dance is over and are too sleepy to tend to your work the next day." The only reply the girl made was "Number, please?" He gave his number and was soon in connection with his party. In a few hours the deal was closed, much to his satisfaction. But the incident of the telephone call and his abuse of "Central" would not be dismissed from his mind.

Going into the same telephone booth he called up the girl with whom he had talked in the early morning.

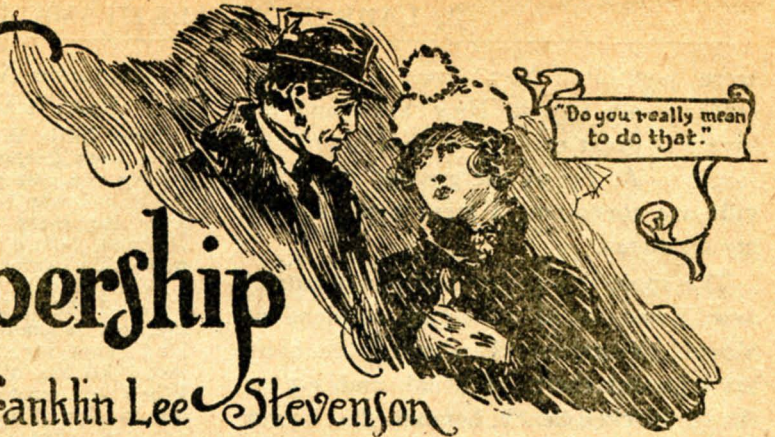
"I'm the man who insulted you this morning about standing on street corners all night and not being able to tend to your work," he told her. "I'm sorry I was such a brute. Is there any way in which I can square it with you? May I bring you a box of chocolates?"

"Yes, there is something you can do if you feel you must make it right with me," came sweetly the girl's voice. "Just send me a kiss over the wire."

—M. Mount.

A Life Membership

By Franklin Lee Stevenson



"I AM going to be one of—of those women for a week," Mercy Van de John said with decision, as she stamped her foot.

Who dared contradict her; who even considered the entertainment of a thought that conflicted with that impulsive little creature?

Mrs. French alone dared. She dared do anything.

The two sat opposite each other in King Joy Lo's Chinese restaurant. A number of tables had been reserved for the members of the *Scribblers*, a writers' club, and as the two belonged to that organization it was but natural that they should be there. It was also natural that they should disagree any time, anywhere, and about everything.

Each represented a different type. Mercy was tall and slender, had light hair, blue eyes, and was dressed in a pale blue gown that accentuated every motion she made and emphasized her beauty. The other was also beautiful, but older. Her hair was black with just a faint shade of gray around her temples. She was larger; even stout or "embonpoint," as she styled it in her endeavor to use French words and phrases as often as possible. Her dress was black, her eyes gray and now her mouth was drawn in a tight line that showed her determination.

Every member of the *Scribblers* knew,

or rather felt, that trouble was at hand; ready to break forth in cyclonic fury at any moment. But they were mistaken, as both women were styled in higher arts of giving vent to their tempers than the old fashioned way of using hard words.

The two looked at each other over their teacups. It was a quiet battle and the few words spoken were low but full of meaning. The eye-play was taking an important place in the struggle. Each was determined that she would not be defeated; but Mrs. French, in spite of the fact that she had long tried to mother Mercy, had never become acquainted with her. She did not know that her own will before that of the younger girl was as a leaf before the November wind.

Mrs. French spoke as though her words were to be the final ones. Her tone implied a command.

"My dear, you must not talk that way. Why should you become one of those—those—women, merely for the sake of local color?"

"And why should I not?" came the instant query.

"Well," was the answer. "I shouldn't argue with you, for we all feel that you will not act as you threaten to do. But you are always so serious that we usually take you at your word!" Then in a pleading voice that denoted a new weapon, she added: "But you are a foolish, foolish

girl if you are sincere in your determination."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. French, but have you yourself not always claimed that the only way to write fiction was to use local color—and plenty of it? Haven't you also said that the only way to get it was to see it—to feel it—to experience it?"

Mrs. French's laugh was short and harsh.

"Certainly," she said, "but there is a limit. Such a life as you propose would be your everlasting disgrace—even if it lasted only a week."

"Allow me to differ with you," Mercy said coldly and yet thoughtfully, as she made wet rings on the table by lifting her teacup and setting it down repeatedly. "There are no limits to art. I am about to write a novel—I have the synopsis finished—and my principal character is one of—of those women we just spoke of. In order to make my work real I am going to be one of those very women for a week. I am going to live as they live—"

She emphasized the last words by setting her cup down with such force that the fragile bowl snapped. A dozen pairs of eyes were elevated at the audacity of her remarks.

"Yes, I am going to live as they live," she said, tightening her grip on the broken cup. "I will eat at their tables—I will enjoy their pleasures and hardships—yes, all of them; in short, I will do everything that they do—everything—and furthermore, I will make good."

She glanced up challengingly. Although Mrs. French opened her lips there issued no sound.

Again the teacups clinked but the noise was more like the sound of a funeral dirge than like that of a happy gathering of authors and their satellites at a weekly meeting.

Mercy was the only one who seemed to preserve the continuity of good humor; but regardless of her efforts to enliven her companions, they only looked at her



and sighed. Local color was all right. The correct thing to do was to go after it; but even the most hardened male in the assemblage felt a strange uncanny

sensation when he thought of Mercy Van de John, the most beautiful girl in the club, stooping to such depths in order to gain an end—an end that at best meant only fleeting fame or notoriety and an uncertain financial consideration.

After some time one of the younger men seemed to catch just a little of Mercy's attitude. Probably it was the tea that caused it, or the combination of the bright lights and highly colored walls of the Chinese restaurant. He began to sing. It was a rollicking, happy song of recent production and one by one the others took it up. By the time it was finished, all had left their chairs. Waiters, little slant-eyed ones with yellow complexions, moved about to assist them with their wraps. Ten minutes later most of the members had descended the long stairway that led to the street. The young man of musical propensities and Mercy were among those still in the room. He was assisting her with her coat.

"Do you really mean to do that?" he asked.

Mercy turned about quickly and faced him; her eyes flashing.

"You know that I do. When I say a thing I mean it—you know that, too."

The young man's face assumed a faint color of crimson but he only laughed.

"Well," he said with a cynical smile as he dropped his half smoked cigarette in an ash tray. "I just thought that if you meant it—well—if you really meant it, I could without offending you say that you might start in tomorrow morning—at—at—my studio."

"I'm on," she returned quickly as she clasped her glove. "You can't bluff me Kjlorn, I'll be there. It doesn't make much difference where I spend my week, but I hardly thought I would begin it with you."

Kjlorn tried to remonstrate as to her inferred application of his words, but she hushed him and in silence they followed the rest of their friends down the stairs. Some one had evidently heard their conversation, for before the crowd separated in front of the restaurant they were all aware that Mercy Van de John would spend the following day in Arthur Kjlorn's studio. Some of the women shrank back in disgust and with their daintily gloved hands pulled their skirts aside instinctively when Mercy passed them. It seemed as though they were afraid that the proximity would be contaminating, and this from people who professed to be Bohemian—who were seldom shocked at anything.

Early the next morning, even before Kjlorn was at his studio, Mercy was ready for her experiment and had been ringing his bell persistently for five or six minutes before he arrived. She spent the morning there. In the afternoon she went to her own apartment and wondered whether she was doing as she should. Maybe, after all, there was some other way to get local color. However, she evidently considered she was right, for she spent the next day at another studio. That was proving too tame, so the following day she went where she could come in direct contact with women of the kind whom she wanted to portray in fiction. The result caused her to shudder a little as she surveyed the motley crowd; all old before their years had made them so. She was with them for awhile but refused to stay long in any one place, believing it would be better to change scenes every day. It was from a studio to a house in the restricted district—she met all conditions and met them everywhere.

One week after Mercy announced her decision the *Scribblers* club met again in the same place. The Chinese waiters

oblivious to the spirit of the audience moved about like mechanical, colored images. The guests, although seemingly filled with good cheer when they came in, dropped their heads and moved uneasily in their chairs as they looked at Mercy. As before, she sat with her feet crossed at the table near a southern window. She leaned dejectedly on one elbow. A teacup was in her hand but there was a difference in her entire mien. Previously her cheeks had glowed, her eyes had sparkled, her bejeweled fingers and arms had moved with the music in a rythmical fashion and her lips had always carried a smile. Now, there were blue rings under her eyes that paint and powder had not erased; the eyes themselves had lost a little of their luster; her whole being showed signs of fatigue.

After all were served Kjlorn spoke. He always was the one to bring up disagreeable subjects.

"Well, Mercy—going after any more local color?"

Every one turned toward her. She sighed a little, but her eyes shone with some of their old enthusiasm.

"Certainly," she answered. "It was a hard life—oh, so hard—but I really believe I enjoyed it—yes, I am sure I did."

The men laughed uneasily.

Mrs. French, sitting across the table from Mercy, looked scornful and haughty. Her bosom, under the black silk folds of her dress, rose and fell with emotion.

"Let us not talk of it, please," she

said, addressing Mercy directly. "If you liked such a life you can be of little credit to people of refinement."

Mercy laughed. She seldom became angry with Mrs. French.

"Yes, I liked it," she said in spite of the other's admonition to taboo the subject. "And—oh, you needn't be shocked—but I made good—"

"You bet you did," chorused two or three men in whose studios she had spent a part of her time.

The frigid glance cast by Mrs. French in their direction were a great contrast to the smile Mercy gave them.

"Yes, I know I did," she continued. "I made so good that those women made me one of themselves. They have an association of their own—or union, I believe they call it. I was voted a life member because I helped them settle a strike. They appreciated it."

"The devil, you say!" Kjlorn ejaculated, as he looked up and lit a cigarette.

"Yes, they did," she answered proudly, "and I have a union card." She opened her chatelaine bag which lay on the table and extracted a piece of cardboard which she passed to the man nearest her.

It read:

UNION CARD NO. 3337

This is to certify that Mercy Van de John has paid her dues up to date, and is a life member of the Scrub Women's Union No. 7.

ELEEN O'HARRIGAN,
Secretary.

TAINT SO

Mary Pickford says, "Think like a little girl and you will look like a little girl."

It ain't so! We know lots of folks that think like Jackasses, but look just like ordinary human beings. Even Bryan and Borah look natural.

—Wm. P. Barron.

The Unbilled Turn



by

L. M. Huxley

Illustrations by
Bruce Oglesby

CYRIL STRUNSKY, the successful and aggressive manager of *Nixbaum's Palace*, quite daringly advertised his bill for the week of September 23rd under the caption "Risque Week."

"It'll be the biggest stuff we've put over this year," remarked Strunsky to his box-office man.

"There's liable to be a howl," lugubriously observed the latter. "I wouldn't be surprised but what you made the ads a little too strong."

"Nothing of the kind," said Strunsky. "There won't be any trouble and we'll have the fattest week in months. You'll see the bald-domes fourteen rows deep."

And Strunsky, the manager, strolled away with a faint swagger of confidence and unconcern. The doubts of his ticket-seller were, however, not so lightly abandoned as one might have made presumption from his demeanor. Strunsky was astute in the business of vaudeville and no less keen in his estimates of the public conscience. In his lengthy and various theatrical connections the popular sense of the permitted and the tabooed had many times engaged him; he had for in-

stance, at the press of public demand, seen the police close down a doleful sex-play whose scenes of funeral solemnity would have raised unquestionably more sleep than devil in most men, whilst a few blocks distant a burlesque house flaunted openly and unmolested a bill blithely suggestive. These whimsies of the popular morality, coming closer home to Mr. Strunsky, had more than once been to him the occasion of monetary loss, and very frequently annoyance, and had engendered in him that mental attitude akin to contempt with which all servers of the public come finally to regard their patrons. And yet, the years of his activities, if they had taught a standpoint somewhat similar to scorn, had also taught the manager the illusive and shifty rules by which the turns of mob-vagary may be foreseen.

Strunsky, in putting on his risqué week, and advertising it with these same words, had gambled with the possibility of a public uproar. From his experiences he could not be wholly at mental ease, for he apprehended the chance of his house being forced to close. His "Risque Week" was as much in name and publicity as in the veritable material. There was perhaps a little more dancing, and that veil dance—and the skit was a bit *sophisticque*—but—frankly, Strunsky wanted to wake them up, now that the autumn season was beginning. The latter summer weeks had dragged through to small houses and he planned to bring in his winter clientele with a rush.

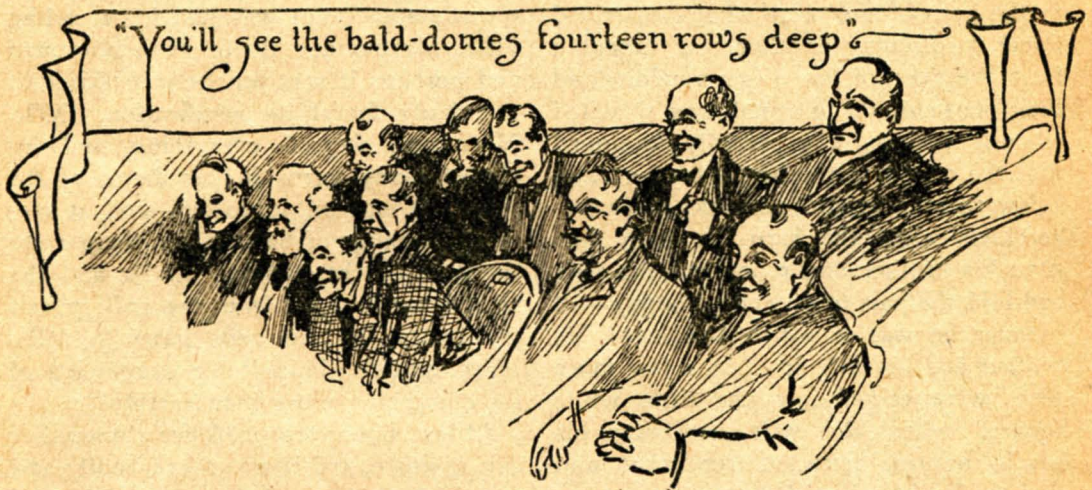
The manager was not without the wisdom to know that a *certain* amount of righteous uproar, properly controlled,

would be entirely to his advantage and so it happened that he ordered in the advertisements some days in advance, instead of waiting until Sunday for the first newspaper insertions. Rather as he expected there came at once a response, mainly from the Law and Order Society. These virtuous and pious gentlemen at once made open threats of the police and the whole thing went with a splendid blare of publicity into the news-columns of the dailies. Strunsky said nothing for several days and then he issued a state-

seeing this of course with all the others, felt his heart sink when he saw the actual waiting crowd at the box office and the vast throng pushing into the lobby and the line stretching shuffling and serpentine far down the street.

"We could fill two houses this size," he remarked dolefully to the property man. "Ain't it a damn shame you can't open your house out like a collapsing cup when you've got a gang like that waiting?"

And the property man shook his head mournfully and went away about his un-



ment, which also went into the news-columns. "For three years," he wrote (the sentiments being put to paper by his press-agent) "I have been in charge of the Palace. In that time I have developed an audience of regular and esteemed patrons whose good will and continued support make possible *my* continuance as manager. Is it to be supposed that I intend now to disappoint these friends and patrons of three years' growth? We announce now that our 'Risque Week' will take place as scheduled."

Realizing the tremendous benefit of this unusual advertisement, everybody connected professionally with the Palace anticipated an overflow attendance at the first Monday matinee and Strunsky, fore-

believably multifarious duties while the manager glued his eye to a round peephole in the curtain and observed the rapidly filling auditorium. Without, the box office men and the dispenser of family circle seats around on the side worked more rapidly and with a greater expenditure of perspiration than many weeks had witnessed. So rushed was the box office man that his usual manner of leisure and insouciance sweated out of his pores and he failed to give each face at the little barred window that speculative and not a little lordly inspection which was normally his habit. In this way it happened that the old gentleman with the white, great beard and the glassy indignant eye received his strip of admitting pasteboard

without any hypothesizing observation, which his person under ordinary circumstances, would have occasioned.

