

10 STORY BOOK

• A Magazine for Iconoclasts •

January
1922

Stories by
Harry Stephen Keeley

Lewis H. Kilpatrick

Arkady Rissakoff

Robert McBlair

Wynn Logan

and

Others

25¢





Next Month:

A Further Adventure of

DE LANCEY, KING OF THIEVES!

More Fascinating than Raffles



Smarter, Snappier, Breezier, Livelier and Saucier Than All the Rest



10 STORY BOOK



Vol. 21, No. 2

January, 1922

Twenty-First Year

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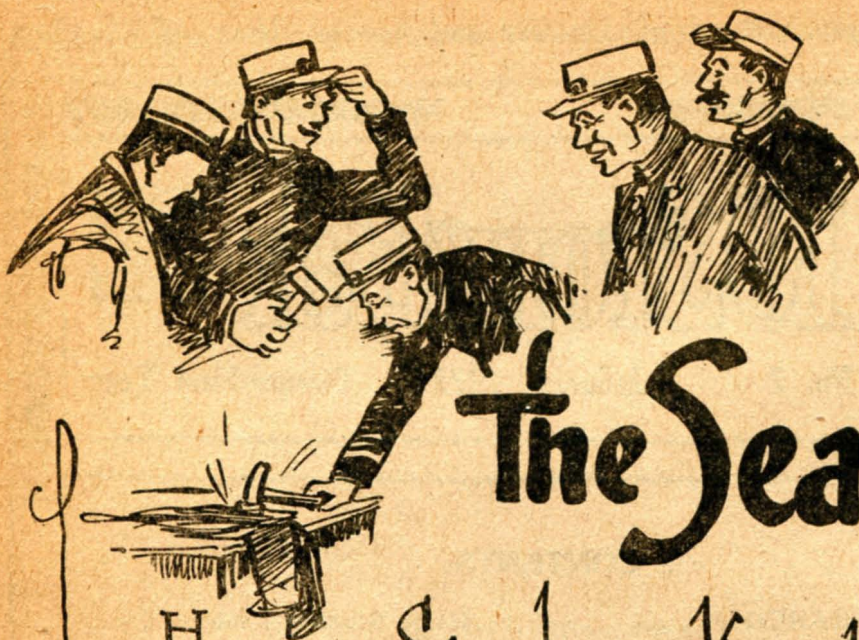
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The Search

by Harry Stephen Keeler

THAT De Lancey had been highly successful in the undertaking which he had described to me when last we parted in New York, seemed clearly proven by the account I had clipped from a New York paper on the second day of July. It read:

AMERICAN ARRESTED IN PARIS

(Cable) Paris: July 1. An American, said to be of French parentage, named E. M. De Lancey, was arrested here today in connection with last night's robbery of Simon et Cie, 14 Rue Royale, in which two of the most well-known diamonds in the world were stolen.

The stones, known as Castor and Pol-lux to the trade, are similarly cut and weigh eight carats apiece. The total value of the two, considered by English experts to be well over £12,000, is due to the fact that one is a green, and the other a red diamond. Although certain circumstances point to De Lancey's complicity in the crime, the jewels were found neither in his possession nor at his rooms, and since sufficient definite proof in other directions is lacking, the authorities expect to be com-

pelled to release him within a few days.

A few of the people who are known to have been with him the morning after the robbery, are under surveillance, and it is hoped that the stones may ultimately be recovered from one or another of them.

Clever old De Lancey! How invariably he made a success of everything to which he turned his crooked abilities.

As for myself, I had, of course, expected to be of assistance merely in getting the two stones into the hands of old Ranseer at his farm near Morristown, New Jersey, after which our pay would be forthcoming and would be divided up according to our respective risks in the proceeding. This was the method which we always pursued.

Had the clipping itself, however, been insufficient evidence that De French had again scored one on the French police, his letter, which reached me a week and a half later, made everything clear.

The communication, which was, of course, in cipher, when translated, ran as follows:

Gay Parce, July 4.

T. B.

— Str.,
New York.

Dear old T. B.:—Was it in the New York papers? Must have been. Pulled it off as slick as the proverbial whistle. The beggars kept me locked up three days, though. But they were shy on proof—and besides, they were too late.

T. B., there is to be a new man in the crew after this. Never mind where I picked him up. *I firmly believe he is the only man in Europe who will be able to get those gems across the pond.* His name is Berghem. He called at my rooms the morning after the *coup*. I passed the stones to him, each one wrapped in a little cotton package and tied with silk thread.

Now, T. B., he's bound for New York, taking the trip across England in easy stages as befits a gentleman travelling for his health, and according to our plans, should embark on an ancient tub named the Princess Dorothy, which leaves Liverpool on July 6th, and arrives at New York nine days later. Immediately upon landing, he will call at your rooms.

So Berghem seemed to be the only man

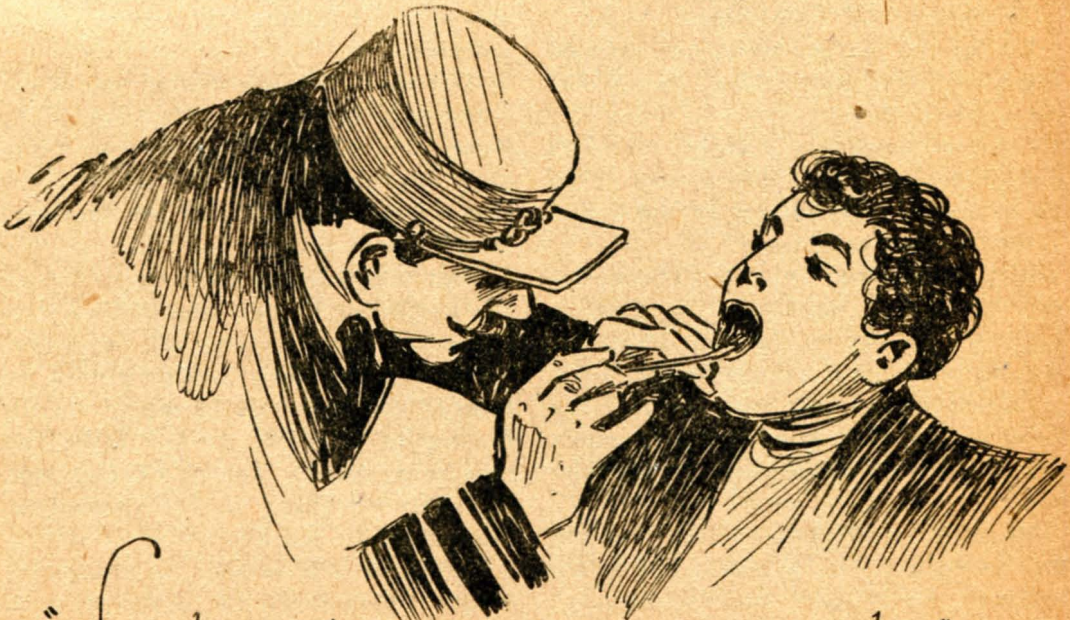
in Europe who could get those two sparklers across the pond?

Surely, if he had to get them out of Europe before the eyes of the police, and get them into the States before the eyes of the custom authorities, he would have to be sharp indeed, especially in view of the fact that a hue and cry had already been raised.

Everything was in readiness. The pigeons were cheeping in their covered basket. On the mantel were two small leather leg bags ready for the loot. I looked at my watch and found that it was after nine o'clock.

Strange that Berghem had not arrived. I had called the steamship offices by telephone at six o'clock and had learned that the Princess Dorothy had docked an hour before.

Then I fell to wondering why he had encumbered himself with his son. Unquestionably, he must have realized that in dealings such as ours, every extra man,



"They began by examining our mouths"

constituting a possible weak link, meant just so much more chance of failure.

The clock struck ten.

Where had De Lancey found this fellow—this Berghem? Was he sure of him? Did he understand the game as we did?

Everything that De Lancey did was perplexing. He seemed to know every crook between the equator and the poles and to understand just what part to assign him in any of our undertakings. Without doubt, he must have known what he was doing this time.

So he was the only man that De Lancey believed capable of—

The clock struck ten-thirty.

I heard the slam of a taxi-cab door down on the street below.

A second later, the bell of my apartment tinkled sharply.

I hurried to the front door and opened it quietly. In the outer hall stood a tall man wearing glasses. He had gray hair—and a mole on his left cheek. At his side was a boy of about sixteen.

"This is T. B.," I whispered.

"Berghem," he answered, and stepped inside with the boy, while I closed the door behind them.

I passed down the narrow inner hall and threw open the library door. "In here," I said, and snapped on the lights. "How did you make out?"

Berghem seemed to be ill. The whiteness of his face and his halting gait, as he leaned heavily on the shoulder of his son, signified either sickness or—

Failure! Ah—that must be it. My heart seemed to stop beating. Berghem must have been unsuccessful in his mission.

He sank heavily into a chair that the boy brought forth for him. The latter dropped down on a small foot-stool, nearby, and remained silent.

In the interval, I studied Berghem

and perceived for the first time, the horrible expression on his face. His eyes had the same haunting look that I had once seen on the face of a maniac in the state insane asylum.