And, inside, the orchestra presently blared out an overture and Blankley and Perkins, comedians of the black-face, entered hilariously with an argument humorous and complicated and proceeded to divulge certain jokes with which Satan diverted Eve a few years ago.

Presently the skit came on and the audience proved appreciative. The sympathy of these patrons went out at once to the hero of the piece when he arrived home to discover another man escaping from the door of his wife's boudoir, and their sense of the unusual was titillated when it soon and unexpectedly developed that the man was the hero's brother, and a few tears were dropped into the handkerchiefs when the hero heroically forgave his brother and renounced his wife and told the pair to go and be happy—all because he was unselfish and loved his brother and his wife so. And a few more tears were rained into the little white squares when the wife, realizing his heroic nature, returned repentant and was received back with an embrace.

And finally Mlle. Marmount, the headliner, flitted to the stage, twirled a few moments and stopping suddenly stood looking at the wings, whence proceeded her partner attired in full dress and the orchestra opened into the music of a chaste minuet. Mlle. Marmount's act was a novelty in that she began with an old and stately dance from which she progressed through a series of dances until as a climax she stood upon the stage alone and amid dimmed lights did her fascinating dance of the veils.

Of course, the lights finally *were* dimmed and she *did* at last glide out in the veils but the audience gasped, for there seemed to be two of her, and they did not know that a great mirror had been slid along

the back and the drop, until now hiding it, lifted. But the most astute presently penetrated this illusion and the rest thought what they pleased while, slowly, Mlle. Marmount began her dance of the veils.

Mlle. Marmount's dance was a triumph of art, if we judge it from certain angles. Looked upon pedantically it was nothing—a potpourri—a vulgarity; for it was of no recognized form, neither ancient and classic nor imitative after the dance to be seen in the Strauss opera. Perhaps the purist's standpoint was just in regarding Mlle. Marmount's dance as a potpourri and perhaps it was precisely in this that the dance found its justification. Mlle. Marmount danced everything and included many forms in her dance of the veils. It was an education—and at moments a thing of beauty, for there were times when the dimmed border and the faint lavender spot from the gallery and the gauzy floating veils gave to Mlle. Marmount the indubitable suggestion of the something more than earthly.

At last she approached her climax, her daring finale, and it was taken bodily and embellished from a dance she had herself seen (although often they are described) done in a small tent in the orient, by a brown fierce dancing girl. The spot suddenly threw upon Mlle. Marmount a shaft of gold and silver like a sudden burst of moonlight and at once the orchestra fell silent and Schwartz, the violinist leader, laid down his bow and let his head drop back on his fat neck in order to better get a view of the stage.

Mlle. Marmount, now beginning the crisis, stood for just a moment in absolute stillness, and from the gaping crowd could be heard by her an intake of breath. And quickly then she began with a scowl, a terrible and exotic grimace, which drew her red upper lip over her teeth down and her red undel lip from her

teeth and raised one brow of her eyes horribly and unnaturally above the other. As quickly as it had appeared, the fearful scowl left her face and with it departed the contortion into which her wonderfully supple body had fallen as accompaniment. The dancer took a few steps forward and fell slowly into curious writhings, inchoate and scarcely at all taking on a form, and at first her face was devoid of any expression. She writhed and at last her writhings centered themselves, mentally, into erotic poses, seductive and charged with allure, and a smile grew with marvelous slowness on her lips and in her eyes. She danced a fascinating lascivious dance brought from the hot sands under the Egyptian tents.

It was natural that no one perhaps in the rapt audience understood the nature of the interruption, or thought it an interruption, as the old man stepped from his box, over the dimmed border, just at the moment when Mlle. Marmount had reached the closing contortions of her dance. The old man stood there a moment, with his back to the throng of seated staring people below him, facing the dancer. His white vast beard flared out, and his eyes—a little red in their whites—glared at the woman. She saw him after a moment and her hands dropped to her sides and she stood, halted in the midst of her most extravagant undulations, and stared startled at him. It made a strange tableau for a few seconds, the two silent figures on the stage with no music from the orchestra and only the dimmed border and the dimmed side lights and the shaft of silver and gold blazing from the gallery.

"Lascivious woman!" thundered the ancient man at last, and with his arm he made a gesture of burning dismissal. Mlle. Marmount remained another few seconds in irresolution and then she gathered around her the filmy gauze of her

veils and fled from the stage.

He turned in a moment to the white stretch of astonished faces and spoke again.

"Lascivious people! Scoffers before the flood! What does it mean that you are here like swine in a pen and that I come here and find you?"

With a white face Strunsky the manager rushed around back of his box and back of the stage. "Lights!" he yelled. The electricians on the border flared up, but not those in the house, so confused was the moment. He rushed, motioning for several broad-shouldered men, to the flies.

And exactly as Strunsky and his retainers were about to belch out and seize the unpardonable offender, they were stayed by a roar of laughter and a thunder of applause not unmixed with an enthusiastic vocal demonstration, from the audience. For the people, listening for a few moments in amazement to the words of the old man in the white beard and seeing that the house lights neither went up nor the curtain came down, suddenly perceived that this must be one of Strunsky's amazing surprises—a fascinating denouement to the veil dance. So they listened while the old man on the stage told them about their sins and told them further that he was an evangelist come to save their souls—and right at this point the humor broke exquisitely upon them, the droll end Strunsky had tacked to his dance and the perfect art of this actor and his jocosely made-up and they burst into a tornado of applause—

Strunsky stood for a period behind the scenes petrified and not understanding. The men behind him, hesitating to go forward without the precedent and sanction of their chief stared over his shoulders, trying to catch a glimpse of the religious fanatic who had usurped the stage.

The old man waved his arms, and flaring into a tremendous wrath at the entirely unexpected and astounding roar which had broken from the silent crowd, lashed the people for their folly and again they drowned him in an ocean of guffaws!

And Strunsky then saw the light—"God!" he exclaimed, half aloud. "What an act!" And waiting a few more moments until the enthusiasm was at its apparent greatest, he yelled, "Ring down and throw in the house lights."

Perhaps as the curtain descended and the lights flared up in the dark auditorium, the rounds of hand-clapping and the frank cheering and the stamping of many feet which broke forth had never previously been paralleled in the most enthusiastically met acts put on at the

Palace. Strunsky ran on the stage with a chair and the old man dropped into it.

"God!" he repeated. "What an act!—They thought you were on the bill! Say, we never had a single on like that—With that turn I could run this bill without a stop for a month—what do you say to fifteen hundred a week? Two thousand, eh?—I'll give you two thousand for that—or let us say, twenty-five hundred—and a straight month's run here and a year on the circuits! Listen to em! God, just listen to 'em stamp!"

He put his hands under the shoulders of the old man whilst the latter stared speechlessly at him.

"Get up, old boy. We'll have to ring up and let 'em see you again. You'll just have to give 'em a little encore!"

PAID WITH INTEREST

or

The Doughboy's Watered Bread

A Drama of Altruism

Scene 1—*Millionaire Corwynne's study. Corwynne is reclining in an easy chair, languidly listening to his valet's rendition of the newspaper headlines. The young millionaire is palpably bored and ever and anon yawns prodigiously. Suddenly, however, he starts and exclaims:*

Corwynne (*excitedly*)—Hold on a minute, Jenkins. Read that again.

Jenkins (*re-reading*)—Lester Lance Jailed. Ex-doughboy arrested after bold robbery. Held for bail.

Corwynne—"Lester Lance"! Ex-service man!! (*leaping up frenziedly*). My hat and stick, Jenkins, and call the car.

Scene 2—*Corridor in a jail. Lester Lance sitting dejectedly within a cell. Enter millionaire Corwynne and the warden of the jail.*

Warden (*deferentially, to Corwynne*)—Here he is, sir. Lance, a visitor for you.

Corwynne—Lance, do you remember me?

Lance (*inspecting him closely through bars*)—Can't say I do.

Corwynne—Don't you remember the man to whom you gave your last cigarette in France one day?

Lance—Which man?

Corwynne—Ah, generous lad, I see you have forgotten. But I have not, nor shall I ever forget that day at St. Mihiel when, as I lay wounded and smokeless behind the lines, you stopped, pressed upon me your last cigarette, and rushed away from my thanks. Now, than Heaven, I am at last in a position to repay you, and with interest.

Lance (*looking up eagerly*)—Yes?

Corwynne (*extending his hand*)—Here are two cigarettes!

—R. Jere Black, Jr.

THE UNDISCOVERED



by
Ernest A. Phillips

HE BLEW into camp as fresh as they are manufactured and with the breath of a cyclone sticking out all over him; and, you know, lumber jacks do not exactly fall in love with the individual who starts calling them Bill or Pete or Jack right off the reel, just like he had known them all their lives. But that was Claude Painter to a dot; and the Portland shipment of men had not been in Camp Four twenty-four hours until trouble of this character loomed forth on the horizon.

"Gentlemen, my home is in heaven, and I'm only down here on a little visit—what say for a little stud game?" were his opening remarks after supper had been devoured that night. Well, it was not so much his question as it was the flippant manner in which he spoke that got him in bad right off the bat. "What's the matter with you guys—Columbus took a chance once, and died in jail—so what's the diff whether you win or lose? Money! Hell, that's the cheapest thing we've got in the world—it doesn't cost a cent. All you have to do is step out and work a few hours every day for it."

And to firmly impress it upon the minds of all concerned that he possessed a few feet of that root which causes all evil, he jingled the coins in his pockets rather tentatively. This act, of course,

had its effect, and when I noticed big Tim Keefe nod his head slightly at his buddie, Red Herring, I knew someone was going to get the vacuum cleaner run over his carcass and have a few toad skins sucked from his stake; and twenty minutes later, when the usual gang collected about the usual little table and started the usual game, I considered myself extremely lucky in taking the tip Keefe's nod advertised. For when Keefe and Herring were right beside each other, some powerful hands most generally appeared after either of them dealt—and in nine times out of ten, one or the other of them held a hand which usually brought home the gin. And on the tenth time, well—it always pays to give the victim a little encouragement occasionally, and consequently they would lose a pot now and then. But making certain the "velvet" for the night's play had not been cast upon the waters.

"Here's where friendship ceases! Naw, the devil with the cut—run 'em out! You can't get 'em out fast enough to suit me!"

Tim Keefe smiled lightly at the remark after offering Painter the deck to cut, and proceeded to deal out the cards, one all around, face down, and one all around, face up. And when an ace popped up for his first card showing on

the table, with a king laying there before Painter, I had a hunch he would be sorry afterwards for not cutting the deck.

"Ace high bets, you," ventured the newcomer, nudging Keefe.

"One squirt!" Keefe slipped a silver dollar into the pot after glancing around the table to make certain he was high man, just as if he did not already know it.

"Nice, sociable bet, bo," prinkled Painter. "Ride once." And he contributed a dollar bill to the kitty, glancing expectantly and taking it for granted his kings, back to back, would be a cinch hand.

Everyone decided to see the next card, but when the betting reached Red Herring, he twisted his lips into a queer smile and eyed the hands considerably for several moments.

"Forced to churn it, people," he uttered, sincerely enough, and a five-dollar bill found its way into the jack-pot.

"Humph!" Keefe grunted and elapsed into deep thought for a second. He glanced over at Herring's hand. The trey of hearts showed face up, and the best he could possibly have would be treys back to back.

"If you've got an ace in the hole, Red, I've got one up and my hole card beats your face card; so I'll have to have a look one more round."

Painter peeped at his hole card again, and a beam of satisfaction glistened in his brown eyes.

"Forced to call," he said, at length.

The rest dropped out, and Keefe resumed dealing.

The queen of diamonds fell to Painter; Herring received the deuce of spades, and Keefe gave himself the jack of clubs; and, still being high man with his ace, checked the bet along. Painter hesitated several moments, seeming on the

verge of stepping out, but he also finally checked; but Herring ushered a ten dollar bill into the pot.

"Humph!" Keefe elevated his matted brows and grunted again.

"Call, dammit, call!"

All eyes gazed askance at the newcomer. He sucked his teeth and gazed about the table.

"Brother, deal to me once more," he commanded, in due time.

Keefe artistically slipped the top card off the deck, and the queen of spades did he receive, making a pair of queens showing; and his complete hand, kings up thus far. A twinkle appeared in the depths of his youthful eyes. Kings up! Cinch hand!

Herring received the trey of clubs, giving him two treys showing, and Keefe's card was—the ace of diamonds, giving him a pair of aces on the board.

"Pair aces bet, Jack," stammered Painter in his sarcastic tone.

"Humph! You seem pretty anxious, brother, pretty anxious. You got three queens?" Keefe eyed him closely.

"No, but I'd feel lots safer if I did have, Jack—from the looks of the cards turned up," he retorted; and a cloud crept into Keefe's hardened face. Did this newcomer suspect? Keefe wondered, and proceeded to bet ten dollars on his pair aces.

"Up to you," he urged, after Painter had waited several moments before reaching his final decision. "Bet 'em high an' sleep in the streets, kid. Let'er be root hog or die."

Painter fingered his money momentarily, and, picking up a yellow double-eagle, he hurled it into the jack-pot.

"Ten and ten," was all he said.

"Three queens! I knew it! Pretty soft to have a sucker play your hand for

you, ain't it?" Keefe forced a flush of camouflage as he spoke.

Red Herring appeared not at all alarmed over the raise, and with his two little treys showing, he deemed his merely wise to just call—and he did. There yet was one more card to go around, and if he could but harpoon the third trey—

"Humph! Ten and ten—and you call, eh?" Keefe glanced sharply at his buddie—but I caught that sudden flash that disappeared from his eyes as abruptly as it had appeared.

"Twenty-five squirts more!"

Keefe shoved thirty-five dollars into the pot and leaned back in his chair, folding his arms across his stomach and gazing at the ceiling.

A faint throb of suspicion surged through Painter's veins; and as he watched Keefe closely for a scant second, this suspicion seemed to expand.

"I call," he said shortly. "And if I lose—may God strike me dead if I don't beat the pulp out of the dealer!"

His words pierced the air in a cool, self-satisfied and determined manner, and his gaze into Keefe's face was as direct as the stare of a baby.

"You'll what!" savagely roared Keefe, springing to his feet with the agility of a monkey and glaring down upon the new comer. "Do you mean to—to insinuate that I'm handing you a cold hand?"

Painter nodded his head jerkily and a sneering smile of contempt formed upon his thin lips.

"My words, bo, go for their face valve—if I lose this jack-pot I will beat the pulp out of the dealer."

Keefe's fingers twitched momentarily and he doubled his fists—but that was as far as his preparations for combat traveled. Painter, seeing what was in the wind, instantly slipped his foot between Keefe's legs, a sudden jerk caused

him to fall unexpectedly, and this gave the youth opportunity to gain his feet and be on guard.

"You—you rat-eyed tramp!" blazed Keefe, jumping up and lunging ferociously at the form before him. "Ill—I'll educate you for this, you—you contemptible hound!"

Keefe, outweighing the other by some twenty odd pounds, lowered his head and rushed toward the youngster, fists flying rapidly but wildly through the air. Painter stuck out his right arm and when Keefe's guard went up to block the feint, the kid slashed a wicked left upper-cut through the opening, and connected with the point of Keefe's chin with a deadening thud. Keefe's eyes rolled in their sockets, his knees sagged, and his arms gradually fell limp to his side. He crumpled and doubled up on the floor—sound asleep.

"Now, it's your turn, sonny!"

Herring winced under the remark. He had witnessed that powerful upper-cut which had sent his partner into dream-land, and, if the truth be known, he did not crave to establish business relations with it—but the man of him accepted the challenge, and he realized what would result if he did not call the bet. Yellow! One word he despised.

There was no way out. He must take it up where his unfortunate buddie had left off. And so, without a single word, he doubled up his fists and tore into Painter, madly, wildly, and with the blood of revenge dripping off his teeth. He realized he must watch that left upper-cut; and he stepped cautiously about at times, and when in a rush, he made certain his chin and face was well protected.