"Met with considerable trouble," he stated laconically, after a pause.

"Tell me about it," I said, half sympathetically and half suspiciously. His gaze, which had been roving aimlessly around the room, he directed toward me again. Then he commenced to talk.

"I called on De Lancey the morning after the robbery. He gave the two gems into my keeping at once. The lad was with me. He's a coming thief, is the lad. We took a cab at once for the station. Three hours afterward, De Lancey was nabbed.

"The lad and I boarded a train that morning for Calais. We reached there at one o'clock in the afternoon and spent the rest of the day in a hotel. From the hotel we made the boat safely that evening and got into Dover at midnight. So far, everything ran without a hitch. We stayed at a boarding house in Dover till morning.

"No use to bore you telling you of our crawling progress across England. Only three hundred miles, but we spent four days covering it. Of course, we were just a gentleman and his son traveling for pleasure.

"But things began to liven up for us. We had hoped by this time that we were not being looked for after all, but apparently we were wrong. As we got off the train in the station at Liverpool, on the evening of July 5th, the lad, little lynx that he is, spots a man in a brown suit, carelessly watching all the passengers. He nudges me quickly.

"Now comes luck itself. A crazy emigrant, farther down the platform, pulls out a gun and commences shooting through the roof. Hell and confusion

break loose. During the big rush of people that takes place, the lad notices a little door leading out to a side street. 'Quick, Daddy,' he says, 'we'll slip out this way.'

"Outside, he flags a cabby in a jiffy and we drive to a little dirty hotel on a side street, where we spend the night wondering whether the man in the brown suit was looking for us or for someone else.

"However, we're on our guard now. We don't feel quite so easy. Next morning we make the pier and board the Princess Dorothy, which boat, I may add, is one of the few that do not touch at Queenstown or any other point but New York, once she leaves Liverpool. Yes, friend T. B., every detail was figured out long in advance by De Lancey himself.

"As soon as we get aboard, I lie down in the stateroom and let the lad remain on deck. I'm not a well man, friend T. B., and traveling under the conditions and handicaps that we traveled under is hard on me. The following is the boy's account.

"As he says: No sooner had the ship pulled out from the docks and was headed about for the open water, than a motor car comes rushing pell-mell up to the landing. Out jump four men—and one of 'em is our friend in the brown suit. The lad whips out the binoculars and watches their lips. 'Damn—too late—wireless—' is what our brown-suited near-acquaintance appears to say.

"Well, in spite of the fact that we're equipped with wireless nothing happens to us on the boat. But at no time do I forget the existence of the Atlantic Cable. All the way across I take my meals in the stateroom and the lad prowls around deck trying to pick up some information. But, as I said before, everything's as peaceful as the grave.

"It's a mighty long nine days for us,

friend T. B., but late in the afternoon of the fifteenth, we find we're within one hour of the Battery—and we realize now that things are very doubtful for us.

"As we step from the gangplank together, each of us suddenly finds a hand on our shoulder. In front of us stand three men, two of 'em fly-bulls with stars—the third a customs inspector. 'You're Berghem,' says one of 'em. 'Want you both to step in this little house at the end of the pier for a couple o' hours. When we get done there won't be any need of a customs inspection, for the inspector himself, here, is going to help us out.' He laughed unpleasantly. 'Yep—we got a warrant,' adds the other in answer to my unspoken question.

"Well, my friend, I, Berghem, know my limitations. I didn't take the trouble to deny anything. Smilingly, I admitted that I was Berghem and that this was my son. Then I asked them what they intended to do. 'Just want to look you and your boy and your two suitcases over,' admits one of them.

"In that little inspection house they locked the door. They drew down the shades and turned on the lights. They commanded us both to strip. When we had done this, they made us stand stark naked up against the wall. They began by examining our mouths, taking good care to look under our tongues. Then they combed out our hair with a fine-tooth comb. After a full fifteen minutes, in which they satisfied themselves that the jewels were not concealed on our bodies, they started on our luggage. 'This is an outrage,' I grumbled.

"They dumped out the clothing in our suitcases and placed it in one pile together with that which we had been forced to discard. Then they commenced with our underclothing, which they examined seam by seam, button by button, square inch by square inch. Following

that, our garters, our socks, our suspenders, were subjected to the same rigid examination.

"As fast as they finished with an article of clothing, they tossed it over to us and allowed whichever one of us was the owner, to don it. In that way, we dressed, garment by garment, always protesting stoutly at the outrage.

"In the same manner they went through our neckties, most of which they ripped open; our shirts, collars, and vests followed next.

"When they came to our outer suits, not content with an exacting scrutiny, they brought out hammers and hammered every inch. Our shoes—look for yourself, friend T. B.—are without heels; they tore them off, layer by layer. Our felt hats underwent similar treatment, for they removed the linings, replacing them later, loose.

"Our suitcases were examined at buckle and seam, rivet and strap. At every place of possible concealment they pounded vigorously with their hammers, using enough force to smash steel balls, let alone brittle diamonds.

"Friend T. B., we were in there three and a half hours, and had we had trunks, we might have been there yet. They left nothing unturned. Everything, though, has to come to an end. In disgust, they finally threw away their hammers. 'That lead from Liverpool's a phoney one,' said one of the three to the two others. 'You're free, Berghem and son,' his companion added. 'It's a cinch you've not got the proceeds of the Simon

Company's burglary at Paris. You and your boy can go.'

"This was about two hours ago. We have had no supper for we took a taxicab and, with the exception of a couple of breakdowns on the way, came straight here in order to tell you of the situation in which we found ourselves."

I was very bitterly disappointed. And I told Berghem so.

"It's a shame," I said. "De Lancey stakes his liberty on a bit of clever work—and then sends a bungler across with the proceeds. Of course, man, they've got 'em by this time. It doesn't matter where in the stateroom you hid 'em—the woodwork, the carpet, the mattress,—they've found 'em now. Well—we'll have to put it down as a failure—that's all."

He heard me through before he uttered a word. Then, dropping his glasses in his coat pocket, he answered me sharply:

"Failure? Who has said anything of failure? You do me a great injustice, friend T. B. Berghem never fails. Look!"

He pressed his hands to his face. For a moment, I thought he was going to weep, for he made strange clawing motions with his fingers. Then he lowered his hands.

I sprang to my feet, suppressing a cry with difficulty. Where his eyes had been, were now black, sightless sockets. On each of his palms lay a fragile, painted, porcelain shell—and in the hollow of each shell was a tiny cotton packet, tied with silk thread.

(Next Month—"The Adventure of the Cordova Necklace"—the second exploit of T. B. and De Lancey.)



DO YOU remember the time Henry Flyer, of Philadelphia, was sued for breach of promise by a manicurist in the Waldorf barber shop? It created a tremendous sensation in Philadelphia, and I think was even mentioned in one of the New York papers. Its interest to the outsider lay in two peculiar circumstances: first, the girl was arrested in a Pullman car in southern Virginia for scratching the face and tearing the clothes of a pretty girl passenger, and she made her initial charges in the same fit of anger. Secondly, Henry Flyer wasn't on the car at the time, the girl couldn't produce a scintilla of evidence against him, she afterwards retracted, and Henry was able completely to exonerate himself.

The other day while the girl in question—a blond, pleasing, aggressive person—was doing up my fingers at her old stand, she happened to tell me the true story; and now that Henry has safely inherited the Flyer millions I give it here, feeling that her side of the case is entitled to a public hearing.

It all began a short while after the Pullman left New York. When the porter began making up her lower berth, Maisie—that is the manicurist's name—went forward and sat down by the refined looking girl in the blue tailored suit. Persons like this girl had a fascination for Maisie. She wondered what their feelings were.

They always seemed so quiet, so self-effacing, yet so perfectly sure of themselves. There was something mysterious about that. When Maisie felt sure of herself she wanted everybody to know it; and as she usually felt very sure of herself indeed, she declaimed it by wearing clothes a step or two in advance of the current fashion.

The quiet girl—who was pretty in a cold, Dresden china way—wore plain leather tan shoes. Her skirts were carefully draped and Maisie could not tell what kind of stockings she wore. Maisie's shoes were of a tingling bronze color, and not a man in the Pullman had any doubt as to the color of her stockings. Maisie felt the comparison to be all in her own favor; yet she sensed the other girl to emanate an air of superiority that she was powerless to escape. This was very baffling. She wondered if she could get the girl to talk.

"Pardon me," said Maisie in her best manner, "but do you happen to have change for five dollars? I want to give the porter a dollar." This was a neat touch, she felt; most people gave only a quarter.

The girl flitted her a quick look, flushed slightly, then, murmuring something, found her dark blue tasseled silk wrist bag on the green plush seat, tugged it

open and took out a dainty blue leather purse.

"I'll see," murmured the quiet girl; "I doubt—"

She emptied the contents of the little purse into her lap and counted the coins and the three bills with immaculately gloved fingers, "Two, three, four, four-fifty, four-sixty—no," she finished, "I'm sorry, but I can't quite make it. I've only four-sixty, you see."