At the end of five minutes, Painter had not been able to hit his opponent effectively, and for a while, it appeared as

though Herring stood an equal chance; but the next second changed the tide of affairs.

"You can't do me like you did him!" chided Herring, nodding his head toward the silent form of Keefe, which was still stretched out on the floor.

"Like hell I can't!" Painter made a vicious jab for Herring's chin with his left hand, and in a flash of a second, he saw his opponent's guard leave the stomach open—and a terrific smash, dead on the belly button, landed against the equatorial section—and it was all over.

Herring's color fled from his face, a deathly gaze was last seen in his eyes ere he crumpled and fell to the floor, the deathly silence of the day of crucifixion veiling him.

"That bird was a hard nut to crack, gentlemen," laughed Painter, after making certain Herring was stowed away for the next few minutes.

He walked over to the table. The cards and deck were as they had been left.

"I'll just deal them out to see what would have come off," he whispered, picking up the deck and dealing his hand a card. It was the six of clubs, and he smiled knowingly; and when nothing turned up to match Herring's upturned cards, his smile broadened; but when the seven of hearts fell to Keefe's hand, his smile vanished and his face clouded mysteriously.

Had he misjudged the men? He wondered.

But after scowling heavily for a minute, his face brightened as a new thought flashed into mind. He reached over and turned up Herring's hole card—it was the trey of spades! He turned up Keefe's hole card, but a lone pair of aces was all he had. He turned up his own hole card—and leaving the kings up on

queens showing, picked up the money in the pot and stuffed it into his pocket.

Turning to those of us standing there, watching him in awe, he said, in a clear, sincere voice: "You see, I would have been the fish. Off man setting there to hook my two pair with his three treys—pretty soft, I claim!" A sparkle of delight shone in his youthful eyes. "And the best part of it was I said what I did just to feel them out, and—well, use your own judgment. I got mine, and when they wake up, tell them I'll give them a return scrap any day in the week they want it."

He bowed and evaporated from the scene.

"I'll git that skunk! Damn me if I don't!" Tim Keefe was a roaring maniac when he came to, and as he and Herring sulked out of the room they both swore revenge. They would get Painter—and get him in a way he would not expect. No young "whistle-punk" was going to fleece them that way and get by with it. No, sir-e-e! Leave it to them—they swore up and down they would square the old debt.

But the days passed and nothing seemed to result from their open and determined threats. The weekly Four L boxing bouts were staged in the Four L hall at camp, and when he learned of it, young Painter seemed rather enthusiastic and anxious. It seemed as though he loved boxing, and when a chance turned up, he stepped into the ring and traveled three short rounds with a lightweight, weighing the same weight as he; and in this exhibition, he plainly showed the fact that he was pretty handy with his fists. True, the bout was merely for pleasure, and no hard blows were exchanged, but Painter's footwork was exceptionally clever for a lumber jack, or "whistle-punk" as that was the capacity

he was working in. His guard was a mystery to the one who opposed him, and the neatness and dispatch in which he landed blows upon the other's face and body was indeed a rare sight to those who witnessed the performance.

But Tim Keefe and Red Herring, taking it all in from the back of the house, did not clap approval at the end of the exhibition. Nor did they join in with the rest and hurl praise upon young Painter. They had seen, in that little bout, a splendid opportunity of evening their old grudge against the youth; and the idea was being worked out in their heads.

By the end of his fifth week in camp, Claude Painter, with all his irrepressible ways and with all his freshness, turned out to be a sort of hero among the lumber jacks. So easily had he disposed of and outpointed his opponents in the regular weekly boxing bouts that they wanted to pit him against Steve Taylor, a Portland lightweight who had won considerable fame about that inland town—and after three weeks of begging, Painter finally accepted to lock horns with Taylor in a ten-round scrap.

"I'm no boxer, don't even claim to be, gentlemen," he said, after consenting to the bout. "But, show me the duke my weight who thinks he can slip me the shock that turns out the lights!"

Shouts of laughter and applause greeted his nervy statement, but in the rear of the audience, Tim Keefe and Red Herring nudged each other, and smiled knowingly. This was just what they wanted, their old enemy to meet the one who had so easily cheated the cheaters on his first night in camp. Keefe was an old friend of Steve Taylor—and what they had in mind would be certain to give them their revenge, in a neat little

package, cutely tied with pink ribbons and everything.

And so, when Tim Keefe drew ten days pay and started into town two days later, nobody thought anything about it. They took it for granted he was simply going to scrape up a bottle of hooch.

Being an enthusiastic boxing fan, Keefe had taken special pains to get acquainted with any number of professional pugs off and on during his brief but frequent stays on Burnside Street between jobs, and it so chanced he was on good terms with Solly Burns, another lightweight, but acknowledged to be superior to Steve Taylor in that he had flattened Taylor three times, and inside five rounds on each occasions.

In other words, Solly had the kick—the knockout wallops.

And Keefe knew that he would be the one who would trim Painter's lamp wicks in splendid fashion, and when he returned to camp several days later, he wore a confident, sneering smile—as though everything had been arranged for the slaughter of young Painter. Keefe and Herring kept pretty well to themselves during the intervening days before the fight, but I noticed they both made no awkward bones about betting, when they could find a taker—and they found lots of them!—on Painter's "opponent." No names were mentioned as to who his opponent would be, the takers simply knowing that Taylor and their hero had been matched for a ten-round setto,

Once or twice during those days, Claude Painter suspicioned that all was not well and that Keefe and Herring were playing a sure shot; but on second thought, he was wont to believe they were betting against him on account of the old wound which separated them. And his determination increased the more.

But this latter thought concerning their betting fled when the morning train arrived from Portland on the day of the fight, as Solly Burns showed up instead of Steve Taylor!

"Steve fractured his right wrist in the Elks Smoker the other night," advertised Solly, "an' he asked me to come out here—simply as a favor, you know—because he said he didn't want to disappoint you boys, so here I am, fit and ready to go."

Painter's face clouded queerly, but if he was disturbed he managed to cleverly conceal the fact from gazing eyes.

"Solly Burns!" whistled Pete Vaden, a warm admirer of Painter. "Whew—my bet looks like a gonner."

And that is just how most of those who had placed their money on the youngster felt at that moment. For, as clever as he was, it did not look encouraging to see him pitted against the sluggish, dangerous, foxy, Solly Burns.

"Why, that's the guy who stayed eighteen rounds with Demon Hunt, the champ, ain't he?" cried Slim Casto after remembering where he had read of that memorable scrap. "Hot dogs! Painter, you sure'll have your hands full with this duke."

Painter nodded his head slowly, and with that one little nod, all dislikes we held for him over his fresh attitudes vanished—and we sympathized with him; aye, even felt sorry for him. You know how it is—even though we utterly despise a person, our tenderness comes to the front when danger for our enemies looms forth; and that was just how I turned to Claude Painter. Hoping against hope, I longed to see him emerge from the fray victorious. But against the trained and experienced Solly Burns, it was indeed one chance in a million that a green lumber jack, not used to the game, not posted on its hundred and one

little tricks, could possibly last the ten rounds let alone get a draw. As for a possible victory—well, that was entirely out of the question; but when the two gladiators entered the ring that night, lusty cheers of encouragement echoed throughout the Four L hall for the "whistle-punk"; and his faint smile did not carry his former flippancy. A downcast gaze showed in his eyes and it was apparent his hopes were at low ebb.

But we gave him credit—he was game, and the eleventh hour substitution did not cause him to crawfish out of the bout, and we cheered him on, wildly and enthusiastically, to his doom.

Solly Burns, smiling tantalizingly and confidently, hopped forth from his corner at the opening gong and rushed across the ring, driving a wicked, stinging left hook against Painter's ribs ere the youth had taken six steps from his chair; and this, followed in rapid succession by a steady stream and flow of telling blows to the face and body plainly showed that Solly had the fight where he could end it at any stage of the game.

"Finish'im, Solly! Get the dirty tramp right away!"

"Yeh, dump'im fer the count, Solly, old socks! Atta boy—rip'em into his onery old hide!"

I looked back through the audience, and was not surprised to see that Tim Keefe and Red Herring were doing the lusty and sarcastic yelling.

"Oh you Solly—my coin's on you, boy!"

"That's the time, bo! Sink'em into his slats!"

And then, right in the middle of the very first round, Painter commenced to display the fatal signs of inevitable defeat. Coming out of a short clinch, Solly managed to shove a wicked right cross against the youngster's face, rocking

his head alarmingly. By degrees, the eyes in his sockets seemed to turn glassy, his doubled gloves slowly commenced to unfold, and, for a scant fraction of a second, his arms lowered and hung limp and lifeless at his side.

"Come on, Solly, old socks," pleaded Keefe, seeing his enemy in a dazed state. "Put on the finishin' touches an' ring down the curtain!"

"Hot dogs! Just one little smash, Solly!" advised Herring in his extreme joy; but just then the unexpected happened. Solly, seeing his man in a stupor, remembered the agreement he had with Keefe and Taylor, and saw the golden opportunity to wade in and end it then and there; but lo and alas!—young Painter watched his man between half closed eyes, and when Solly lumbered in to measure his distance and drive home the final wallop, Painter suddenly sprang forth from his dormant state, lunged through the now open guard of Solly Burns, and, with his right fist, tilted his jaw to the proper angle, held it there just long enough for that vicious left upper-cut to come slashing through the air and collide with the point of Burns' sharp pointed chin. Then, in the bat of an eye, he added the finishing touches by hopping back real quick, plunging in again with a ripping right jab to the pit of the stomach—and when Solly Burns woke up, some six minutes later, he found the grinning countenance of Claude Painter gazing into his eyes.

"Tough titty, bo!" greeted Painter, in his same old manner. And I thought it strange he should so chide the one he had whipped; but when he continued again, I did not blame him a single bit. "Nice stunt those two birds tried to slip over on me, wasn't it—bribe Taylor to hang back and slip you a chunk of kale to come in here and trim me? Yes, cussed fine, I say!"

But before the dazed and astonished Solly Burns could realize how it all happened, how he had been trapped into the clever stall, and before he could speak, Claude Painter was gone—and the next time I saw him he was coming out of the timekeeper's office, waving a check.

"So long, Slim! Had to drag up after all that stuff!" he yelled at me, and I have never seen him since.

But, two years later, I blew into Portland from Grays Harbor, and once down on Burnside Street, looking for a top-loader's job, I chanced to see two familiar faces, and the two men, so it came to me, were Tim Keefe and Red Herring. A look of disappointment was inscribed upon their faces, and I, thinking that perhaps they were flat and hungry, was on the verge of stripping out the price of a Novia Scotia T-bone when Keefe held up the newspaper he had and said: "That lucky devil, Red; you know, if it hadn't been for us, he'd never been discovered. Would he, now?"

Red nodded his head, and they dropped the paper and walked off down the street, their hands shoved deep in their pockets and with a glare of utter disgust and contempt showing in their faces. I, wondering who they had been talking of, stepped over and picked up the paper they had discarded; and there, streaming across the sporting page, were the words which brought it all back to me.

KID PAINTER SCORES K. O.

Kid Painter, the clever lightweight, who was discovered in the lumber camps of Oregon two years ago, last night easily disposed of the last man standing between him and a crack at the lightweight champion of the world.

That was as far as I read right then, and I turned to look for Keefe and Herring, but they were gone—and I wondered—wondered.

The Chattel by W. Carey Wonderly



HE had been trying to amuse herself for the last hour, while waiting for Holbrook, and the room testified mutely to her success—or failure! At one end of the apartment a pianola was littered with music rolls, while between the windows, facing the street, a phonograph stood open and discarded for the greater delights of the printed page, dozens of magazines, chiefly cinema journals, being scattered on table, floor, and chaise-longue where the girl herself had been lying. Now, at the sound of a knock at the door, she sat erect, tense, listening.

The negro maid was away for the afternoon—and the office hadn't acquainted her by telephone that visitors were on their way to her apartment. In the immense flat-building that she was honoring for the time with her presence she hadn't a friend, only a few intimates indeed in the city. Who, then? Life as she lived it had made her cautious, even suspicious, but curiosity being born in the sex, she rose at last and went to the door.

Across the threshold stood a man; their eyes met and then there was silence, only momentary, yet long enough for

each of them...to collect their wits—quickly.

"Why, Charlie French—!"

"Merle! . . . Well, of all people—you!"

"To see you like this—here!"

"And you! . . . Though we knew in Gretna you were in New York—of course!"

"Of course." Suddenly she laughed a short, hard, uneasy laugh, and then, comprehending, stepped aside for him to enter. "It's good to see you, Charlie—to see anybody from home. . . . Surely you're coming in?"

He nodded and stammered, and a careful observer would have noticed the color which swept his face from brow to chin.

"I—I was looking for somebody," he said. "I didn't know you lived here. I must have made a mistake—in the floor, the apartment—"

She nodded, still waiting for him to enter.

"But you'll come in for a second—surely!" She looked at him, her eyes bright, her lips slightly parted, as if breathing was difficult. "Gretna!" she repeated, and swallowed a lump in her throat. "It's been—ages since I've seen anybody from home," she ended, with a miserable little smile.

Charlie French laughed.

"We're not much for traveling, I guess. New York's quite a jaunt. . . . You're looking fine, Merle. You have changed, and you haven't—if you know what I mean." Then he attempted to explain,

She began to cry softly—



failed dismally, and added, flushing, "You're still Merle Cook . . ."

The name brought the color to her face too, but she said nothing, and the man, after an awkward moment, walked self-consciously into the room.

It was an ornate, over decorated apartment, heavy with red and gold "art" pieces, imitation leather, and papier-mache marble, but to eyes fresh from Gretna it looked very splendid and imposing indeed. Even its untidiness attracted. It looked like a setting for a play, or an illustration from a magazine—which, indeed, had been the obscure artist's idea. French, with the memory of the stiff, cold, darkened parlors of his home town in mind, was properly impressed, and showed it.

"It's rather a mess—the negro maid's away for the afternoon," said Merle as she sank down on the pseudo Louis XIV divan and pointed to a chair facing her for him.

But Charlie, for the moment, remained standing, his eyes traveling around the room—the gold, the velvet, the pianola, the phonograph—the chaise-longue itself was worth a paragraph in the Gretna paper; he had never seen one before ex-

cept in a movie drama, and here Merle Cook—. When he brought his glance back at her at last she plainly recognized the half bitter, wholly regretful look in his face.

"I don't wonder that you turned me down for this," he said slowly. "I don't wonder you refused to wait for my ship to come in, but chose the stage instead. It's . . . very grand."

Words failed her, she made a depreciating movement with her hands, pointing to the littered instruments, the untidy floor and table. Yet it was this very confusion which attracted and fascinated Charlie. In Gretna the horse-hair parlors were in such apple pie order.

"It's a sight," she repeated, her eyes on his face.

They had known each other all their lives, having been born and reared in the same humdrum little town of the Middle West, he the son of the doctor, now deceased, she the orphan niece of the Methodist minister's widow. They were both in their early twenties, she blonde and petite, he long and slim, with brown hair and gray eyes, nose a trifle broad, lips large and sensitive. Some of the awkwardness which she remembered so vividly was visible today, as he sat opposite her in this gaudy room, but he had changed, too, changed for the better, and the clothes he wore bore the stamp of metropolitan tailoring which Merle had come to know so well.

"You have changed—and again you haven't," she said, the words seeming to escape unnoticed. "I wonder—?"

"What?" His eyes narrowed, he leaned toward her. "My—my ship's come in, that's all. Perhaps you've heard—? If you had only waited!"

She shook her head, altering her position so that the light from the window was behind her now.

"Not a word from Gretna since I left home—three years ago," she told him. "Aunt Julia, of course, wouldn't write, and—there was no one else."



"There was—me," he muttered, and then looked away, coloring. "There's never been another girl like you, Merle—though I'm not blaming you for stopping writing—to me."