"Oh, that'll do," answered Maisie. "What's forty cents? Here." She proffered her a five-dollar bill, and the only bit of money she would have until next morning.

"No, indeed! I couldn't think of that," objected the quiet girl. Refilling the blue leather purse, she reentered it in the bag.

"That's all right!" Maisie insisted. "I'm willing to pay forty cents in order to get the change."

The Dresden china girl shut her small mouth firmly; but further discussion was interrupted by the ebony-faced, white-jacketed, courteous porter.

"Number fo'teen, lower, ready, Miss," he informed Maisie.

As Maisie went through the acrobatics of disrobing, thoughts of the quiet girl were effaced by thoughts of Henry Flyer. Oh yes, Maisie, the New York manicurist, knew "Hy" Flyer, of Philadelphia. Henry was one of those youths who had been advised by his Presbyterian parents that his first departure from the straight and narrow would mean ten million bequeathed to the Home for Wayward Girls. He was one of those super-careful youths; he had a way of quoting the latest newspaper scandal wherein the hotel clerk is subpoenaed as a witness at a most inconvenient time for one of the parties concerned. Henry was bitter against hotel clerks in general. Hotel clerks kept Henry from enjoying life as he would have enjoyed it.

Maisie was fond of Henry in the same way that a hound dog is fond of the cook. Henry was no piker in his gifts. If there was one person in the world that she was certain of, it was Henry, and it always gave her a comfortable, lazy feeling to know that Henry was always sure to turn up on schedule time. A number of times part of the Flyer fortune had found its way into Maisie's hands—always in the form of four twenties and two tens in one roll. That was the way Maisie liked her share of the Flyer fortune; and that was the way the gift always came to her; four new crinkly yellow-backed twenties rolled about two yellow-backed tens, the whole usually neatly held by a narrow elastic band.

Maisie liked to travel. Once a month she took a short trip south on the train leaving New York at nine at night. About once a month "Hy" Flyer took the same train. That morning he had received a telegram reading, "Fourteen delegates to meet in Richmond tomorrow." To Henry's Presbyterian mother and father—who gave him an allowance of ten thousand a year and then watched him in his pleasures as a wife watches her husband—this caused much pleasure, for it meant that fourteen delegates to a Young Men's Christian Association conference were to meet in Richmond the next day. The mere fact that the number of delegates mentioned in the telegram delivered to him was exactly the same as the number on berth 14 we must attribute to the laws of chance, or the workings of coincidence. We can do no more. The last meeting of the Y. M. C. A. at Richmond held sixteen delegates—and the month before—.

Maisie had been on a highly successful party the night before and she was, anyhow, about two weeks behind on sleep. For some moments she drowsily pondered whether it wouldn't be wiser to stay awake a while, but decided, however, that

such procedure was unnecessary. And so, some time before Henry Flyer boarded the sleeper at Philadelphia she was slumbering heavily, her plump right hand clutching an imaginary roll of yellow backs bound with a narrow elastic band.

Henry stumbled along the aisle, seated himself upon the edge of his own berth—number 15—and surveyed his surroundings. Opposite was berth 14, and while the train was still he could hear floating therefrom a recurrent sibilant sound that was strangely familiar. His eyes ran down the narrow aisle of drawn green curtains and rested upon the one cross seat that had not been made up into a berth. Sitting there a pretty, refined looking girl in a blue tailored suit was reading a novel.

Henry was taken by the way her Dresden china profile lay outlined in the light. He let himself examine her regular features, her delicately tinted cheek—

Just then the girl's blue eyes flitted up, encompassed him in a politely inquisitive glance, and veiled themselves as quickly.

Had she smiled? Henry suddenly became acutely conscious of his recently acquired reddish moustache, of his rather striking orange and black tie, of his shepherd's plaid suit. There was something about the girl that made him not quite sure of himself; and this same something for some fearful delightful reason, set his pulses to fluttering wildly. He was not at all certain whether she had smiled in amusement, or for that matter had smiled at all; but he was determined to find out.

Looking at her steadily he waited to see if he could catch her eye.

In a moment she glanced up at him as before, and this time when her eyes fell there was no doubt in Henry's mind. A faint but unmistakable smile tugged at the corners of her small, pretty mouth.

With his usually stable heart struggling wildly to get up into his throat, Henry balanced along the narrow aisle and sat down by the Dresden china creature who had bewitched him.

"Aren't—aren't you afraid you'll—you'll strain your eyes, reading in this light?" he asked foolishly.

A superior, puzzled frown rippled across the girl's smooth forehead as she laid down her novel.

The train left Richmond at 7:50 the next morning. About 9 o'clock Maisie met the Dresden china girl in the dressing room.

"I know you'll think it's nervy," entreated Maisie, "but I expected to have my uncle get on at Richmond and he hasn't shown up. I've got to get back to New York somehow, and I only have five dollars. Can't you help me out a bit?"

The Dresden china girl flushed slightly, extracted the dainty blue leather purse from the tasseled silk bag lying on the seat, opened it and took out a neat roll of crinkly yellow bills. Taking off the narrow elastic band she smoothed out the four yellow-backed twenties and handed Maisie one of the two yellow-backed tens.

WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

They were three college professors discussing that time-honored riddle: What is happiness?

"Happiness," observed the fat one, "is the state of having no work to do and not wanting any."

"No!" snapped the thin idealist. "Happiness is spirit—the culmination of all that is good and true."

But the third only smiled, and, nodding good night, went confidently to the chamber where his pretty young wife awaited him.

—Edmund Ludlow.



THE BREAKING of BLACK MCGRAW

BY WILLIAM E. WILLIAMS

BLACK MCGRAW walked Red Light Row and his ways were not above suspicion. It was taken as a matter of course over at headquarters that the patrolman on this particular beat would get his share of the Row's shameful revenues. It was also expected that he would divide with headquarters, or that, in the event he failed to do so, he would at least have the grace to move on obediently and make room for a man whose perceptions of "mine and thine" were somewhat more in accord with those of his superiors.

McGraw had trod the beat for ten years and he had defied headquarters either to remove him or make him divide. His answer was always that he was no taker of blood money and that, if headquarters didn't like it, headquarters might try to switch him to some other beat if it thought it could.

Headquarters was not to be deceived. It knew the way of patrolmen on Red Light Row and the way of sergeants, lieutenants and captains, for that matter. Also, it knew that it was quite the regular thing for McGraw to draw into the shadows some pitiful, slinking thing with whom he would talk long and earnestly. If that didn't mean graft in its dirtiest, lowest, most unregenerate sense, headquarters wasn't wise in its own time. And headquarters believed that it was. So headquarters tried again and again,

through changing administrations of the police board, to "move McGraw."

"Some nice, quiet place in the sticks, with the goats and the little birds for company," the chief would suggest.

But from somewhere, safe in the upper world with which the chief had little to do, from somewhere in the sphere of influence that occasionally reached down through the police board to take the chief by the nape of his pulpy neck and shake him into a realization of his helplessness, was always stretched forth a hand in behalf of Black McGraw.

While the hand did its work, McGraw continued to swing along the grimy, broken sidewalks of Red Light Row as if they did not savagely desire his scalp over at the "office." As always, he drew the slinking figures of the night birds into the shadows, spoke to them in undertones for a time and passed on. As always, his club did bloody service upon the skulls of the men of prey whose women took the wages of sin in the Row.

Then headquarters would try to "break McGraw." He seemed to be gifted with second sight in avoiding traps. A vulture, sleek from feeding upon the victims of the Row, might offer him money. If so, there was presently a call for an ambulance, work for an emergency surgeon and curses in "the office." Or a woman, proffering a share of her gains, might be

the lure. She went to the holdover with the compliments of McGraw to the captain.

Once, indeed, it looked bad for McGraw. A woman swore upon her honor, which had long since departed, that he had accepted money from her and then had "sent her in." Before McGraw could be brought to trial, however, the mysterious hand reached down again, shook the chief into his proper senses and sent the obstinate patrolman back to his scowling rounds of Red Light Row.

There was a legend that there had been a Mrs. McGraw once and that Black, who came of a moneyed family, had gone to the dogs after her death. It was also said that Black, for all his repellent hardness, had a "soft spot" down inside somewhere and that when this spot, became particularly yielding, he would go up to St. Patrick's church and have mass said for the repose of the soul of the woman who had sought to share the life and fortunes of a wild Irish monstrosity, but who had died of sheer weariness early in the attempt. But inquiries, discreet or indiscreet, from Father Phelan failed to throw any light whatsoever upon the matter. One headquarters emissary, who was so unwise as to ask the priest his opinion of McGraw, presently found himself jobless, through the interference of a powerful politician who was too fond of the jovial clergyman to permit him to be annoyed by police feuds. There were those at headquarters who saw in this incident the solution of the mystery as to the identity of Black McGraw's protector. They whispered that it was the priest who, they averred, couldn't be expected to understand what a complete and hopeless degenerate this man McGraw was.

A change of administration gave courage to a new chief whose notions of mine and thine were exactly similar to those of his predecessor.