She was silent, and after a moment he went on:

"My ship came in, as I always said, as father always knew it would. But he died before— And now— If you had

only waited . . . but three years is a long time. The land, that land Grandfather French left me, turned out just as he said—oil. Oh, it wasn't a treasure ship, exactly laden down with gold, but it was big, for Gretna—fairish, too, for New York, I expect. I've even met men here who consider me rich.

II.

The girl became suddenly roused now, the color returned to her face, the ring to her voice. "Easy, boy! Let the New York sparrowhawks alone—men and women both—I know. So you've got money now? When New York knows it it will flock like carrion, strip you, then toss you aside. Don't pal with the folks you'll meet around the hotel—don't! I—I've been in New York longer than you, Charlie—"

"A fellow gets lonely," he said, in a low voice, his eyes on the floor. "It wasn't as gay as I thought—by myself. And I had come to have a good time. What's the difference?" he asked suddenly, with challenging eyes. "Nobody cares. And the money's mine to spend . . ."

There was a short silence. Merle nodded softly then.

"I see," she said. "You met a—woman—?"

"No! A man. . . . But don't let's talk about it. And thank you, for your advice. Of course, I'm green—and New York's shed its swaddling clothes long ago—I felt ashamed, as if I'd missed something, and I thought it was high time I saw . . . life. But we'll say no more about it, please. I—well, I am a fool. Always was, always will be, eh? Even money can't make a great difference. You were right to pass me up for a stage career, Merle. . . . I suppose you've been very successful?"

She was no idiot and the words came easily, quickly.

"I was the biggest failure in the show business, Charlie, that ever struck the big town with a change of clothing tucked away in a befo' de wah carpetbag. The dark horse and the big chance happen only in fiction. I was greener than the shamrock, three years ago, Charlie. I thought I had only to open my mouth, to show myself, to sing—and you know I was considered some song-bird in Gretna—to have the managers falling over each other to secure my services. Instead of which they wanted to send me on the road in the chorus of a No. 2 company." She laughed a bit, as if at the memory of those early days. "I think I must have refused—refused with scorn, Charlie, like a movie heroine—more chorus jobs than any girl alive before I was driven to accept one—"

"Driven?"

"Yes. Exactly that. One must eat even in New York—or should I say 'especially'? At last I took a job in the chorus, and—and there I stayed. Quite like a fairy story, eh?—it's so different! In fiction I would have got my chance, you know; and made good. My dear, I never did—either. Just chorus—for two years, and then—"

"Yes, and then?" he supplied, as she paused.

"And then I got married—let somebody else hustle for the jam for the bread—most girls do the same thing, once they got wise to themselves. I suppose you'd call me successful, all right"—she glanced around the ornate room and smiled at him. "But it's not the success Gretna dreamed of for me, is it? Matrimony is not half so picturesque as stardom. And I am only a wife—what does Gretna think about me, Charlie?"

"I don't know," he said slowly, after a brief pause.

"Oh! Are we then so soon forgot?" she laughed, though the color receded

from her cheeks, leaving her deathly pale.

He flushed and looked away.

"Well, you see—"

"Yes, I see," she caught him up. "I was a black sheep, an unnatural girl, and undutiful niece, all because Gretna smothered me and I wanted to get away and live, live! Because I had my ambitions, because I didn't see the world through Aunt Julia's spectacles. Gretna was sure I would come to a bad end; the town never spoke of me, waiting and hoping—yes, hoping—for the day when folks could point to me as a horrible example. What a joke, what a farce, what exploded, antiquated ideas! Tell them, tell them, please, when you go back—you have seen, what you have seen. I am no twinkling Broadway star, perhaps—which they knew perfectly well, for they'd have seen it in the papers if such were the case; but—I have this!" She swept her hand imperiously over the room; her voice hardened, the blood rushed to her cheeks. "You have seen—all this!" she repeated.

He nodded, his eyes on her face.

"Yes, yes. I am glad—"

Another brief silence followed. The moment over, Merle glanced at the clock and remembered . . . Holbrook. So she jumped up and walked around the littered room, making a pretense of putting things to right.

"And who were the people you had come to visit in this building?" she asked, turning suddenly with a nervous smile.

"Never mind. You wouldn't know them," said French.

"I don't know a family in the house," she returned, truthfully enough. "That's the New York way—one never gets to know one's neighbors."

"Maybe you're just as well off," muttered he.

She shrugged, smiled, and began to put away the phonograph records. Charlie watched her for a second or two in si-

THE SETTLEMENT



SLOWLY and painstakingly, cane in hand, Kirkland made his way along the fifth floor corridor of the Columbia Building. After studying each transom in turn, he finally stopped in front of one which bore the number 505. Then he lowered his gaze and stood for a fraction of a second, reading the sign painted on the ground glass panel of the door:

AMOS TRIGG

Attorney-at-Law

He turned the knob and walked in. An elderly man, with iron-grey hair and eyes framed in heavy, gold-rimmed spectacles, looked up from a desk where he was shuffling over several papers.

"Kirkland!" he exclaimed. "Phil Kirkland! Didn't expect to see you back in the land of walking people for at least a couple of days yet. Did you leave the hospital before my letter reached there?" He rose hastily and placed a chair for his visitor. "Here, boy, sit down. You don't look a bit strong yet."

"No, I'm not," admitted the younger man, sinking into the chair with a sigh of relief. "But regarding that letter, Trigg, it's worrying me. It reached me just as I was pulling out from the hospital. So, as soon as I could round up a cheap furnished room, I got down here as fast as a pair of hopelessly damaged legs

by Harry Stephen Keeler

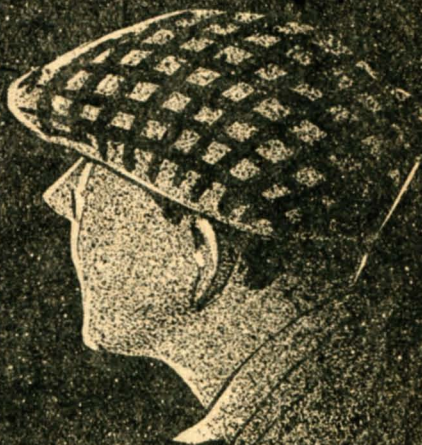
could bring me. It's bad news, I'll warrant. I've been on my back for three months, and that—that—money was absolutely my last dependence."

For several minutes the lawyer stared from the window without speaking. Finally he reached into one of the pigeon-holes of his desk and withdrew a narrow packet of papers.

"Well, I'm afraid it is bad news," he stated, a look of pity lighting up his face for a bare instant as he caught sight of Kirkland's brown eyes staring at him so eagerly. "Not good news at any rate, my boy, not good news." He paused, studying the papers. "I'd better recount to you the facts just as they stand and carry you up to the occurrence of yesterday—which same occurrence caused me to drop that letter to you. Here they are, dates and all:

"Late in the evening of the fourth of May, according to this first slip, you were run down by an automobile at the corner of Michigan Avenue and 33rd Street. You were taken to the Wesley Hospital as soon as an ambulance could be telephoned for. And there they found that both of your legs had been broken above the knee."

Kirkland nodded unhappily. "Yes. And I sent for you next day to ask you to look into the case for me, since the



machine that struck me had been running without lights."

"Exactly," assented the lawyer. "So I agreed to look into the case and see what I could do with it—at my usual terms, twenty per cent. Well, I've already told you how I rummaged around in the vicinity of Michigan Avenue and 33rd Street, and how I finally located a small cigar store whose owner had seen the whole accident—as well as several important features connected with it.

"According to his statement—which tallied with your own—the machine, with no lights whatever burning, had swept along at a terrific rate of speed, and, after knocking you down and passing over you, had flown on without even stopping to see whether you were killed or not.

"The street was almost devoid of people and, machines at this late hour, and, so, since two men were already picking you up, he had watched the car after it struck you and had seen it come to a stop not more than a block and a half away. He turned the key in the lock of his shop and hurried down to the point where the machine had drawn up at the curb. There he had come across the owner, obviously drunk, cursing to beat the band and hastily cranking up the engine. This accomplished, the latter had lighted the two headlights and pulled away from the spot. But our cigar store man was foresighted enough to get a description of the car, the driver, and the license number.

"I tell you, Kirkland, matters did look rosy to me. It certainly appeared as though we had a clear case against somebody—and all the necessary details, as well, for finding out who that somebody was. And let me say right here that it's high time that someone landed hard on those devilish scorchers—for it's getting to be so now that a pedestrian's not safe anywhere in Chicago except on the side-

walk. But to go back to the facts of the matter. You know how I looked up the license number at the City Hall and how I found that it had been issued to no less a person than Sam Hoggenheimer, the millionaire distillery man. And I didn't need any investigation to find out whether this Hoggenheimer's description tallied with the one given me by the cigar store dealer, for every lawyer at the Chicago bar knows Hoggenheimer. In litigation, Kirkland, he's a devil. He wins out in every law case with which he gets tangled up, simply because he's got the capital to carry his cases higher and higher; to buy off witnesses; in other words, to wear his opponent out.

"Well, the cigar store man promised faithfully that he'd go into court if necessary and testify as to Hoggenheimer's criminal negligence in running at a high rate of speed—if not exceeding the speed limit altogether—with no lights burning. So it looked as though we had old S. H. backed in a corner this time, dead to rights. As far as I could see, we had a chance to sue for \$5000—which would give us a compromised sum of \$2500. And that amount, of course, would give you \$2000 clear. And I don't doubt that you deserve every penny, Kirkland, lying on your back for three long months with the knowledge that your legs would never be quite the same again."

"It was fearful, Trigg," assented Kirkland, uneasily. "The only thing that made it endurable was the knowledge that the man who had run me down was rich, and that I could get at least enough out of it—\$2000—to buy up some little business where I could sit down for the greater part of the day. But about this bad piece of news—you've got me worried. What is it?"

"Yes, I'm coming to that. Well, during the next two and a half months following your injury, we were at a stand-

still on account of Hoggenheimer's sojourn at some California health resort where he was taking treatment for a valvular affection of the heart. He's a big, fleshy man, Kirkland, and a life of ease combined with loose living has put him more or less to the bad. And so, as you'll remember, he returned two weeks ago—just as you'd nearly served your sentence in the ward of the hospital. Of course I immediately called on him in his office. I told him that we had the descriptions of himself, of his car, and of his license tag. And I added that we possessed an unimpeachable witness to testify to those three things. I practically informed him that we had him dead to rights. And then I played my trump card—a card which, between you and me, was only sheer bluff. I declared that the man he had injured, Phil Kirkland, had wealthy relatives who would carry the case to the highest court in the state, if that were necessary, to obtain justice.

"Well, that trump card of mine, that bluff, seemed to impress him as nothing else had. He hemmed and he hawed. He scratched his chin. He chewed on his cigar. But he was foxy enough not to admit or deny that he was the man who had run you down. Finally he asked me what I'd consider a fair settlement for this damage suit that I intended to bring against him.

"'Twenty-five hundred dollars,' I snapped back. 'My client's legs will never be as good as they were before the accident. And he's spent three months on his back.'

"'Um!' was all he said. He seemed to be thinking it over. From what I've heard of Hoggenheimer I imagine he was figuring whether those hypothetical rich relatives of yours were backing you up as much as I declared. But finally he broke the silence. 'Mr. Trigg,' he grunted, 'as soon as your client leaves

the hospital—which'll be in about two weeks, you say—fetch him to my office and I'll have him sign a release for me. Then I'll pay over to you the amount you've mentioned.'

"Well, Kirkland, as a lawyer, perhaps I should have suspected that he was merely playing for a delay. But my knowledge of that man's fortune as compared to a paltry \$2500, completely misled me. I can't understand how anyone could hold back on an amount which, in addition to being an entirely just debt, was nothing but a drop in the bucket to him. And so I left the office.

"Day before yesterday I called him up and told him that I'd be in his office with you in three days. To my utter dumfounding he jumped all over me, called me a shyster lawyer, told me that I could bring action and be damned—and that I had nothing on him.

"Quick as a flash, I suspected that he'd got hold of some inside information about you; that he had learned in some way that I had been bluffing absolutely on the subject of your financial backing; that he'd ascertained that you didn't have a relative or a soul who could help you out in a long court fight. But there was assuredly, assuredly I say, no way for Hoggenheimer to have suspected that—much less to have known it.

"At any rate, I grabbed my hat, caught a street car, and went down to see our star and only witness, the cigar store owner. To my chagrin the store was sold out to a new man—and the former owner had vanished without leaving even a forwarding address. I located the place where he had boarded. He'd left there also. Back I went to the new proprietor of the cigar store and commenced quizzing him. He admitted that he dimly remembered seeing a big, fleshy man—and Hoggenheimer's just such a person—talking to the former owner of the

store on the day that the bill of sale was signed.

"The inference is obvious—too obvious. Hoggenheimer got inside information, in some way, that you were penniless—and without relatives or influential friends. So he rummaged around too, located our sole witness, slipped him a hundred or two, and packed him out of the state—possibly to Canada. To boil my whole narrative down to a single sentence, Kirkland, we've lost our case. With our witness gone and our bluff punctured, we haven't a leg to stand on. It looks mighty bad."

For a full minute Kirkland said nothing. He was stunned, overwhelmed, panic-stricken at the sudden and unexpected turn of affairs for him. Just as he was on the verge of receiving \$2,000 as compensation for a pair of hopelessly stiff and crooked legs—which was poor compensation indeed—the amount was snatched from his hands on account of the cupidity of a man who had more wealth than he knew what to do with. Vainly Kirkland tried to brace up under the engulfing wave of bitterness and dejection that swept over him—but to no avail. He realized dimly that now he stood face to face with unemployment, very likely hunger, for how long could a man live on \$7—and who would take on an employe whose legs were incapacitated for protracted standing? Finally he pulled himself together and spoke.

"That news is worse than bad, Trigg; it's fierce. I've been counting all along on that money to buy out some little business. For years I've been standing on my feet as a clerk at Huntley and McGuire's big dry goods store. I never had any education nor pull—and I've never expected to get anything better than that. But even that's knocked out for me now—and the \$18 a week that was attached to it looks like a fortune to me. And now

—now—" He stopped helplessly and tried to swallow the lump in his throat.

"I'm certainly sorry, Kirkland," said the attorney. "It's not the loss of my own \$500 share of that compromise that troubles me—for I can live. But I'm honestly worried about you. We're up against a well-defined case of crooked work—which we can't prove. Hoggenheimer simply rustled around, tumbled into some bona fide information that you had no one to back you up, went down and paid our witness to sell out and leave town, knowing that he could outbid us by waving some cold cash under the latter's nose.

"As a matter of fact, I've taken steps to bring action today—and I'll stand the small preliminary expense myself. But Hoggenheimer's word is as good as ours—and in conjunction with a phony alibi will knock us silly in a court of law." He paused, looking down at the roaring traffic. "At least, Kirkland, you have the consolation of knowing that there's only yourself to support. You've no wife—no child. You can surely get by in some way."

For a bare instant a rather bitter smile flashed across Kirkland's face.

"I once had the prettiest wife you could conceive of—and the most wonderful baby girl that ever lived," he said tenderly.

"A wife! A baby girl!" exclaimed Trigg. "Why, I've never heard you mention 'em. Dead—are they?"

"The little girl—yes; and the wife—dead to me. There wasn't much to it, Trigg. I married her five years ago. She was pretty—too pretty, I guess, to be contented on \$18 per. Life in a stove-heated flat never quite satisfied her. Although I honestly never blamed her for that attitude, it surely worried me.

"After the little girl was born I thought that perhaps she'd be more contented.

But she wasn't. Later—much later—she got a chance to go on the stage in a chorus part. So she left me. Even at that I'd have stuck to her always, knowing that she might some day come back to me—and her own little daughter. But finally the little one took sick. I guess I'll never forget that last night, Trigg, that horrible night when the doctor told me her chances for living were slim. With her tiny velvety cheeks flushed—and her little blue eyes bright with fever, she kept calling continually for her mother. 'Mama, mama,' she cried, over and over, 'p'ease tum back to me, mama.' God—how my heart seemed to be grinding slowly to pieces.