"That black Mick had something on the other fellows," declared the chief to Hennessy, the go-between. "If he hadn't they would never have stood for his game. There's a good two thousand a month going to waste or into his pockets over on the Row, and it's a damned shame. You get him now—and get him right."

"It's been tried, Chief," said Hennessy, "when you were a captain."

"Tried," snorted the chief, "we're not going to try—we're going to get him!"

"All right," acquiesced Hennessy, "but it means a muss. Mack came to the force ten years ago from Gawd knows where. Somebody moved him over to there and somebody keeps him there."

"Get busy," said the chief.

II.

Black McGraw was an unlovely thing. He had been christened Michael John Joseph by a pious mother, but when a member of the force called him anything printable it was always "Black." Save that his five feet ten were broad and straight and lithè, he might have been mistaken for a battered and weathered-stained gargoyle that had suddenly taken life, dressed itself in policeman's blue and gone abroad swinging a club to the terror of the hardened denizens of Red Light Row.

One long livid gash had burned upon his swarthy left cheek when he came to the force. A vulture of the Row had cleft his full harsh lips and protruding chin with a single sudden blow of a knife. When a sergeant had pried McGraw's fingers from the throat of his assailant, he sent the patrolman to the emergency hospital and notified the coroner that the other was awaiting his attention. McGraw had gone back to his beat wry-mouthed and with a chin that resembled nothing so much as a promontory that

had been rent asunder by an earthquake. A bulbous nose, which had originally been straight and clean cut, with heavy brows freakishly arched over hard blue eyes, completed a facial ensemble that might well have made an ordinary gargoyle ashamed of the comparison.

It was this grim wreck of an unsmiling countenance that chilled the drunken ardor of many a revel along the Row. It was even more efficacious than McGraw's ever-ready night stick in maintaining a semblance of law in that moral plague spot. Over at headquarters they said that the nightbirds, housed or unhoused, took one brief look at the hideous physiognomy and delivered up a share of their wage of shame, instead of saving it for worthier hands closer to the "office."

If McGraw did not grow rich off the creatures of the Row, it was not for lack of opportunity. In the vice dens of Manhattan and New Orleans, in gaudy, sordid houses that hide the worst of San Francisco, and drab, sordid houses that hide the worst of Chicago, the evil fame of the Row is known. It is a sort of clearing house of infamy. Each of the American cities, spewing out its most vile, contributes to the shifting population of the district and receives the like in return. Gossip of the Row is a pretty accurate bulletin of the comings and goings of society's "little lost sisters."

This meant fat revenues for hands hardened enough to take them, for there were, as they said at headquarters, "new pickings every day." Moreover, headquarters knew that many girls reported lost or missing, came back, after a year or two of grappling with homesickness, to the Row as the only place that could or would receive them. Headquarters also knew that, rather than risk betrayal to relatives ignorant of their fate, these women paid prices for silence that even

this authority on the wages of sin considered high. Headquarters was doing fairly well along the Row, but it was doing far, far from as well as might have been expected had McGraw been more amenable to argument. And it suspected McGraw, for reasons sufficient to itself, of profiting largely upon those broken pinioned birds who, after unhappy wanderings among gilded ways, had fallen victims to the homing instinct and come back to look upon scenes of happier days from the pitiful refuge of this place of segregated sin.

Through the raw fog of a November night, McGraw swung silently upon his rounds. For a moment his awesome visage was illuminated by the struggling ways of a street gas lamp and then was blotted out in the gloom. Up ahead a woman new to the Row, looked back and went on with quickened step. Across the street, Detective Hennessy, who might have been there on ordinary business, but was not, slunk back into the pitchy darkness of an alley.

Under the next gas light McGraw overtook the hurrying woman. Grasping her arm he wheeled her sharply and looked into her face. Then he dragged her beyond the rim of the feebly illuminated circle and Hennessy lost sight of them. Within three minutes the patrolman reappeared, plowing his way back through the fog. The detective noted him as he passed one street light and then another. Presently a light flared dimly as the door of No. 19 opened and closed, disclosing for an instant the form of McGraw.

Hennessy went in search of the woman. No. 19 was the shabbiest and most evil of the resorts on the Row. Even its outlaw neighbors looked down upon it with a degree of loathing. There is pride and respectability even in the underworld, and

No. 19, known not inappropriately as "The Bucket of Blood," protected neither the property nor the lives of its prey with that degree of care which became a more self-respecting establishment of its kind. Moreover, a certain snobbishness which does not differ greatly from the snobbishness of the upper world, condemned No. 19 for its practice of permitting its inmates to go forth to lure their quarry from the streets instead of waiting for the quarry to seek them out as the proprieties in the district demanded.

"The Bucket of Blood" was believed at headquarters to contribute handsomely to McGraw's illgotten gains. Hence Hennessy's pursuit of the woman. He found her lingering at a corner.

"How much did you give him?" he demanded.

"Nothing," was the sullen reply.

"Cough up, or in you go." "In" meant in a cell and a fine in police court the next morning.

"Honest, I don't know a thing," pleaded the woman.

"Come along and talk to the chief," said Hennessy.

III.

When Hennessy entered the office the chief's stubby gray mustaches were bristling joyously.

"Maybe the girl knows something and then again maybe she doesn't," he said. "But before you bring her in, take a look at this."

He handed the detective a department report form upon which was written the description by tract of three parcels of real estate.

"What's that?" exclaimed Hennessy.

"That," chuckled the chief, "is what McGraw has done with his graft. Boys dug it up in the assessor's office. Funny nobody thought of that before. Apartment houses assessed at forty thousand—

and means they're worth a hundred and twenty. Fine for a plain bull with only his club and his Rock of Ages face, huh? Send the woman in and hustle over to Nineteen."

As the door closed behind Hennessy, the chief chuckled again. He was in fine fettle. The work in hand was to his liking and his purplish countenance, upon which were written large the sordid experiences of thirty years on the force, was unusually repulsive in its eagerness. A blunt jawed, bluntnosed, bluntfingered, bluntpoken man, was the chief. Even the stolid, faded woman who sat in the chair opposite him, whose frequent contact with the police had long since killed her terror of them, shrank from him.

"Well," said the officer, "how much did you dig up to McGraw?"

"Nothing—to anybody." The reply was wearily defiant. The woman had undergone many such examinations.

"Want to go to the works for a stretch?"

"No." This with a degree of boredom.

"Tell it then."

"Nothing to tell—the officer was just passing the time of day." The woman, with the dear bought wisdom of her kind, was determined to keep out of police quarrels.

Suddenly the chief leaned over and caught the woman's right hand. He turned the palm outward, exposing the brown stains upon the tips of thumb and forefinger.

"How many cigarettes a day?" he demanded.

"Forty or fifty."

"Look me in the eye—turn 'em up to the light. Coke—eh?"

"Yes." The creature was cringing now.

"Give me that handbag," the chief snapped. He fished out several packages

of cigarettes and an ordinary pill box. The latter, as he had expected, contained snow white crystals of cocaine. The chief closed the box and tossed it with the cigarettes upon his desk.

"Look here, snowhead," he growled, "you'll tell me what McGraw said to you or you'll go up thirty days without your coffin nails and coke."

The woman shivered. Only those poor victims of the drug habit who have suffered this torture at the hands of the police, know the full horror of it. No prisoner deprived of the deadening narcotic which soothes away the devils of pain that wrench and stamp upon each quivering nerve end, has ever yet denied the police any statement they demanded as the price for release from this physical hell. Once when the woman was younger, before she had learned what the police can do, she had sought to match the endurance of her nerves against the patience of a police inquisitor. He had won.

"Chief," said the woman, "you win; but honest to God, all he said was that he was looking for a friend that had hit hard luck a long time ago."

"Tell it to the rookies," laughed the chief sarcastically. "Give me the straight dope or—"

"Honest to God, that's what he said—and she blew into the Row today and I told him he'd find her over at No. 19."

"Oh, that's it?" exulted the chief. "One of his women been holding out on the graft, eh?"

"I didn't say Black was getting money," protested the woman. "I never knew he did. I'm new here, anyway."

"Say," said the chief, his blunt fingers fumbling with the cigarette package and the cocaine box, "you don't know anything except that Black McGraw was

hunting a woman and you steered him to No. 19—Get me?"

"Yes, Chief," the woman was cringing now.

He handed her the cigarettes and the box containing the drug.

"Get out," he commanded, and settled back in his chair to await word from Hennessy. It wasn't much that the woman knew, but it would help. It was one more strand in the rope with which the chief proposed to hang McGraw for the peace of headquarters.

The chief leaned back and laughed. The lion's share of the graft of the Row was as good reposing in his safety deposit vault. Apartment houses in McGraw's name could mean but one thing to his thoroughly sophisticated mind—graft and plenty of it. The poor drug fiend who had just slunk from his office would, if need be, tell a story which, harmless enough in itself, could be made to look decidedly bad in the light of what the chief already knew. Hennessy could be depended to locate McGraw in "The Bucket of Blood," and if necessary to keep him there, upon one pretext or another, until four or five of the chief's handy men could apprehend the rebellious patrolman in that resort, strip him of that star and send him under arrest to headquarters. With the aid of these handy men and the miserable moral outcasts of the resort, who could not choose but swear as the police authorities should dictate, the tidy little conspiracy against McGraw could be made tight enough to hold water. Some poor pariah would be induced by threats or promise to tell a story of a demand by McGraw of money for protection—and that would complete the case. The chief took up the telephone and ordered the captain on duty in the front office to call in three plain clothes men whose names he gave. Then

he walked the floor waiting to hear from Hennessy, and as he walked, he chuckled.

IV.

Meanwhile, Hennessy, knowing exactly what was expected of him and reflecting that there are times when it is safer for a chief of police to leave the better half of his orders unspoken, waited in the dim and dilapidated reception room of No. 19, for the appearance of Mag Brown, the proprietress, whom he had sent a woman to summon.

There are palaces of sin whose reason for being is exactly that of No. 19, but "The Bucket of Blood" was no palatial resort. Through a door slightly ajar at the right, there came to Hennessy's ears the mingling sounds of a nickel-in-the-slot piano, the shuffling of feet and raucous laughter. He peered through the crack, upon the remote chance that he would find McGraw disporting himself among the shuffling human wrecks that filled the dancing floor. Women dressed in tawdry imitation of the extreme styles of the day, women hardly dressed at all, women with hard faces, with devil-may-care faces, with pitiful faces, and all faces painted; men going the pace that kills and going it faster than they knew. And over all, the reek of yesterday's tobacco, of last night's beer, of today's impossible, musky perfume, and the mildew of unnumbered forgotten days and nights of infamy.

McGraw was not within. Hennessy, gangling, humped of shoulder, hook-beaked and wattled, looked the vulture that he was as he turned away, but he made a grimace. Decency had long since died in Hennessy, but even such as he gave pause when they contemplated the abandoned viciousness of this sink of vice.

Mag Brown, fat and pulpy with the

wages of sin, lurched heavily down the creaking stairs.

"What's this—a raid?" she demanded with an elephantine attempt at humor.

"It will be if you don't perform," replied the detective. "This is the chief's party—he wants to know where McGraw is."

"Search me, I haven't seen him," declared Mag.

"What d'ye mean—want me to call the wagon?" shot back Hennessy. "The black Mick is in this house—all you've got to do is tip me where and why. If you don't—in you go and the house goes out of business."

"All right," conceded Mag, "he's up in number ten with the new girl."

"What's his game?"

"I don't know," protested Mag, "I'm giving it to you straight. I took the new girl in today—she's a lunger—had a hemorrhage and is pretty bad, if I can judge. I couldn't see her walking the streets. I told Mac this and he cussed me. Said he'd send me in if I didn't let him see her. He's there now."

Hennessy's thin lips skinned back over his teeth in an outlandish grin. Before reporting to the chief, he wanted to assure himself that McGraw was still in the room, and, if possible, overhear enough to know what was transpiring there. Plainly Black's luck had quit him—he had fallen into the hands of headquarters.

Hennessy's ear was at the door of Number Ten when it suddenly popped open. Just as suddenly Hennessy tumbled backwards before the muzzle of Black McGraw's automatic.

"Keep still," ordered McGraw under his breath. "Put your hands up!"

He slipped his hand inside the other officer's coat, removed the revolver that hung from a shoulder holster and mo-

tioned his captive toward the rear of the hall, where a single wavering light marked a back stairway.

Under the light Hennessy turned and looked at McGraw. If the face of his captor had been that of a gargoyle, it was now that of a gargoyle gone mad. Its scars were red furrows in a field of white hate. Hennessy was no coward, but he shrunk against the wall to escape that malevolent gaze.

"Snitching on me, were you!" McGraw hissed. "Stand up, you skunk."

Hennessy stood upright.

"Do you know what I think of a snitch?" McGraw's breath was hot upon the cheek of his victim. Here's what I think of you."

Hennessy tried to grapple with the madman. It was too late. In a flash Black McGraw had whirled his automatic pistol on his finger and laid it sight downward across the flesh of the detective's cheek. The skin ripped open as under a knife. Slash went the pistol against the other cheek. Rip went the pistol once more, this time across the forehead, the weapon cut. Hennessy groaned and reeled.

"Mag," called McGraw, "get a taxi and take this thing over to the chief with my compliments."

The detective, faint with pain, sank into a heap at McGraw's feet. The latter's lips parted in a sardonic grimace that on another face might have been a grin. He went down to the telephone booth in the reception room and presently clumped his way back to Number Ten. He passed a group of half-clad women who whispered in awed tones, while two of the number gave first aid to Hennessy's profusely bleeding wounds.

"I tell you I've got to go back to headquarters," that officer was protesting groaningly to Mag Brown. "If I didn't have to do you suppose I'd let 'em see

what that black son-of-the-devil did to me? Call that cab."

As the car bearing the branded Hennessy back to headquarters and the chuckling chief chugged away, Black McGraw opened the door and strode down the hall.

"Get all the girls in their rooms and keep 'em there," he ordered Mag Brown. "Cut that music down stairs and tell those men to get out of here." Mag, whose establishment went right on transacting its unspeakable business, regardless of ruction, riot, bloodshed or murder, regardless of everything, in fact, except the orders of the police, hastened to obey.

When another taxicab drew up to the curb, and let out two men, one of whom carried a physician's bag, Mag Brown's resort was undergoing one of its rare periods of enforced idleness. Not a poor painted woman was visible. McGraw himself opened the door and led the way to the room on the second floor.

By the door he stood guard until Mag Brown crept in to whisper that two police cars had drawn up in front. As he started down the hall, the doctor plucked him by the sleeve and pointed to the bed. McGraw nodded to Mag, who hurried away to admit the raiding squad.

The chief himself was at the head of the reserves, who, with fingers on the triggers of their riot guns, took the stairs at a run.

"Dead or alive," growled the chief, "but get him."

His right hand held an automatic as his left tried the door of Number Ten. To his surprise it was opened a little from within and before him stood a gray-haired priest.

"Father Phelan!" gasped the chief. He motioned his men back.

"The same," said the priest gravely.

"Where's McGraw?"

The priest bowed and his fingers made the sign of the cross.

"With his dead. You boys over at headquarters have tried these years to break 'im. He's broken, and I can't go now to a politician and ask him to stay th' hand that did th' breakin."

"What was she to him?" husked the chief.

"The poor, weak woman who preferred lights and laughter to his terrible countenance and his heart of gold," said the priest—"his wife. When she fled to such

as this and long search was vain, he left th' useless money he'd made uptown and walked this wicked, bloody Row—watchin', waitin', inquirin'—knowin' he'd get word of her, or her poor tired feet would turn homeward soon or late."

The chief was silent. The men behind him shifted their guns uneasily.

"Let us leave them together now!" said Father Phelan. And he led the silent procession down the creaking stairs.

PAINTING THE LILIES

In the beginning of all things, when old Dame Nature created woman, she told herself that she would give them infinite variety of appearance.

And so, to some she gave saucy, tantalizing pug noses and to others, noses of pure Grecian or artistic Roman lines.

And some women she endowed with long luxuriant tresses and others were blessed with short curly locks.

And one group drew auburn hair and another hair as black as the raven's wing. And still others were given hair of a lovely golden hue.

And so on down the line she went, giving beautiful pale complexions to one type and ruddy complexions to those of a different physique.

To some she dolled out adorable little freckles to be worn on the bridges of their noses and to others she gave none.

But to all, she gave the type of beauty that best fitted their temperament.

But it came to pass that none was suited with the type of beauty which had been given her, but instead yearned for that which she did not possess.

And so those whose locks were long bobbed them; and those whose tresses were short spent all their lunch money buying hair growers.

And those with auburn hair dyed it black and those whose hair was black, hennaed it.

And thus, they attempted to outwit old Dame Nature (whom they called damn nature, for short); the pale ones by rouging and the ruddy complexioned by powdering; the pug-nosed ones by having their noses operated on and made straight and the straight nosed ones by having bones taken out to make their noses pug.

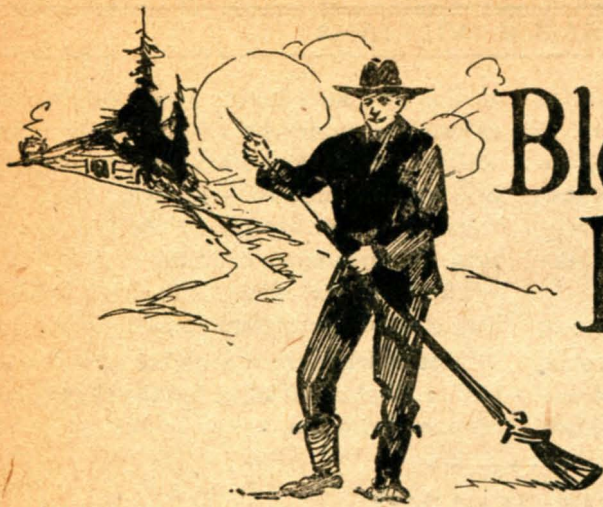
And those with freckles bought every variety of freckle lotion on the market in order to be rid of them and those without freckles blistered all the skin off their noses by sitting out in the sun in an attempt to expose themselves to freckleitis.