"I hurried to the nearest telegraph office and sent a wire to the one who had left me shortly before—and who was in the city at that very instant. It said: 'Dolly, come over to North Side at once; baby not expected to live; calls you continually. Phil.' An hour later her reply reached me: 'Can't come, rehearsing for leading part in the Star Burlesquers; probably the doctor exaggerates. Dolly.' And at dawn my poor little baby girl passed away. The last thing she did was to thrust out her tiny arms and whisper faintly: 'Mama, mama, why you don't tum back to me?'"

Kirkland stopped. He stared hard at the foot of his desk. Then his hand suddenly clenched and unclenched.

"Damn her, Trigg," he burst out; "I divorced her two weeks later. And to this day, I've never seen her, nor heard of her—with the single exception that I was once told that she was playing in burlesque under the stage name of Dolly van Sutzen."

"Heavens, boy," commented Trigg emphatically, "she was no woman—no mother at all. Why she—she—she was a beast, a brute." He sat for a moment thinking. Then he stood up and placed

his hand on the other's shoulder, adding brusquely: "Well, Kirkland, you've had your share of life's digs, there's no doubt about that. But try not to take it to heart. Go home—and don't worry. Come in again day after tomorrow. I'll have action instituted before that time. And we never know what developments are going to enter into any case."

Slowly Kirkland made his way down the corridor. He descended in the elevator. Once out on the street he mounted a car. For a long while he rode northward. Finally, however, he dismounted and walked stiffly and clumsily along a side street until he reached the steps of a dingy rooming-house. He opened the outer door with his latchkey, and, step by step, resting every five or six steps, he ascended a stairway covered with a faded and threadbare carpet. When he reached the third floor, he proceeded along the hall until he came to the doorway of a rear room. Here he thrust another key in the aperture of the lock and shortly swung open the door, displaying to his gaze the room he had rented several hours before. Its floor was covered with dusty, yellow matting. It was fitted with a narrow iron bed. Its only remaining articles of furniture were a straight wooden chair and a washstand on which stood a cracked yellow pitcher and a washbowl.

He closed the door quietly, tossed his hat on the chair, and stood for a few seconds gazing unseeingly out on a dirty back yard, littered with broken milk bottles and rusty tin cans. Then he spun suddenly around and despairingly flung himself face downward on the bed.

For a long time he lay without moving, trying unavailingly to grasp the fact that he was confronted with the oldest problem of life—the problem that concerned the means of existence itself; face to face with the necessity of finding some sort of immediate employment, no matter how

poorly paid, by which he could remain off his feet.

One thing was certain; he must replenish his capital soon, for at the very most it could last him but seven or eight days. Bitterly, he began to wonder why the man, Hoggenheimer, rich even in the modern accepted sense of the word, should take such evident joy in saving the paltry sum that for him, Kirkland, meant the sole chance of a halfway happy future.

He shuddered involuntarily when the recollection recurred to him of how, on the night of May fourth, the great whirling machine had sprung swiftly and silently at him from the darkness, unheralded by either the warning of the horn or the blaze of even one headlight. In turn, the long, tedious days in the hospital came back to him, with their consoling thoughts that the man who had run him down would surely recompense him after returning from the Pacific coast.

Vividly he recalled the thrill of satisfaction that had shot through him when Trigg walked into his hospital ward two weeks before and announced that Hoggenheimer had agreed to compromise matters for \$2,500. From that time on, naturally, he had ceased worrying altogether. And then—yesterday—had come the note from Trigg with its peculiar tone that hinted of bad news. And, on top of this, the latter's statement that Hoggenheimer had laughed the case to scorn, and that the sole witness had been spirited away.

Truly, the ways of the rich were mysterious. What could have caused that sudden change in Hoggenheimer? How could he have learned, if such were really the case, that the man he had injured was without money, relatives, or friends; that he was absolutely unable to engage in a legal battle?

Slowly the afternoon faded away, and the dusk came on, throwing a pall over

every object in the room. And still Kirkland lay on the bed thinking, pondering, brooding. And following the dusk came darkness. In turn the old clock downstairs in the hallway of the rooming-house toned forth the hour of six, of seven, of eight.

Suddenly an idea smote him with such intensity that he raised himself up in the darkness and sat on the edge of the bed, with his heart beating wildly. Why not go straight to Hoggenheimer himself? Why not secure an interview with him in his own home and show him the poor distorted limbs? Why not plead with him for some exhibition of justice? Why not see whether the personal element could conquer the unreasoning attitude of a man who had shown himself anxious only to conserve his own wealth?

Within five minutes Kirkland was making his way, cane in hand, toward the corner drug store. Inside, he seized the directory feverishly and turned rapidly to the H's. Finally he came across the notation for which he was searching:

Hoggenheimer, Samuel: bachelor, res., 1250 Lake Shore Drive.

An hour later he was walking slowly along Lake Shore Drive, carefully studying the numbers of the magnificent residences that lined "Millionaires' Row." Soon he glimpsed the number 1250, showing plainly through the lighted transom of a splendid, brownstone house which stood some distance from the street in a spacious yard.

As he looked dubiously at the number, wondering whether his contemplated procedure would be condemned by Trigg, a man clad in the blue livery of a servant came down the steps, walked along the path that led to the sidewalk, jerked open the ornamental iron gate, and proceeded leisurely up the street. With a curious glance at the latter's retreating figure, still visible in the radiance of a distant

flaming arc lamp, Kirkland turned in at the gate and proceeded up the gravel path. Only for a moment did he hesitate in the vestibule with his finger on the electric button. Then he gave it an energetic push.

From where he stood he could hear a bell ring loudly. He waited—but no one answered the door. Again he pressed the button. And still no reply. Then for the third time he gave it a long ring. And after another short wait he reluctantly descended the front steps. At their foot he paused irresolutely, glancing upward. Then he detected a gleam of light showing forth in the darkness from a second floor window at the side of the house.

Wonderingly he crossed the lawn and peered upward. He found himself able to make out with ease the outlines of a fleshy man sitting at what appeared to be a small desk. For several long minutes Kirkland wavered, wondering whether, in the absence of the servant, it would be quite diplomatic for him to ring for the fourth time. But as he stood there, vacillating from one plan to another, he became conscious, with a shock, that the figure at the desk was unnaturally quiet. So he fixed his attention more closely on the lighted window. Now that he studied the man in the upper room more intently, he became aware of the fact that the latter's head hung down on his chest at a greater angle than the mere writing necessitated.

Kirkland glanced quickly about him. The street was deserted. He himself was shrouded in the darkness of the house. So he stooped and picked up a handful of pebbles, which he flung forcibly upward. They rained on the lighted window with a loud staccato noise and then dropped back upon the lawn.

And still the figure remained absolutely motionless, totally undisturbed!

With more speed than he believed pos-

sible for him to attain, Kirkland hurried clumsily to the front steps for the second time. Once more he pressed the electric button, but this time he kept his finger on it for a full five minutes. Then he returned to the lawn. The figure had not moved by a quarter of an inch.

Hurriedly he glanced along the edge of the house. An open basement window caught his eye. Perplexed, he stood biting his lip.

"That man's not asleep," he muttered finally, half aloud. "He's sick—or else he's dead; one thing or the other." He glanced upward once more. "I guess it's up to me to do the 'phoning for the doctor I'll risk it, anyway."

He stepped quietly across the stretch of dark grass to the open basement window. There he let himself slowly in, hanging from the stone sill by his arms. Swinging one leg back and forth, he stretched his foot until the toe scraped the floor. A second later he had let himself down to a standing position. He struck a match and located a doorway which led to an uncarpeted hall. Along the hall he walked and, by the light of another match, found a flight of stairs which he ascended slowly, leaning heavily on the banister at each step. After he had covered one flight, he felt under foot a soft, thick carpet. Groping along the wall, he climbed on to the second floor. Then, confused in the darkness, he turned slowly around. At once he spied a tiny shaft of light emanating from a keyhole. Cautiously he felt his way over to it, and stooping, peered in.

Seated at a desk in a richly furnished room was the same figure he had seen from the outside lawn—and even yet it had not moved. On the desk itself was an envelope propped up against a paper-weight, a narrow strip of colored paper, and a large sheet of business size paper. Close by was a steel contrivance which

Kirkland recognized instantly as a check protector. On a small stand nearby, was a typewriter. As his gaze shifted to the writing machine, he caught sight of a fountain pen lying on the floor directly below the pendant hand of the silent figure.

For Kirkland, that was enough. He flung the door open and walked boldly in. Immediately he laid his hand on the forehead of the man at the desk. His suspicions were verified at last. The forehead was stone cold.

As Kirkland stood there, dazed wondering what step to take next, his attention was riveted by the inscription on the envelope. He snatched it up and stared unbelievably at it. It read:

Dolly van Suttan,
The Star Burlesquers,
Folly Theatre,
Chicago.

With his thoughts in a mad whirl, totally forgetful of his surroundings, entirely oblivious to the dead man at his side, he leaned over the desk and drank in every word of the letter—a letter which had been cut short by the hand of the Grim Reaper. It ran:

Dear Dolly:—

Your information regarding the fellow I wrote you about, that Philip N. Kirkland, who got tangled up in the machine three months ago, was certainly surprising to say the least. So he's your ex hubby, eh? And a poor mutt who has to depend on \$18 per for his bread and cheese. And as to your added information that he's absolutely without any relatives or any financial drag, that throws an entirely new light on matters. And so, Dolly, I'll certainly follow your advice about lying low and waving a couple of hundred under the nose of him and his shyster lawyer as soon as they see they're up against a 'caseless' case. I guess you're right—they'll be glad to grab it. And to think, Dolly, that that lawyer of his had me bluffed to a fare-you-well with a lot of bunk talk. I nearly coughed up the whole 2500 simoleons.

Now, Dear Girl, I note that your letter says I've forgotten your birthday. No such a thing. The truth of the matter is that I've been rushed to death the last few days with spe-

cialists, consultations and what not else. They claim that my heart is on the blink (the truth is—you've got that heart!) and that I'll have to go East to be thumped by still another specialist in New York. **Beastly nuisance, I call it.** Honestly, I think they're all up in the air about it—and that they're only out for my money.

But now—as to that birthday of yours. I want to buy you a little trinket—but I'm going to let you make the selection yourself. For that reason I'm enclosing a signed check, with the spaces blank, so that you can fill in the jeweler's name and the amount of your purchase. Before mailing it I'll limit it to \$500 with the check protector; so get what your little heart desires—up to that amount. And as soon as I get back from the East we'll—

Here the letter stopped abruptly. Bewildered, Kirkland passed the back of his hand over his brow—and the sheet of paper fluttered to the floor. Suddenly he stiffened up and glanced with a sneer toward the figure that still sat huddled up in the chair.

Then he stepped to the window and drew down the shade.

"My dear Kirkland," exclaimed Trigg exultantly, "the most astounding thing occurred in the night while you were asleep. I've come straight to your room to tell you all about it. At one o'clock this morning, a special delivery letter was delivered to me at my house, marked 'urgent, open at once,' and 'special'—all on the typewriter. It is was a short type-written note—and confound it, Kirkland, signed on the typewriter, too—from our friend, Sam Hoggenger, himself. He told me briefly that he was going East today and that I should cash the enclosed check immediately the bank opened. And in it was a signed check—with my name as attorney, and the amount, \$2,500, inserted with the typewriter. So I—"

"Did you cash it?" interrupted Kirkland, pale, tense, leaning half out of his chair.

"Eh?" Did I cash it? My boy, I've been a lawyer too long to let a check get cold on my hands. I was Johnny on the spot when the bank opened—my own

bank, too, by the way—and got it all in yellowbacks. And say, Kirkland, I was just in time, for when I called up his place ten minutes later to thank him, I was informed that he'd passed over the great divide at some indefinite time between nine o'clock last night and nine o'clock this morning. And a dead man's check is worthless. Whew! Great mackeral—what a narrow escape for us!" He

paused and his face lighted up suddenly. "And say, Kirkland, I've rounded you up a job making out bills and statements. Do you think you could learn to operate a typewriter?"

"Sure do," replied Kirkland, staring out of the window at a cloud, "I've had a—little experience on the—the machine. Some day, Trigg, I'll tell you about it." And a year later, he did!

GENUINE PARTNERSHIP

Upon Alvin's return from the service, his father was so pleased to have him safely home and so fond of him that he generously gave the boy a third interest in the large drygoods establishment that he owned and operated.

Alvin threw himself into the work with a snap and dash that highly delighted the commercial heart of his father. The old man gradually let his son assume the reins of the business. But one unfortunate habit or trait that pained the father was the singular pronoun used by the son in his business transactions. It was always I this, or I that. At length the father mildly remonstrated.

"Alvin, I appreciate your zeal in der business and we both know that it is all yours as my only child, but, Alvin, remember I wasn't dead yet. I still own a two-thirds interest in der business. Ven you buy or make dealings, vhy don't you say, We want this material, or we don't need any silks? You always say, I want this, or I want that. That is not right, Alvin. You shouldn't do your papa that way. WE are partners."

The son listened quietly to the gentle remonstrance and the old man smiled with pleasure at his son's minor oversight. But he soon lost his smile and his face assumed a pained expression. The son failed to heed the father's suggestion. It remained I—I—I.

One day, some time later as the father sat moodily in his office, the door opened and Alvin slipped quietly in and latched the door. The father looked up and waited for the boy to speak. Alvin licked his lips nervously and glanced about. Then as his father silently awaited his pleasure he spoke:

"Father—er—Dad—WE have betrayed the stenographer."

O. F. Jerome.

(Continued from page 31)

lence, and then rose, reaching for his hat.

"I wonder if you know how good it is to see you again?" he said slowly, and covered the hand she offered with his own palm. "I've looked everywhere—at the theaters, I mean—for you, and I had about come to the conclusion that—"

"That the town had swallowed me up—which is Gretna's idea." Her voice grew hard and brittle. "For Heaven's sake stuff that lie down their throats!" she added, choking with emotion. "The life hasn't got me, I haven't gone to the bad, or—or anything else so ridiculous and old-fashioned. Instead I am happily married and have a phonograph with— with Caruso records—see?" She held up a disc and laughed. "Small town philosophy gets me all het up," she apologized, in softer tones.

"I know. And I'll tell them—you bet. I'm so glad, Merle—that you're happy. . . . May I come again?"

"To see me?—of course! How long will you be in New York?"

"A week yet."

"I would like you to meet my husband, if possible. This is his busy season—I could telephone to your hotel—"

"Yes. The Manhatta. . . . And you know I don't even know your name?"

"Terrible!" she laughed. "Cortleigh—Mrs. Cortleigh—"

They were standing thus, his hand covering hers, face to face, lips parted, eyes interested, when . . . there came a sound outside the door. Footsteps in the corridor which paused at her door. Then the sound of a key in the lock. French looked at Merle, questioningly.

"It must be—Harvey," she said, and laughed nervously, though she didn't withdraw her hand.

"Mr. Cortleigh?"

She nodded; and waited.

III.

The door swung open then and a man came calmly into the room, a tall, broad man, with a handsome if brutal face, a bit garishly dressed in silk hat and fur-trimmed top-coat. As he saw Merle and came across the room toward her he neither removed his hat nor the cigar which stuck in one corner of his loose, bestial mouth. But his face lighted up and he smiled as he noticed Charlie French, and his hand clasping the girl's.

"That's right, getting acquainted already, eh?" he said. "Sorry I was late. Met a friend at the Astor, and you know what friends are." He laughed coarsely and took off his coat and hat with that air of possession which is unmistakable, and put them down on the chaise-longue which he cleared of music rolls and magazines with one sweep of his large white hand.

Both boy and girl seemed suddenly to have been robbed of speech, but their eyes never left him, following his every movement with fascinated gaze. His every action was deliberate, studied, and bespoke a stage training. When he turned, Merle attempted to catch his eye, to hold him, to telegraph by a glance some message which she wished to convey—and failed.