And all of them sought to adorn themselves with artificial beauties that were not in keeping with types.

And old Dame Nature waxed peevish and vowed that she would give woman something so inflexible and stubborn that it could not be changed, something that would never suit womankind but which she would be forced to endure as it was. Something that would continually flaunt its vices in her face and boast of its virtues in a sickening manner.

And old Dame Nature smiled contentedly as she created man.

—H. Allan Perrill.



Blood of Breathitt

by Lewis H. Kilpatrick

THE young mountaineer noiselessly let himself down from the top of the giant boulder, where he had been watching the trail, and crouching in its shelter, listened, one hand in the bosom of his blue cotton shirt. Footsteps sounded along the trail, slow, careless steps that snapped impeding twigs and crunched indifferently over the ruts. One of the comers was talking in a flushed voice:

"I tell ye, Nettie, hit was a caution the way I cleaned out them six Germin machine gun nests. I done hit all by myself, too. The general he give me a medal fer hit; 'lowed I was a hero and had jest about won the war fer the Alleys. 'Course hit was the truth; but, as soon as he got out o' sight, I throwed the medal away. Hit 'peared too much like braggin' to be wearin' sech things. Trinkets is fer wimmen. Anyway, ye know, I ain't a feller to git stuck on myself. Naw, I ain't." There was a pause.

"Here, don't be jerkin' yer hand away like that. Jest let me hole hit a leetle while, Nettie."

The man behind the boulder drew a .45 from his shirt. His eyes narrowed; his smooth, strong lips tightened. For a moment he regarded the sinister black barrel doubtfully. Then, with sudden resolution, he laid the .45 in a crevice in the

rock, covered it with a handful of dry leaves, and stood up.

"Ye stay thar," he muttered to the hidden weapon. "If I can't handle Bulger withouten ye, then he can handle me."

He struck the trail below the boulder, meeting Bulger and Nettie.

"Wal—howdy, folks! I weren't expectin' to happen on ye all."

The perky red mustache on Bulger's lip twisted in a sneer. He was dressed in a worn khaki uniform; on his sleeve were two gold service stripes; a rabbit cap was pulled close over his eyes.

"Been huntin' 'shiners, Alvin?" he inquired in a sarcastic tone. "I hear ye've jest about cleaned the licker business out o' Breathitt County. Hit weren't so bad stayin' at home and bein' a deputy sheriff during' the war, was hit?"

Alvin did not answer. He skilfully maneuvered himself between Bulger and the girl.

"Nettie, air ye goin' back to Hindman School this year?" he asked, walking at her side.

"Naw, she ain't goin' back to Hindman School," declared Bulger. "She's a-goin' to stay here and marry me, that's what she's goin' to do."

Nettie's black eyes snapped. "I haven't said so yet, have I, Bulger, Webb? And don't you go making talk

about me marrying you until I do say so. Hear me?"

Bulger sulked.

Two years at the mountain seminary not only had improved Nettie's grammar, but they had taught her to think for herself and speak with a freedom unusual to women of the hills. Also she had learned to wear shoes and stockings the year around, do her black hair neatly and dress with a simple effectiveness that brought out the charms of her slender figure.

"Bulger, the feller who git's Nettie'll git a mighty smart gal." Alvin looked at him gravely. "He'll git a mighty good gal. Fact is, thar's pow-ful few fellers in these parts who's fitten to marry her. And seein' as she ain't got no brother to say hit, I 'low that whoever does aim to git her will, fust o' all, have to tell her the truth about hisself."

Bulger met the hidden challenge with a squaring of his shoulders. His red mustache bristled.

"Who air ye to talk o' way about my gal?" he demanded. "A spyin' deputy sheriff, a sheman who stayed home with his ma and pa and let other fellers go off and git shot to pieces——"

"I don't see none o' ye missin'," Alvin interrupted.

Bulger's anger increased. "Hit ain't yer fault I ain't all shot up. More'n likely ye wisht I'd 'a' been kilt; then ye could 'a' gone on courtin' Nettie and married her. While I was over thar wallerin' in blood and killin' Germins, ye was here raidin' stills and takin' hit easy and talkin' to my gal."

"That's not so!"

The three had stopped in the middle of the trail. Nettie confronted Bulger.

"That's not so, I tell you," she repeated. "I been down at Hindman School most of the time. Alvin's been here in Breathitt. When I was at home, he didn't come near me. I've seen him

only in passing or when I'd go to Jackson town. He hasn't been courting me a minute since you left for the Army."

Bulger grinned. Her vehemence and the sense of her words cheered him, in spite of her hostile attitude.

"That's all right, honey," he soothed. "I knowed ye'd stick to me. No gal with any gumption'd 'low a coward to hang 'round her. Don't ye worry, honey, I ain't a-doubtin' ye."

Nettie voluntarily resumed her place on the opposite side of Alvin. They continued their walk in silence. The sun had dropped behind the western ridges and twilight was shrouding the valley.

A little way farther a young rabbit hopped from the weeds to the middle of the trail. There it paused, its eyes large with wonder, its muzzle twitching, watching the approach of its natural enemies with animal innocence.

Without losing a step Bulger stooped and picked up a stone. He swung his arm with the quickness of a sling. His aim was true. Proudly he held the small, quivering body, wet with its own blood, before Nettie.

"Take hit, honey. Hit'll be mighty fine eatin' fried in pork fat and served up with corncake and 'taters."

Nettie reached for the rabbit; then, with sudden repulsion, withdrew her hand.

"You hadn't ought to have done it, Bulger," she reproved. "The little thing wasn't hurting you."

"Hump!" Bulger flung the rabbit, still quivering, into the brush. "Since ye're too stuck-up to eat hit, some varmint will," he added contemptuously.

They rounded a bend in the trail. Before them, a short way up the mountain-side, was a cabin built of upright undressed planks and roofed with clapboards. Fragrant wood smoke curled

from the rock chimney. A rickety slat fence inclosed the yard.

"You'll drop in and have a bite of supper, won't you, Alvin?" Nettie invited at the gate.

Alvin glanced sidewise at Bulger, who needed no invitation.

"Yas, I reckon I'll stop fer a spell, if hit ain't too much bother."

He took a seat on a split-log bench near the door. Nettie went into the cabin. Bulger looked after her covetously, then lit a cigarette.

"Alvin, thar ain't no use in ye actin' contrary over this here business," he drawled in a conciliatory tone. "I don't want no hard feelin's twixt us. 'Tain't my fault that her folks favors me more'n they favor ye. The best man wins, ye know, Nettie she's a leetle mulish, but I'll bring her 'round all right. I'll marry her fer all her fool notions. Jest see if I don't."

Alvin rested his bare elbows on his knees, his chin in his double palms. His keen gray eyes pierced the dusk to where Bulger was leaning against a tree.

"Do you love Nettie?" he asked suddenly.

"Do I love her?" Bulger was puzzled. "What do ye mean by that?"

"Do ye love her enough to tell her somethin' she don't know about ye, and then take yer chances?"

Bulger straightened. Alvin waited for him to answer, but when he did not, went on:

"Bulger, I ain't a-goin' to stand twixt ye and her if she wants ye. I ain't a-meanin' to spile her happiness fer a minnet. But I'm here this evenin' to hear ye speak with yer own tongue what I has in mind.

"Things can happen when you and Nettie air alone. Atter all she ain't no more'n a woman. She may sof'en on ye. She may promise to marry ye afore she really knows ye. That's why I'm here

Bulger, not to meddle in what ain't none o' my business, but to see that ye totes fair. Do ye understand what I mean?" He bent forward, his jaw hard with determination, peering at the man by the tree.

Bulger growled an oath. Throwing away his cigarette, he advanced on Alvin.

"Ye keep outen this"—his voice was menacing. "This ain't none o' yer affair. Ye keep outen hit, ye slacker!"

Alvin sprang up, his fists clinched. Bulger halted. Just then Nettie appeared at the door. She watched, saying nothing. Alvin did not see her.

"Bulger Webb," he began, "ye've said thing to me this evenin' that many a man has been kilt fer sayin'. Ye've called me a slacker and a coward. Ye've 'lowed I stayed home durin' the war because I was 'feered to go and fight. And I've stood by and took it."

He paused a moment, then continued: "Ye know as well as anybody why I didn't enlist. I had a pa and a ma, both of 'em down with the misery, and I was the only one to look after 'em. Pa he didn't have nothin' to live on. Ma she was too crippled to work. Hit was up to me to take keer of 'em as best I could.

"Hit didn't come easy." Alvin shook his head. "Hit hurt like ever'thing to see the other fellers goin' off while I stayed home. But pa and ma they'd stuck to me when I was puny and helplesslike—and I had to stick to them. They come fust so long as thar was other men, withouten families, to do the fightin'."

Bulger snorted derisively. "Whar's yer pa and ma now, Mister Deputy Sheriff?" "Dead."

There was a moment of uneasy silence.

"The influenzy took 'em off last winter. When they was gone I went to

Lexington to enlist. The Army men thar 'lowed hit weren't no use then, the Germins had laid down. That was all thar was to hit fer me."

Bulger lit another cigarette. He was looking at the girl in the doorway rather than at Alvin. Alvin was still unaware of her presence. He resumed his seat on the bench, his back to the cabin.

"Another thing, Bulger," he spoke slowly, thoughtfully. "The way ye figger hit out, I'm jealous o' ye with Nettie. That ain't so. She tole ye herself that I ain't been a-talkin' to her while ye was away. That weren't on yer account, but on hers. I thinks too much o' her to be hangin' 'round her in stores clothes." He scraped the ground with the toe of his boot.

"Gals like Nettie is 'titled to the best men thar is," he added. "I ain't one of 'em. 'T weren't my fault I wasn't a sodjer—but maybe she don't look at hit that a-way. Seein' as I couldn't go and fight fer her, I reckoned I hadn't no right keepin' her company."

A muffled gasp from the doorway. Alvin looked around. He saw Nettie and flushed.

She leaned toward him from the sill. "Is that what you thought, Alvin?"

He turned his face the other way, staring into the gathering darkness.

"That weren't the only reason I stayed away, Nettie." He hesitated. "Ye see, ye're a lady now, not jest a plain mounting gal. Ye've been in Hindman School and got larnin'. Ye're different from we'uns. I ain't fitten to keep yer company. I ain't had no schoolin' myself to speak of. One o' these days, I reckon, ye'll be goin' down to the settlements whar ye'll find ye a man who's good enough fer ye. We'uns ain't."

"I'm good enough fer ye, ain't I, Nettie?" Bulger swaggered over to her.

"Don't go letin' him pizen yer heart agin me, honey."

Alvin was beside him, his powerful body rigid. The surrounding darkness was partly relieved by the light from a dingy kerosene lamp that shone through the doorway and front window of the cabin.

"Bulger, air ye goin' to tell her now?" he demanded.

Nettie forced a laugh.

"Stop quarreling, you boys," she said. "Supper's almost ready. You all come in and sit yourselves down."

Bulger started past her through the door; but a hand gripped him by the shoulder and jerked him back. Alvin faced him, his hat off, the lamplight playing weirdly upon his features.

Bulger twisted himself free and stepped back, snarling. "Do ye want to git kilt?"

Alvin disregarded the threat. "Bulger Webb, afore ye set foot inside o' that house, listen to me," he commanded. "Fer two weeks now, ever since ye come back to Breathitt, ye've been goin' 'round these parts tellin' o' what ye done in the war. Other fellers has come home, some of 'em wounded, but nary a one of 'em has took on as much as ye have. To hear ye talk a body'd think ye whopped the whole Germin army. When the fact is, them who done the most says the least. Braggin' ain't becomin' a real sodjer, Bulger Webb."

"Ye're jealous, that's what ye air. Didn't I volunteer?"

"Yas, ye volunteered. And so did mighty nigh ever' other Breathitt County man who went."

Alvin glanced around to make sure that Nettie was still watching. She was resting against the door jamb; but her fine head, with its curly black hair, was held high.

Bulger began to shift uneasily. He nibbled at his mustache.

"I reckon I'll be a-goin, Nettie," he said, and started to move away. But again the hand gripped his shoulder.

"Naw, ye don't. Not yit." Alvin held him tightly. "Afore ye go I want to see yer discharge papers. Turn 'round here to the light. That's hit. Face Nettie thar. Now, where's them papers?"

Bulger breathed thickly. "Lemme go, Alvin. I ain't got 'em with me just now. Lemme go, I say."

Above them came Nettie's voice, calm and authoritative through the still evening air:

"Alvin, stop that foolishness. Turn him loose. He's my guest the same as you. Take your hand off his shoulder."

Alvin started to protest, then released him, his rugged features suddenly pale. He looked around quickly for something to use as a weapon. At the same time Bulger, with a sidewise jump, got between him and Nettie, fumbling at the bosom of his flannel shirt.

The girl gave a little scream, but stood motionless. Alvin sprang at Bulger with a savage grunt: "Take cover in front o' a woman, will ye;" A revolver barrel flashed in the lamplight. The two men, grappling, crawling, cursing, fell to the ground. A stream of fire shot from them into the darkness, followed by a strangled cry. The report echoed down the valley.

Nettie closed her eyes, leaning heavily against the door frame. Something hard dropped at her feet. She looked. The writhing figures slowly untangled. Alvin rose to his knees, his nails digging into Bulger's right wrist, his other hand clutching his throat.

He dragged him away from the cabin, out of sight of the girl.

"Take off that air uniform, take hit off right here and now," Alvin ordered.

Bulger gasped. "I—I can't." He staggered back against a tree, panting. "I ain't got much else on, Alvin."

"That don't make no difference. Joe Tuttle lives three mile from here. Go to him, he'll loan ye some clothes. Take off that uniform!" Alvin repeated.

Bulger, unsteadily, began to undress.

"Now speak out loud so's Nettie can hear ye." Alvin raised his voice, "Whar'd ye git that uniform?"

Bulger hesitated. Alvin's teeth snapped close to his face.

"I bought hit from a feller who'd been discharged and needed money," he confessed.

"And what become o' ye atter ye deserted the Army at Fort Thomas? Say hit loud."

"I went to West Virginney."

"Yas, went West Virginney and hid in the mountains, and run a still, and waited till the war was over to come home and brag o' all ye didn't do. Ye skunk! No man's fitten to wear them clothes who ain't willin' to fight in 'em. Take 'em all off, I tell ye!"

"We'uns at the sheriff's office got papers tellin' what ye'd done," Alvin continued. "I 'lowed to keep hit quiet so long as ye didn't come back. But when ye did come back, actin' sassy and a-lyin' to folks, I seen yer time was up."

Bulger's nerve was gone. "Air ye goin' to arrest me, Alvin?" his teeth chattered. "Please, please don't go doin' that!" he begged. "I'll go 'way! I promise to go 'way and never come back! Please don't arrest me, Alvin!"

Alvin rolled the uniform into a bundle.

"Naw, I ain't goin' to arrest ye," he said shortly. "Hit ain't no consarn o' mine what happens to ye now. I quit bein' deputy afore I left Jackson town this mornin'. I wanted to be free to handle ye man to man.

"Now, Bulger Webb, ye git outen

these parts." He pointed to the gate. "Git out quick. Thar's the road; take hit. Git!"

Alvin watched him until he was out of sight. Then he went toward the cabin. Nettie stood erect in the doorway, her slender young body silhouetted against the dim glow. He silently laid the rolled uniform at her feet.

"I'm sorrly hit had to happen." He stooped and picked up his hat from the bench. "I'm pow'ful sorry it happened, Nettie, if ye reely keered fer him. 'Deed I am."

He put on his hat, his shoulders drooping with sudden weariness, and turned away into the night.

"Alvin!"

His feet beat an irregular tattoo along the rutted trail, growing fainter.

"Alvin!"

A whip-poor-will sent a mocking answer from the mountainside.

"Alvin, I want you! Come back, Alvin!"

The footfalls ceased, then became more distinct as they slowly re-approached the cabin.

"Yer victuals is almost col', Alvin. What do ye mean by runnin' off that a-way?"

A dry sob came from just outside the circle of light near the gate.

"Don't go talking like that ag'in, Nettie. Ye knows better. Ye've gat larnin'——"

She went forward to meet him. "Larnin' don't count fer nothin' if it makes my heart go lonesome. Alvin, air ye goin' to 'low a pile o' school books to stand twixt me'n bein' happy? Air ye, Alvin?"

His hand trembled with the pressure of her firm, warm fingers; his shoulders straightened, and there was a smile on his lips as she led him into the cabin.

IMPERTINENCE

When Old-man Smith lay down and died,
He'd been so miserly,
His young and pretty wife he left
A nice, fat legacy.


One day a note came asking her
To come and hear the will;
When she appeared her lawyer found
That she was dressed to kill.

She took his offered seat and sat
With knee crossed over knee:
The lawyer smiled and said: "You have
A nice, fat leg, I see!"

—James Clyde Bailey.

THE REVENGE OF SARRAS

BY ARKADY RISSAKOFF



TRUE, Sarras, the wanderer, was sick, but Zingare had reason enough to take him in. Meeka, his wife, could feed him up, he would get well, and then he could help in the harvesting. The peasants asked money for their labor. Zingare had money, but none to pay out. The wanderer would be glad to work for his keep. Zingare fed up his hogs for market. Why not feed up a man for the harvesting? So it was settled.

Zingare did not anticipate any trouble on the score of his wife. Sarras was ill; and what fine, rosy woman like Meeka would be attracted to a sick man? Sarras was also a mere boy, looking scarcely twenty; women like men, not children. Then to crown all, Sarras was a Jew. Zingare did not have to make him confess it. The frank acknowledgment was not a confession, anyway; it was a proud avowal volunteered even before he told his name, with a quiver of nostril and flash of eye.