So that she blundered hopelessly, rushing in with a recklessness born of desperation instead of waiting first for her cue.

"This is Charlie French, from my home town, Harvey. Charlie, I want you to know my husband, Harvey Cortleigh. . ."

For a moment the big man with the brutal face just stared at Merle, his jaw hanging loosely, and then he gave a short, coarse laugh and nodded to the boy.

"We're old friends, eh?—don't bother, Merle. I've been trying to get here for the last hour." He had turned again to French.

But there was no answering smile on the boy's face, nor on the woman's. She stared as if fascinated, first at one, then at the other, so that presently even the man became conscious of something alien in the atmosphere of the structure he had builded.

"Eh, what?" he muttered, undecided whether to smile or to glare. "What's the game? Gad! I'm a good sport, too. All fixed—? I told you, French, she was a great little girl, eh? Say, what's the game, the big idea, the dramatic silence, folks?"

French had dropped Merle's hand and stood with his face purposely averted, but a stealthy glance revealed a rigid figure, with clenched hands, a face pale and set, from which eyes both angry and ashamed gazed steadily at the man. She didn't understand it all then, didn't try to, but as she saw her structure tumble down around her head like a house of cards she gave a low little cry and darted from the room, closing the door behind her.

The man's mouth fell open as he groped blindly with the situation.

"Say, French, what's the big idea?" he demanded again, turning helplessly to the boy.

Charlie's face was tragic.

"Who is she?" he gathered courage to ask presently.

"Merle. . . . The girl I was telling you about. For a bang-up little pal—! Oh, boy! And maybe she's not pretty?—class, eh? Listen: There's not a dame from Joe Weber's to the Circle who can touch her. She does a man proud. A fellow don't mind loosening up when his running mate's a classy little filly like Merle, eh? Gad! She was the best little friend I ever had, but—well, you know how it is. My show goes on the road in a week or two. I can't be carrying her around the country with me—of course.

And to keep her here in this apartment while I'm away—" He half closed his eyes and leered at French, a one-man-to-another expression. "And then, frankly, two years is a long time, you'll admit. But she's just the girl for you, the very girl, French—as I told you all along."

The boy kept very still, controlling his temper with silent promises as he pushed on to learn more, everything, the truth.

"She's—your wife, or—or not, Latham?"

"Wife! Good God!" The man started to chuckle at what to him seemed a fine joke, then, as if thinking better of it, he took the boy by the arm, with paternal interest, and spoke in a low, confidential tone.

"You don't get me, I guess. This is New York. You said you were lonely here, didn't you? Didn't know anybody in the East. Gad! A man can't see New York without a girl—eh? Right-o? Sure! A bang-up little pal. I told you I knew the very girl for you—right-o? Boy, she's a queen! You got here before I could introduce you, but you've seen it with your own eyes. If I weren't so damn' poor— And then a fellow can't be dragging a woman all over the country. I'll be sorry to say good-by, and that's the truth, but—well, you know how it is. I've got to go. And I don't like to leave her flat, without something in sight, you know. You and she ought to hit it up fine together, boy—a classy girl like Merle—!"

French swallowed hard, and nodded.

"Then she's not your wife?—I see."

"A great little girl," the man put in eagerly. "But a fellow like myself— An actor, without a home, more or less a servant of the public, and—and all that— We've got no right to marry. But believe me there's nothing like a little woman to come home to when you're dead tired and everything's gone stale, a little woman

who's a pal—and Merle is that. I ought to know—two years. If it wasn't my engagements took me out of New York so much—"

"They do?"

"Yes! Often six months in the year."

"And you left—Merle here in New York, then?"

"Not in the past, no! She's been from Jersey to Frisco with me, the first year. But it's a hard life, damn' hard on a woman, French," he added hurriedly. "Of course, if you'd ask me I'd say you can trust Merle anytime, if you've got to go away, no matter for how long. She never mixed with the Broadway push—yet a good little sport with it all. Gad! There's nothing I wouldn't do for that girl."

"I know." The boy's fingers itched to get at him; with parted lips his breath came hissing through closed teeth. "But—there's one point yet I don't understand—quite. She called you . . . Harvey Cortleigh, and said you were her husband. I know you, as Douglas Latham—"

The man leaned toward him, patting his back with a soft, white hand.

"Listen, French! Gad! I—we're not trying to put anything over on you—if that's what you thought. Was it? Say, I don't blame you for being careful, boy. Many a nice young fellow's been caught up in some badger game. Women get hold of 'em—and their men—I'm not that kind!" He threw back his shoulders, posed and grimaced. "We're regular people, Merle and I. She's been my girl—see?—damn' fine, classy little kid—! My name's Douglas Latham, of course. You know me! I've acted with the best stars in the country—was leading man for Madame Androva for a season—next year I head my own company—see? All open and above board. On the level, boy. That—what was it?—Harvey Cortleigh?—

God knows where Merle got hold of that. Of course I'm not, nor is she my wife. Not so you could notice it—catch me playing that sucker's game, eh? 'A young man married, is a young man marred,' eh? But a good, classy little pal—! . . . Now I'm putting you in the way of this because I like you. There's no regrets go with Merle. I'm withdrawing, going on the road with my show, and all that. All you've got to do is to move in, take up where I leave off—nice girl, nice flat. You're not tied down, not bound to anything; stay a month or a year—Boy, I envy you. I almost hate to say good-by."

French hardly moved, only his lips:

"Why say it then?"

"Eh?" The man turned quickly, on the defensive, yet with a smile lurking, if a smile was necessary to the situation.

French repeated his words.

"Why say good-by then? Why not marry Merle?"

"Marry her? Say, we men of the world don't do that little thing, eh, boy?" He winked.

"I always thought men did, yes," returned French.

The man looked at him for a moment with a smile still lurking round the corners of his bestial mouth; then something in the boy's face struck him unpleasantly, and he turned coldly away.

"I don't know what you mean," he muttered.

"Oh, yes, you do!"

"What?" The man eyed him suspiciously, head lowered, shoulders hunched forward.

"You know what I mean right enough," repeated French, trembling in every muscle. "You know what I mean—damn you! You beast, you coward, you—you human wolf! I ought to kill you! That girl—Merle—I knew her when—when—" Emotion choked him, he averted his face.

The man, mistaking the pause, advanced threateningly, his loose lips curling as he bellowed forth:

"Say, what do you mean? What are you getting off, eh? I guess she's been telling you lies before I got here, playing on your salad youth, your sympathy. What do you think you are anyway?—some damn' heroic figure in a play? You hand me a good laugh, boy. You are green. She tried to put one over on you, eh? Never mind what she told you, I don't want to hear her swan song. But let me put you straight: She was glad enough to come under my protection, two years ago.

"Get this: She was in the chorus of a show at the Casino, and she had been in other shows, always in the chorus, a genuine failure if there ever was one. I was with Androva that season, playing repertoire. One night when I wasn't in the bill I went to the Casino, and picked Merle on the stage. A friend in the company introduced me . . . and in a little while she had her own apartment and had quit the stage. Just like that. She knew a good thing when she saw it, and by George! she's had a good time, an easy time, for the last two years. If she's sensible—But she won't be; she's sore because I'm pulling out, tired of the game, yes, tired. I'm quitting. And she tries to start something, telling you lies when if she was sensible and grabbed you—"

"Me!" French started, and then went very white.

"Sure! Get down to earth. What's the use of flaring up, eh? When I promised to introduce you to a classy little girl—"

"You said . . . Miss Strathmore. But, of course, I forgot. That was only her stage name. My God!" The boy covered his face with his hands. "So it's true—Merle is—is that—! But it's your

fault! You're to blame! You deceived her—!" He advanced with upraised hand and murderous glance.

"Hold on, French, hold on!" The actor was the bigger man, but the boy had youth and clean living in his favor. He was more than a match for Latham, and his fingers were at his throat, tightening slowly but surely, when Lathan suddenly bethought himself of an old trick, and tripped him. French went down hard on the polished floor and the actor, beside himself with rage, raised one foot and kicked hard, and then raised it again, above his face, as if to bring down his heel hard.

IV.

But before that moment arrived, the door that led to the rear of the tiny apartment opened, revealing Merle, a little pearl and silver toy—a revolver which Latham himself had given her for protection when alone—held firmly in her hand.

"Don't! Don't you dare!" she told Latham in low but menacing tones. "Get up, Charlie. It's all right. And, thank you—" She swayed now that the moment was passed, and would have fallen but for the boy's strong arm which supported her around the waist. "It's all right, Charlie," she nodded again, smiling faintly. "Go! Get out of this. Don't get mixed up with—with our rotten kind. It's true what he said—I am not his wife, but—the other. Only I didn't want you to know, my dear—not you who loved me once, or Gretna. I didn't want you to know, so I lied."

The boy stood speechless, eyes tragic, lips in a thin, straight line.

"I didn't want you to know," she went on, in a choking voice. "It was true, what I told you, partly—I was a failure on the stage, and I was sick and discouraged when this—this man came into my life. As he said, a friend in the show

introduced us. And he made me . . . his thing, his—chattel, for that's what it amounts to, the way he looks at it. I am his property. Now that he is done with me, he turns me over to another man, offers me to you—my God, to you, Charlie! You see, Aunt Julia and the homfolks were right—I have come to the same bad end they prophesied. Just a girl of the red lights. But I didn't enter this life with my eyes open—you must believe that. He lied. He said we would be married—swore it—in a little while. And I was so tired—”

French stiffened and looked at Latham. The actor sneered.

“It's a lie, a play for sympathy. They all say that, you ought to know their kind.”

“It's the truth!” reiterated Merle.

“I believe you,” nodded the boy. He took the revolver from her cold fingers, and took a quick step toward Latham. “You're going to keep your word to the lady, even at this late day,” he told the actor. “You're going to marry Merle Cook, Latham—now.”

“Now?” The man's jaw dropped; he looked at the pistol and was afraid to smile. “What devil's game is this, eh?” he demanded, roughly. “You can't frighten me, youngster, I'm over seven. Marry her? I never said so, never promised.” His voice rose shrilly. “It's a hellish plot between you, a damn' lie! . . . If it's money you want, Mer—”

“She don't!” snapped out French.

“What kind of a holdup is this? Say, you can't frighten me into a game like this. I'm a man; I've got friends—I'll have the police on you; if this ain't a badger game for fair—! I'll see the pair of you go up the river yet, for this stunt, you damn' four-flusher you!”

“I wouldn't talk about the police, and going up the river if I were you, Latham,” said French, with keen satisfac-

tion in his manner. “I may come from the grass and all that, but I've got a head on my shoulders and some brains in that head just the same. Either you marry Miss Cook without a fuss, now, or I'll see that a charge of breaking the Mann White Slave law is entered against you. Yes, that! By your own confession Merle Cook has accompanied you from Jersey to Frisco, and I suppose your money paid the fare—I suppose so, Latham. I know the law, don't you? It was framed for such as you. Now don't kick. This 'hayseed' has 'got' you.” He spoke to Merle over his shoulder, the pearl and silver weapon still covering the actor. “About a minister and a license: We'll all wait right here in this room. Call up the office, let them send a messenger for them—the minister and the license—give them the necessary information. Never mind.” He gave her a look so full of compassion, of love and understanding, that the tears started to her eyes. “I'll make it right; I'll see that this fellow does what he promised. Then you can . . . go home to Gretna, if you want, your head in the air, as good as any of them—better, a hundred times better! And he”—he glared at Latham—“can go to hell!”

V.

She covered her face with her hands.

“Oh, Charlie! What's the use—now?”

“Every use!” he insisted. “Call the office, get a messenger, we won't keep this gentleman waiting—”

She moved to the table, picked up the instrument, and opened her lips. But instead the words were addressed to French.

“Oh, Charlie—!” There was half appeal, half despair in the cry.

He nodded encouragement, even smiling for her benefit, and that smile, that look, decided her. She replaced the telephone and faced him calmly.

"I don't want to marry Douglas Latham," she said in a clear, distinct voice. "I don't want to marry him—even to leave him the moment the ceremony is over. All I want is to get away, to forget; he has had enough, I will never bear his name, not even a moment, nor have it said I was ever legally his thing. I want to forget him, never to see him again. This is the end. Send him away, please. Marriage now won't alter things, and I think I couldn't stand it, I couldn't forget with that to remember. I don't want things made 'right' that way, Charlie. Thank you, bless you, but send him away."

There was a little silence. French looked at her, his hand with the revolver falling to his side. But Latham was looking, too, an expression of very genuine surprise on his face, and he made no effort to escape.

"Are you sure this is the end?" he asked the boy, after a second or two.

The look she gave him held the ghost of a smile.

"This is the end of everything," she said. "Now that you know the truth, I don't care much—no, not even for Aunt Julia and Gretna. Send him away, please; and say he is never to come back."

At this Latham threw back his shoulders and sprang to get his hat and coat with a somewhat nervous chuckle.

"Oh, I'm going—I'm on my way without a return ticket, believe me. And no ill feelings, either, for the gun play, French. You take a sensible view of things, Merle—and I understand I'm due for a cut in salary when we take to the road. I always said she was a classy little pal; eh, boy? And the rent's paid to the end of the week. I bid you both good-by."

He took himself off with a great air, an air which wilted when the door closed behind him and made him seek first of all a bracer. What a rotten half-hour!

Alone, French looked at Merle, and all at once she began to busy herself with the books and magazines on the table and chair, piling them into straight, methodical rows.

"You'll want to get out of here, of course—at once," he said, abruptly.

"Yes, of course," she nodded, without looking up from her task.

"And then what?"

"Oh, Charlie—! Never mind, boy. You've been dear and sweet—brave, very brave. I shall never forget." Her voice trailed away. "Only don't tell Gretna what and where you found me, and you, boy, try to forget in the years to come. Go. Never mind me."

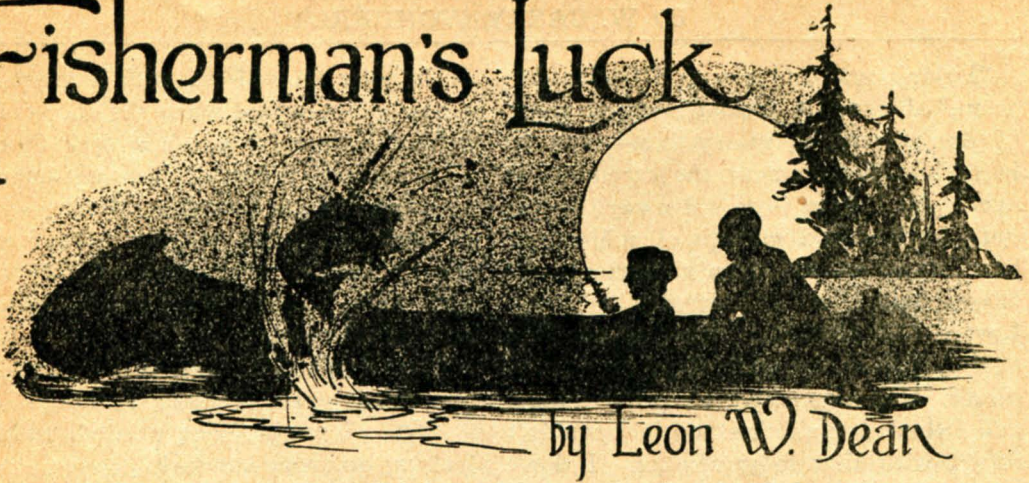
"But I do mind you, Merle," he said, drawing nearer. "I've always minded you, more than anyone else in the world, I guess. I love you." He whispered it. "Marry me and come home to Gretna, dear."

"Marry you? Oh, Charlie!" She began to cry softly. "Never, never, never. This is hail and farewell. I've got my own horrible way to go—you'd never forget."

"Say—what right have I to be remembering?" he asked, the color flooding his face. "Why did I come here? To see whom? A Miss Strathmore, a 'classy little pal,' that Latham had whispered to me about. I'm no plaster-of-paris saint. I'm just a man and I love you. You can't say no, and send me back to Gretna alone—you just can't do it, Merle. You've got to come with me."

He held out his arms to her. For a moment she hesitated; then, with a glad little cry she crept into their embrace.

Fisherman's Luck



H EED ye now the story of Rainbow, the mighty salmon of Pocock Pond, at once the hope and despair of all fishermen, with a price of five hundred dollars upon his head!

No more wily outlaw ever took to his native strongholds, there to bid defiance to all comers and play at death with those who sought his capture, than this same outlawed salmon called Rainbow. Swift and strong and bold was Rainbow. He took his name from the resplendent, crescent leaps he made at sundown as he sported and played or took his food—or even fought back at the end of some would-be captor's tackle, breaking or shaking it loose from his gristled mouth. By day, he lurked deep down in the pond's safe retreats, but at twilight—well, twilight was the outlaw's hour.

Long before summer camps and hotels had usurped the place of spruce and birch and pine around the shores of the pond, sportsmen had learned of Rainbow's fame as a big, fighting fish, and took long journeys to try their skill and stoutness of rod and line upon him. That was before he became an outlaw, with a price upon his head. He was then only a gamey leviathan of the deep woods, a finny prize sought by veteran anglers. But with the crowding into the wilderness of summer

guests in duck and flannel, a new era dawned. The former sturdy campaigns were succeeded by a constant harassing. The old thoro-going sportsmen, with whom he was wont to try conclusions, one by one departed for less trameled fishing ponds, and he was left to the mercies of the amateurs. They gave him no peace, but he got his revenge.

Out in a boat, under the shade of a multi-colored parasol, a lady was one day fishing. In the boat with her was a hotel guide and her husband—a jolly-stomached little man who looked as tho he would have much preferred sipping some cool, terrestrial beverage beneath an overhanging porch on shore to broiling in an open boat beneath the hot August sun. The lady, however, was adamant. You could tell by that lean jaw that she meant to conquer wild nature as she had conquered human nature. Her air was of one accustomed to sweep all obstacles from her path. Here others had failed. Others' failures were her opportunities. The capture of that fish would show again her invincibility and superiority. And why should not a fish be captured?

Perhaps never before in her life had she been a-fishing, but that mattered little. She felt that she sufficiently understood the art; that she had simply to

drop in her bait, and—well, all fish were wont to come to her hook. She was not dressed for her occupation, and the hot sun took grim advantage of silk and satin, but let us give her the credit due, she held stubbornly to her task. No doubt of her final triumph would she permit herself to entertain. From time to time she unbent sufficiently from her stern dignity to lean over and dip her fingers in the refreshing waters of the pond, and at such times a rare assortment of fine jewels flashed back their presence to the sun.

Thus it was that the accident occurred. Perhaps her fingers had become shrunk-en by the influence of the water, perhaps it was for some other reason that one of the rings hung unnaturally loose. At any rate, it suddenly parted from her finger—a magnificent diamond—and went twinkling down into the depths below. Occupants of nearby boats heard a stifled cry. A swift shadow darted upward from some dark lurking place far beneath the ken of human eye. Its tail splashed the surface of the water as it checked its savage rush. The diamond was gone.

The little fat man proceeded to dab nervously at his moist forehead, and to steal surreptitious glances at his lady, who had so far forgotten herself as to utter that choked cry of dismay. Was there malign satisfaction in those glances? Was it his moment of unholy vengeance for the past hours of discomfort? Who shall say? Other curious eyes than his, and less furtive, were upon her. But now she had withdrawn into her shell of decorum, and not until every other craft had departed was her guide ordered to row home.

The buzz of conversation ceased as she mounted the hotel veranda. The little man unconsciously dabbed again at his forehead, but his consort carried off the situation with uncompromising dignity. Nevertheless, the mischief was

done. The guide had been bribed to hold his tongue, but the secret was too good to keep, and he must have cut his corners pretty close, for presently it began to leak out that old Rainbow had partaken of milady's diamond, and was worth anywhere from two hundred to a thousand dollars. On this point opinions varied, but, as the years went by, and the tradition was passed down to each succession of lakeside guests, the value somehow crystallized at five hundred. Milady visited the vicinity no more, but enveloping oyster was never courted for its prize as was Rainbow, the monarch salmon of Pocock Pond. More wary he grew as the years passed him by, and of added weight and fiery vigor. Seldom now would he rise to any lure, but when perchance he did and the steel barb hit home to the battle-scarred jaw, he brought to his aid the wisdom gained of many a former conflict and, hurling all his far-famed bulk and speed and strength into the struggle, fought himself free.

There came, one day, to the pond Clifton Brainard, an assistant in the United States Department of Fisheries. Forsooth, however, he was not in pursuit of the king of the pool, but a beauty to his eyes much more attractive—no less a one than the queen of the summer colony. Fish he might have with him always, but her—ardent was his wooing.

He was good to look upon, was this Clifton Brainard, for he stood four-square in the stature of a man, clean, stalwart and purposeful. Not few were his admirers, nor did he find disfavor in the eyes of the queen. But queens are capricious and privileged mortals. They do not surrender at a finger's beck and may ask a price for their favors.

"You would marry me?" quoth she.

"I would," said he.

Let us not go into detail. Her price was the ring "in yonder pond." In vain

he plead of leniency, but queens are obdurate and there was a stubborn twinkle in her eye.

"What, sir knight, you profess a passion for me and will not undergo this simple quest?"

"Simple?" groaned he, and there was a world of meaning in the groan, for he was experienced in the ways of the finny tribe, and the prowess of old Rain-bow had days ago been recited in his ears.

"Ay, simple. Go, good knight, and when your quest be done, return, that mayhap you may have found favor in my sight."

"Tarnation!"

"Pray, sir, is that a knightly oath?"

"You don't know what you're asking. Why——"

"Yours not to reason why. Come, let us see if your spirit be equal to your protestations."

"But this is tomfoolery, it's——"

She stamped her foot with pretty impatience, and he desisted. Moreover, long before Apollo had driven his flaming chariot to the crest of the eastern mountains on the following morning, our valiant knight was afloat in a skiff, and, with that alternate hope and despair of which we have before spoken, a thousand times amplified, was whipping the waters of Pockock Pond.

This was but the beginning. Each morning and evening thereafter, and not infrequently at midday, he could be seen diligent upon his quest. What recked it if his charger were a boat with oars, and his lance a fisher's rod! No knight of famed King Arthur's band ever rode the marches with a higher purpose. What recked it, I say, whether it be spelled in one case "rode" or in the other "rowed!"

Of course, the good people began to wonder why the young man so abruptly transferred his attentions from one such

estimable form of angling to the other. To the one he had previously ignored, he now seemed peculiarly devoted. Had he been jilted? Was he thus seeking to assuage his disappointment or show his indifference? Gradually the truth began to dribble out. Then furor. To no such sensation had the society folk been treated since that dramatic day on which the ring first was lost. Could the young fellow land the fish and, with it, the girl? How long would she wait? Would she really refuse him if he failed?

It began to look as tho this last question was in a fair way of being put to the test, for the unsympathetic old monarch consistently refused to strike. No lure so gaudy or so dazzling, no bait so tasty as to tempt him from his seclusion. Once, indeed—oh, thrilling moment!—he rose to a flitting, spangled bunch of feathers, but, alas—oh, sinking heart!—passed the temptation by. And then again, horrible to relate, even while he was being so bravely and patiently besieged by our hero, he was so inconsiderate as to take the offering of a total stranger and win to freedom only after a hard and bitter contest. Fickle queen and fickle king, what could the desperate lover do betwixt them?

Tho merrily willful and capricious the girl was by no means a heartless tyrant. Perhaps she, in some measure, repented the rash favor she had exacted, for often she accompanied her knight upon his quest to cheer and encourage him. This her presence did, but sometimes, too, it was bitter sweet, disheartening him with the hopeless uncertainty of attaining her. At such times he no longer plead, for he was bold of heart, but was given to pen-sive and melancholy lapses of silence during which he would gaze absently into the water and speak never a word for the space of many minutes. Then would she gently chide him and bid him take

heart, yet she, too, could not but realize that summer had passed into autumn and the season was drawing to its close.

On one of these occasions, an evening when they had substituted a canoe for the rowboat and were drifting idly along with motionless paddle, a most unlooked-for interruption occurred to the monologue with which she was addressing him, laughing at his forlorn cast of countenance.

"Tut, tut, sir knight, faint heart ne'er won fair lady," she reminded him.

But he scarcely heard her, so introspective were his thoughts. Vaguely he speculated upon the death struggles of a resplendent moth that had fluttered to its watery grave near the edge of the drifting canoe. He might almost have extended his hand and saved the insect from its untimely end, but it did not occur to him to do so.

The girl ceased speaking, her eye also caught and held by the creature's titanic exertions to extricate itself from the engulfing element into which its twilight travels had cast it. Being in better command of her faculties, she might have reached forth and performed the mission neglected by her knight but for a sudden swirling, upward rush beneath the unfortunate flutterer's body—a rush so headlong that the water broke, and from its surface leaped full-formed the vision of a mighty salmon, carried thru the air by

the impetus of its charge to come somersaulting into the canoe.

For an instant it lay there panting at their feet, half stunned by surprise and the shock of its landing, then sprang to action and with a single convulsive bound almost cleared the gunwale, but it struck the edge and fell flopping back. With an inarticulate howl of joy and triumph the young man hurled himself upon it, bearing it down. Then seizing up a paddle he prepared to make an end of its flounderings.

"Stop," cried the girl.

He hesitated with bludgeon upraised.

"Would you humor me at the expense of life itself? You have won, now let the poor thing go."

"But the ring?"

"Should such a creature come to such an end? Any portly jeweler can supply you with a ring. Let him go, I say," she spoke with mock yet earnest imperiousness.

"Will you marry me?" he persisted doggedly.

"Be as gentle as you are patient and determined, sir knight, and you would be worthy of the hand of any woman."

"Then dang the fish," he cried, and overboard went Rainbow, the monarch of the waters; and there in Pocock Pond, he swims to this day, still the subject of tradition and the object of much seeking. May his tribe increase!

The House of the Heart

by Lillia Montgomery Mitchell



NINA could not remember the time when she had first met him. She knew vaguely that she had seen him at the beach every morning for weeks before they ever spoke to each other but past that she had no recollection. But he was speaking again in his soft tone that was at once gentle and vibrant.

"Isn't it wonderful," he was saying softly, "that at last we have met. It seems that we have known one another since before Adam and Eve. If you hadn't worn slippers that morning with long silk threads—what do you call them?"

"Ribbons," laughed Nina, her grey eyes crinkling. How like a boy he was!

"Yes," he agreed, "ribbons. If you hadn't worn slippers with ribbons when you came to the beach that kitten would never have played with them and run off dragging the slipper up to Sheridan Road. And if the kitten hadn't done that I could not have played retriever and brought it back, making a perfect reason to speak to you in returning it. So many times before I wanted to speak to you but," he sighed and smiled, "you were not as other girls. One couldn't start any beach flirtation with you."

Nina gasped. "Oh, you don't know mother! And Aunt Cordelia! Beach flirtation! Why, they would probably

expire instantly if they thought that I ever spoke to anyone over here—even girls. You see," he said naively, "they are very exclusive and so I, too, must be like them if I want any peace at home."

"But it was all right, you see," he went on. "What harm could there be in our friendship," he hesitated over the word slightly, "we go swimming at nine each morning, talk and go home by eleven. I am hoping that perhaps when you have introduced me to your people that it will be something more than mere friendship."

Nina blushed prettily. "We have had wonderful talks," she whispered. "I never knew anything about Freud and psycho-analysis and Main Street and Anatole France and Shaw and oh, just lots of things you have told me about."

He was not listening for the moment. He had turned to bow courteously to a passing brunette who passed but whose eyes showed that she longed to stop. "Marie Martinson," he said to Nina, "she's A. L. Martinson's daughter—the stock broker, you know?"

Nina nodded. Who should not know of him when he was one of the wealthiest men in the city. Nina felt a proprietary pleasure in sitting here chatting with Paul DuBrock when the great Martinson's daughter very evidently envied

her. Nina's father, too, was wealthy but compared to Martinson—! They lived on Kenmore Avenue, a block away from the beach, while the Martinson's home was on Sheridan Road with the back yard leading down to the lake with a private beach. Nina knew that the only reason Marie Martinson had left their own beach to go to the one at the end of Ardmore Avenue was so that she might greet and perhaps talk to Paul DuBrock.

"Do you know her well?" asked Nina jealously.

He nodded carelessly. Without waiting for further questioning he said: "I knew at once what a wonderful girl you would be. You see, you are so beautiful." This he said quietly, as a matter of fact. No flattery entered into the idea. "It has always been a theory of mine that a beautiful heart is housed in a beautiful face and frame."

Nina wondered how old he was. It sounded to her as though he must be quite old and yet he didn't look over twenty-three or four.

"The house of the heart," he said, his eyes on the blue ripples of the lake. "Wilde says—do you know Wilde?"

She shook her head.

"Ah, the talks we shall have," he went on, "and you are the perfect listener, Nina. Wilde says in his *Duchess of Padua* that 'Woman's love makes angels of men.' I think that very true, don't you?"

Nina was not sure about it and so she kept her grey eyes fastened on his brown ones.

"Time to go," he said and jumping to his feet he pulled her up. "One more dip and then home. When am I to meet your people to talk about our—engagement?"

Nina ran ahead of him and looking back over her shoulder with a laugh swam far out and away from him.

When she ran up to the second floor to take off her beach robe and dress for luncheon her father was at the top: "What a time you've been," he snapped, fingering his watch. "I've barely time to get down before the Antsruthers deal. I want you to do something for me. Business is bad, Nina, very bad, had to let the man go who has collected the rents out here. You go down to the Hollywood building, the one there at Winthrop, and the janitor will have the cheques for the three top floors. Why those men can't mail their cheques is more than I can fathom but they always hand it to the janitor and at the same time make some complaint. You get those cheques and when you drive downtown with Aunt Cordelia this afternoon stop in and give them to me at the office. Before two o'clock, remember! I must get them into the bank to cover me." He looked at her sharply. "You'll have to marry well, kiddie, to recoup the family fortune," and he laughed shortly.

Nina could not be sure whether he was joking; beneath the laugh there seemed to be a lurking reality that was unpleasant. She would tell him of Paul DeBrock. "Daddy," she started.

"Got to go," he cut in hastily. "Before two, remember."

She had just barely touched the janitor's bell at the Hollywood building when the basement door opened and a man in unionalls stood before her. Nina did not glance at him but said: "I am Miss Meredith. Will you kindly give me the rent cheques for the upper floors?"

The man stood staring at her silently. She waited a moment for him to move and then let her eyes travel towards his face.

With a joyous laugh the man stepped forward and took both of her hands in his: "Nina," he said softly, "dear girl, to think of you coming down here—"

She drew her hands away: "Paul DuBrock," she gasped, "whatever are you doing here?"

"I'm the janitor," he explained.

With her mouth opened widely she eyed him. Then she let her eyes travel up and down the tan union-all with its many pockets for wrenches and tools necessary to the janitoring business. The young, little-girl feeling that she had at the beach when he had talked to her so beautifully vanished. "You—cad," she said in a hard voice. "You fooled me. You thought you'd marry me—you—a common janitor."

The smile left his face. "But, Nina, I love you, dear heart."

She stamped her foot. "Don't dare call me Nina, you contemptible—thing!"

"But—what—" he stammered.

"Aunt Cordelia would simply die, die, I tell you, if she thought I even spoke on equal footing with a janitor."

"Then she ought to die," he said stoutly. "You mean to say that just because I am janitoring here you would refuse to—to marry me?"

She glared at him: "You must be a bigger fool than you look," she said harshly. "Janitors don't marry into families like ours."

"Your father is in the real estate business, I think you said?" he asked coolly. "And because he makes say, thirty thousand a year his daughter cannot marry me because the money I earn is less—"

"Less!" she fairly snorted. "*Less!* But don't talk." She turned to go but something held her, something she had not known was in her. She turned back. "I'm awfully sorry, Paul," she said softly, "I really do l—l!" the janitor's uniform loomed up vividly but she went on, "love you, but you see how it is, dear. Aunt Cordelia—"

"Hang Aunt Cordelia!" he said vehemently. "What do you care about Aunt

Cordelia? When we're married we'll never have to see her again."

Nina hesitated, then shook her head. "You don't know Aunt Cordelia," she let fall. "It wouldn't be *only the* money, it would be also the social standing, you see. Oh Paul, I'm so—so sorry but it would all be quite impossible. You, too, will see it when you think it over."

"And I can't even meet your people—to speak about it?"

She shook her head. A lump was in her throat now.

"Then we are, as Wilde says, 'a pair of caged birds who kiss each other through the bars' and these bars are those of money, money and social standing. I wish you didn't feel this way, Nina." He looked into her eyes hopefully but she turned away.

She stumbled going out of the door. The street was very bright in the summer sun, brighter than ever in contrast to the black disappointment in her heart. "The house of the heart," she said half to herself, "the house of the heart."

Marie Martinson was passing with her slim greyhound on the leash. "Calling on Paul DuBrock?" she said, falling into step with Nina.

At another time Nina would have rejoiced in the happy camaraderie of the wealthier girl whose acquaintance was so eagerly sought by everyone. Now, however, the janitor-uniform loomed before her eyes. Before she could voice the denial that she was phrasing in her mind Marie continued:

"Isn't it wonderful of him to do that work? I think that his father is mean to make him earn his way through medical college when he has so many millions but father says it is the making of a rich man's son to have to do that. But just fancy—one of the New Orleans DuBrock's doing janitor work for a lot of pork packers!"

Nina stared at her. "The New Orleans DuBrock's?" she repeated.

"Why, yes, didn't you know? Paul is very reticent and so—so democratic. He'll be worth all of twenty-eight millions when he's thirty. I turn off here," she said as the dog tugged at his leash.

Nina stood on the corner looking after her. Twenty-eight millions coupled with the DuBrock family of New Orleans! Hot tears filled her eyes.

Then she turned back to the Hollywood building. She had forgotten the rent cheques.

AN EMBARRASSING SITUATION

During the Civil War the Union forces captured a small town in Tennessee, compelling the Confederate soldiers to flee in great haste and disorder. One of the Rebels named Smith, cut off from his comrades and trying to evade capture, ran to a large farmhouse nearby and implored the negro woman whom he encountered inside to hide him. The negro woman hid the fugitive in the attic until, three nights later, an opportunity occurred for him to escape.

After the war ended Smith went north, engaged in business, prospered and married. But he never forgot the kindness of the negro woman to whom he felt he owed his life and many years later when he was touring in Tennessee with his wife and daughter a strong desire came over him to visit the old scene. He wondered if the old house were still standing and if the old negro woman were still alive.

Smith related his experience to his wife and daughter and they urged him to motor over to the town, which was about fifty miles away.

As he caught sight of the now dilapidated but familiar old farmhouse Smith let out a cry of joy and stopping in front of the place he assisted his wife and daughter to alight. Then he guided them around to the back of the house where they beheld an old negro woman washing clothes. Smith immediately recognized her as his benefactress and approaching her he asked: "Rose, don't you know me?"

She scrutinized him intently for a while, then replied: "No, sah, Ah don't believe Ah do."

"Don't you remember during the Civil War, the soldier you hid in the attic?"

"Oh, yes, yes indeedy. Is you him?"

"I am he," replied Smith, "and I came back here to see the old place and find out if there is anything I can do for you."

The old negro woman gazed at him fondly for a moment and then cried out in a loud voice: "Oh, Mandy, come out heah and see yo papa."

—Benton Bunch.



The Job He Didn't Want

by Mary Rosenthal

MOST men would have been happy in a paid for bungalow in Rogers Park, particularly when it was furnished with pretty draperies, solid oak furniture, well tapestried rugs of soft gray patterns, and a wife that was the envy of every male acquaintance.

I reiterate, a man should be happy—but Young Hines was grumbling—as usual. His wife's slender, cool fingers running through his light hair, her fragrant breath against his ruddy cheek, her swelling bosom on his shoulder as he comfortably sat deep in a luxurious cushioned chair, should have made him happy, but there was a frown on his white brow and his blue eyes were—well, anything but blue. They were the color of discontent, of discord, of hate—of hate toward his disordered world.

"I'm sick and tired of that damn job," he grumbled.

"Same old story, eh dear?" patiently came the question.

Ethel leaned over to kiss the furrowed brow, but he pushed her roughly aside and rose from his chair, allowing her to regain her balance by inelegantly falling into the seat.

Hines paced the floor angrily.

"It's easy for you to talk about old stories," he snarled. "But do the same thing day after day, day after day, while the big bosses sit around the office, smoking their perfectos and having an easy time, living on the sweat of us poor suckers. I wish I had one of their jobs. If I could get in right, Big Jim could do something for me too—but hell, it's nothing but work."

"I work all day too—dishes, darning, and—"

"Oh hell," he flashed, "I'm going to bed."

Ethel waited until two shoes had dropped to the floor before rising. These scenes, common as they were, tired her. She sighed as she walked to the kitchen and filled tabby's saucer with sweet milk, and then made her way to the bedroom. Standing before the mirror, she slipped out of her housedress and then took the pins from her long brown hair, while it fell gracefully over her ivory shoulders, showing their perfect color because of the contrast between them and her white, spotless garments.

Her disrobing planted the seed of an idea in the mind of Hines as he watched her.

It grew.

When the lights were turned out he was kept awake a long time by the growth. It was almost as though new life were within his physical being, and its insistency excited him, but by morning the idea was a well developed plan which he would work out that very day.

Morning dawned, the grapefruit was delicious, and Hines was in a better mood.

"Dearie, I asked Big Jim for lunch this noon," he lied. "Forgot to tell you last evening. Felt awful rotten. Didn't think of anything, I guess."

Ethel raised her brows inquiringly.

"Yeh, I know he's a rotter—but treat him nice. He won't hurt you. I'll be here."

Ethel changed the subject. The thought of Big Jim was distasteful. She remembered the newspaper accounts of him and his escapades with questionable women, and then she remembered the previous night. The rest of the morning was spent in careful concentration.

"It wasn't possible," she kept saying over and over to herself as she swept, washed the dishes, and carefully ironed some of her husband's silk shirts. "He wouldn't, he couldn't do that." But at noon she wore her prettiest gown and sat awaiting the return of her husband and his guest.

Her face gave no indication of her feelings. It was rouged a pretty pink, her nails were manicured to a rich brilliancy, her dress exposed a voluptuous slope, while beneath her hose was revealed a slender but firm and graceful limb.

At twelve-fifteen the door opened. Young Hines and his guest were removing their outer coats and hats while Ethel opened the hall door.

Hines was astonished as he looked at his wife, but his astonishment turned to pleasure as he thought of the fact that she had dressed to fit his plans—unknowingly.

"Ethel, meet Mr. Burbank. Mr. Burbank, this is my wife," Hines fumbled as he preceded his guest into the parlor and stepped awkwardly aside.

The woman courtesied coquetishly, while Big Jim grasped the air for a hand which he didn't reach.

The meal was a success. Burbank played the game in his usual way. Ethel directed her remarks to him, not forgetting to let him feel her warm breath on his cheek as she poured his tea.

"Let a wisp of your hair brush my cup and I won't need any sugar," he remarked as she passed the bowl and questioned, "One or two?"

Ethel dropped two lumps in the brimming cup and laughed musically.

The meal was a success, only one vote to the contrary.

The door had scarcely closed behind the two men on their way back to the office when the older gave a sigh and rubbed his eyes as though just awakening from a long sleep.

"God Almighty, man! What a woman! Patterned after angels! Painted to match the flush of a peach! God! What a woman!"

Inwardly Hines swore. Outwardly he chuckled.

"Bet your life, Jim. Best in the world. Good woman, good housekeeper and good en—."

Jim took the word out of his mouth.

"Entertainer! God! Yes! She must be! An hour with a woman like that is worth Solomon's kingdom and his glory—yes, by heavens, and his whole damned bunch of wives and concubines."

The subject was distasteful to Hines. He was glad when the office was reached

and he was at his desk. From his position he could see Big Jim looking pensively out of an open window. It was not hard to guess what the big fellow's thoughts were. The young man swore and wondered whether or not his plans were working, and whether or not they were worth while.

He wondered still more that evening when he got home from work and found the house empty. A weighted note on the library table, fluttering because of an open window, seemed almost alive in the solitude.

"Dearest:

Mr. Burbank called me on the phone this afternoon and asked me to dinner and to the Scandals of 1921. I accepted because I thought it might help you to get in his good graces. There is a cold lunch prepared for you in the ice-box.

Lovingly,

Ethel."

In a daze young Hines turned about and left the house. The cold dinner could remain. His mind was in a conflict of emotions. He thanked his lucky stars that this last event would make life easier for him in the office and that it might give him the much needed promotion. He cursed the thought that his wife would, of necessity, be under the guardianship of a beast if for only a few hours, and yet, it was his own fault. Or was it? Did she suddenly take a liking to Big Jim?

He didn't know where he was walking, but a disordered brain impelled continuous motion. His steps were consciously aimless, but subconsciously, they led him to the theater after miles of tramping. At least he would look for them. Maybe some action on her part would tell him what to really believe. The minutes were eternities as he stood across the street from the playhouse, under the brilliant lights of a Randolph street restaurant.

At last the great exits of the theater were thrown open. The chattering, gay throng soon filled the street. Taxis were filled almost before the poor drivers were fully awake. Private cars worked their way out of the mass of vehicles that crowded the street. Newsboys called the early morning editions, but Hines saw nothing, heard nothing, and thought nothing. He couldn't think.

He straightened his narrow shoulders and the gleam in his eye became brighter as he sensed, rather than saw his wife, laughing gaily as she clung to the arm of her admirer.

Straight across the street they came—to the very doorway in which he was standing. He moved inside and into the bar room, securing for himself a position where he could get a good view of the entire dining room and where he, himself, could not be seen.

Big Jim found a seat near the orchestra for himself and companion. An automaton in white and black made his way to their table. Jim nodded familiarly.

"Bring my regular dinner! Snappy now! For two! Chicken tender as this one," moving his huge arm toward his companion, "mushrooms fresh as her cheeks, and Burgundy as sparkling as her eyes. Move lively for the love of God and your babies for the night is mine."

Ethel's face blanched, but she laughed gaily and moved her head coyly as Jim tried to reach her dimpled chin with his clammy fingers, puckering his thick purple lips over his yellow teeth for a kiss.

The orchestra began "Vamping Rose," and performers sang loudly and unmusically,

Vamping Rose
There she goes
In her fancy clothes.

One girl in particular seemed to pick

out Big Jim as her prey. She caused her dance to bring her near his chair, when she stooped over and kissed a shiny bald spot on his head. He grabbed her quickly and pulled her to his knee. Her bare arms caressed him lovingly for only a minute, and then, like a breath of perfume on the boulevard, she was gone.

Big Jim lost all reason.

"God," he exclaimed, "Let's dance."

Suiting action to his words he was on the floor, under the scintillating, dazzling lights, with the protesting and now thoroughly frightened Ethel. He whirled her about with the music until she was faint and dizzy. After the first dance was over, it seemed as though he had just started, but she was too ill to rise to the occasion and sought her seat.

Jim thought only of himself and again

reached for her. His clumsy hands tore her waist and she screamed.

Then there was another sound. Hines, in a mad rush, pushing aside the conglomerate theater crowd which had assembled, reached his wife's side. A chair was in his hands, raised in the air, making his five foot five inches of height look giantlike. He crashed it down with terrific force on his boss's head. Big Jim sank weakly to the floor.

Before the stupefied guests knew what had happened, Hines was on the street and in a cab with his wife.

She was sobbing on his shoulder.

"To hell with the job," he said over and over. "You're mine, all mine, dear. I'd rather wade all through Hades than leave you in that man's hands for a minute. God, what a lesson!"

JAZZ

Ring out the cow-bell's joyful jazz
While the dancers do the Razamatazz.
Do the mournful, mellow, saxophone moan
While the drummer wallops the xylophone.

Blow the sweet slide whistle clear
While the steppers do the Cinnamon Bear.
Oh whang the twanging banjo string
While they shake their shoulders and everything.

Bang out the tom tom's measured beat
While the young folks dance, but never mova da feet.
Drummer go to work in the boiler factory now
Everybody's doin' the Mooley Cow.

Sounds without reason, noise without rhyme
Do the Chinese Toddle, what a Hell of a time.
Make the fish horn warble, as they do the Dizzy Dip,
Play the Sweet Patootie Blues—to The Jazz Iron Slip.

Anything, and everything that's bizarre and odd
Goes to make a jazz band—except music—God!
How much further will they go? How much more leg will they show?
How much harder will they blow? As they worship JAZZ.

—Joseph Fox.

HIS SUSPICIONS

A Little Misunderstanding 'Twixt Him and Tootsie

He was as jealous and suspicious as she was pretty and circumspect, which latter fact almost entirely prevented her resenting the former. As she never felt tempted to do anything that couldn't be comfortably inquired into, the inquiries rather pleased and amused her than otherwise. A white conscience is such a specific for clearing the system of all sorts of anxiety!

However, one day he found the accustomed ingenuous, open-eyed candor missing, and his Napoleonic brow lowered accordingly. On this particular afternoon he returned unusually early from the big clerk-filled office which provided the horses, motors, chiffons and diamonds so dear to the unblemished little heart of his wife, only to find that his much better two-thirds had gone out and not yet come back.

Where was she?

The servants didn't know.

Quickly the barometer of his suspicions rose till, at last, when Cerise did put in an appearance, the quicksilver had reached tropical indications.

"Where have you been?" he asked shortly.

For the first time a gleam of resentment entered her sky-tinted eyes.

"I—I have been out?" she answered, evasively, without meeting his glance.

"So I observe. I asked you where you had been."

"I—I prefer not to tell you."

So the bomb had fallen! His hitherto seemingly groundless suspicions were verified at last. So much for the mating of eighteen and forty-three! He ground his white, even teeth over his life's mistake, and then continued with a deadly repression:

"It will be better that I know the worst. I'm sure to find out later on. Tell me."

"As you wish."

"Have you been with a man?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At—at his place."

"My God! To think of it! Is he young?"

"About thirty."

"Married?"

"Yes."

"Ah! then I've got a fellow-sufferer in my misery. Has he been near you—close to you?"

"Yes."

"Has he kissed you?"

"Don't ask me, Jack. His face was very close to mine—he bent over me—his arms were about my neck—he touched my lips as my head lay on his shoulder and—"

"Go on—don't spare me. Have you been with him long?"

"For nearly two hours."

"Heaven help us both! You, at least have been candid. Now, nothing remains but to—. Has this brute ever given you anything?"

"Well—er—there has been—er—gold—"

"Curse him! Why didn't you tell me if you have got into debt? Gold—gold. Oh! my—"

"Yes, dear, and to be quite open and frank with you perhaps I had better show you the gold. See, in my front tooth here. I have been all the afternoon at the dentist's, darling!" —*John, the Cobbler.*

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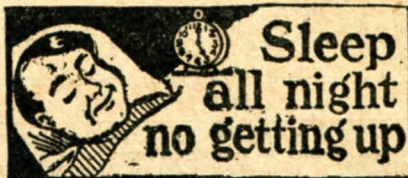


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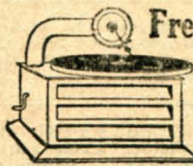
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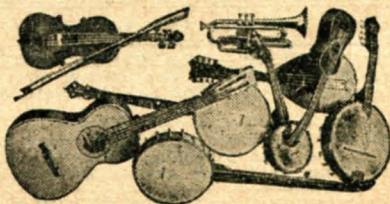
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