Meeka did not exactly like the idea of having a Jew in the house. She fixed up a cuddy for the newcomer in the loft, doing no more than duty demanded. The mattress was straw, the chair was rickety, the little table was palsied; but the place was clean, and Sarras seemed pleased with everything. He frankly said he was glad to be as far away from the rest of the family as possible; he wanted to be alone. This suited Zingare—and Meeka, too; though she was a bit put out by his highflown love of exclusiveness. Not that

she desired his company—Heaven forbid; but it was so presumptuous in a Jew to talk that way, to extract distinction from being hoisted up into a miserable old loft to live! Said Zingare: “Don’t worry about it. Just feed him up as though he were one of the pigs. We’ll work him to death at harvest time and then kick him out.”

Meeka certainly did her part in feeding him up. She was a cook to brag about, and in no time Sarras was showing the effects of eating plenty of good food. No pig could have fattened more miraculously. Zingare was astonished and irritated. He said to Meeka: “Already he’s a lump of lard, a gob of grease, a roll of butter. At this rate he’ll be too fat to lift a hand at harvest time. So cut the rations.”

It was difficult for Meeka to do this, for she was one of those women who cannot bear to set out a stingy table. Besides, she had some pride in the matter. Sarras had complimented her—and in most elegant language—on her fine meals; and she did not want him to change his opinion. “You don’t know how a woman feels about such things,” she protested to her husband.

So Zingare compromised by letting her go on feeding the youth and putting him to work at the chores. He regarded this idea as an inspiration. It would satisfy the benevolent promptings of Meeka’s heart; it would take some of the small “pick-up” work off his own hands and

give him more time to spend in the fields, where he was needed; and it would be the means of getting some honest toil out of that lazy Jew and at the same time keep him in condition for the harvesting. "Don't worry, my dear," chuckled Zingare, rubbing his great, beefy, hairy hands, "we'll exact ten-fold payment then for all the good food (and food is money!) that goes down his greedy throat. I'll make him do the work of three men. After the harvesting he'll be junk." But Meeka did not nod in agreement as she usually did. She just gazed at him quizzically and then half frowned.

The new plan worked well enough for a day or so. Sarras did not seem to mind doing the chores; besides, he was quite handy. But when it came to cleaning out the stable (poor, overworked Zingare had let the manure accumulate on account of having more important work to do) his stomach revolted. He grew deathly sick and for several days was flat on his back up in the loft. Zingare was furious. His only consolation was that Sarras would have to let up on that cursed gorging for a while, at least.

Meeka was human; so on the second day of the youth's illness she climbed up into the loft to ask if she could do anything. He was stretched on the straw mattress looking sick indeed. His cheeks were brilliantly red; the rest of his face was green; his lips were dry and almost scaly. It was quite evident he had a fever. He was surprised at sight of Meeka, but smiled a welcome.

Meeka's heart melted in pity. She had never had a child; and that healthy brute, Zingare, had not been sick a day in his life; hence, the natural compassion of her sex had never been stirred. Quite instinctively, then, she knelt down beside the boy, eager to do those little things that every woman likes to do for sick people, particularly men. She felt his pulse and

looked at his tongue, then went down to the kitchen and brought back soap, towel and water and a miraculously soft pillow. She washed his face and neck and hands as if he had been a child; then she combed his beautiful black hair and put a cold compress around his aching head; then deaf to his protests, she made him swallow a hideous, bitter herb tea which she declared would give his poor torpid liver a regular earthquake and set the sluggish bile to flowing. "And then you'll feel better than for months and weeks," she comforted him, "you'll have had such a fine cleaning-out."

He smiled hazily and dozed off. She sat motionless, watching him, wondering who he was, where he was from, where he was going, all about him. She had not noticed how handsome he was, how unlike a Jew, how like the pictures of poets. But he was so young, only a boy, a mere child, alas—and a Jew. A Jew! Well, what of it? Jews are human. They are people. Of course, she had always hated them; everybody hated them—but couldn't there be one good Jew in a thousand, a million?

Her gaze wandered around the loft and she blushed with shame for having put the boy up here instead of fixing up the little storeroom off the kitchen for him. She arose softly so as not to awaken him, and then with sympathetic curiosity began examining the threadbare clothes hanging on the rough board wall and the strange foreign books on the shaky table. But what interested her most was a large collection of mysterious-looking nails of various sizes, all carved with hieroglyphic figures and all cruelly, inconceivably sharp at the points. In the same box were a number of odd tools and a written manuscript entitled "An Inquiry into the Kind of Nails Used at the Crucifixion." Meeka felt a thrill, then a sense of awe. He was a scholar, a great and learned

man! And Zingare intended making him, him, do the work of three peasants at harvesting!

Suddenly a harsh voice came from the top of the stairway: "Meeka! What are you doing up here?"

It was Zingare. There was no suspicion in his eyes, only amazement. Meeka explained her presence in the loft easily enough. Sarras was sick; she was afraid he might get sicker and die; and that would be awkward.

"Let the Jew dog die," growled Zingare.

"Let him die after the harvesting," said Meeka.

Zingare saw the point and chuckled.

Sarras was up and around the next day attending to the chores; Meeka proved to be a magic physician. She had him clean out the storeroom and then moved him down from the loft. She added the finishing touches to the furnishing of the room herself, making it quite cozy and homelike.

Zingare was out in the fields working when the change was made, and when he came home and saw Sarras in his new quarters he was dumbfounded. But Meeka had her crafty reason: "I want him down here so he can help me with the kitchen work; now he's handy enough to get up in the morning and make the fire. He ought to be doing more to pay for his keep."

If Zingare had thought, he would have realized that this was a very palpable subterfuge. But Zingare did not think; he had to see with his eyes, and most of the time his eyes were closed.

II.

One day Zingare's eyes happened to be open, wide, open fatally so. He had been working the fields, and on account of the prostrating heat came home earlier than usual. God or the devil (Zingare himself said it was God, Meeka insisted it was the

devil) whispered to him to approach noiselessly and look inside before entering.

He looked—and saw. Thick-headed, purblind as he was, he could not help seeing.

Meeka and Sarras were standing by the table. He had his arms around her and was drawing her face toward his for a kiss. And what a kiss it would have been! Eyes were gazing into eyes; lips were pursed for lips; chest was heaving to chest. Eager for the kiss, that supreme caress, they yet were holding off, delaying the divine moment, dallying on the borderland of bliss.

They dallied too long. The kiss was never consummated. Zingare, infuriated, snorting like a beast, burst into the kitchen and tore them apart. With one hand he held Meeka. With the other he pushed Sarras three or four feet away, just far enough to swing on him with a full-sweeping blow. He then struck him flush on the nose, the blood spurted from it in a stream. Sarras dropped to the floor like a log. Meanwhile Meeka had freed one of her arms. She snatched an earthenware pot from the table and broke it on Zingare's head. The blow would have knocked down an ordinary man; it simply maddened Zingare. He fell upon her and beat her savagely, unmercifully.

"Yes," he cried, his purple lips flecked with foam, "you'd kiss a dog of a Jew when all hell couldn't make you kiss me, your lord and master! I've begged you, threatened you, but you just laughed at me, you jade—you'd have seen me dead, yourself dead, and both of us in hell before giving me, of your own accord, the kiss that his Jew mouth was waiting to swallow! Death is too good for a hussy like you. I'll keep you alive and take it out of your hide." And he began beating her again.

Meanwhile Sarras, who had recovered

consciousness, rose, seized the poker and stole up behind Zingare. The latter saw him. Throwing Meeka to the floor, where she lay like one dead, he sprang at the youth, wrenched the poker from him, then picked him up bodily and hurled him against the wall. Then he got a jug of brandy and, sitting down in the midst of the havoc, celebrated his victory, the crushed Meeka on one side of him, the crumpled Sarras on the other.

He drank himself to sleep. When he awoke, Meeka was setting the kitchen to rights. She was limping and moaning with pain.

"Where's the Jew?" he growled, looking around.

"Gone," she gasped.

He brought down his first hard on the table. "Call me master, hussy!"

"Yes, master."

"Did you kiss him?"

"No, master."

"He's gone forever?"

"Yes, master, forever."

Zingare grunted and regarded her suspiciously. "Bring the crucifix here."

Meeka went to the shelf and brought back the image. Zingare took hold of it with gingerly fingers; he had always been an unbeliever.

"Down on your knees, jade. Call me master!"

"Now swear to your Jesus you'll never kiss another man as long as you live. If you do, I'll beat you again; and the next time I beat you I'll beat you to death. Now swear—with those false lips that you would have let a Jew kiss—a Jew!—a Jew of the Jews that crucified your Jesus!"

Pale, trembling, Meeka made the whispered vow.

"There's one man I'll let you kiss!" cried Zingare with a laugh. "Kiss your Jesus! Kiss his feet!"

He pressed the crucifix against her

bruised and swollen lips, then suddenly with a wild, triumphant cry kissed it himself. Meeka was dumbfounded. Had he gone mad?

"No," he said, divining her thoughts, "I'm not mad. I've not even turned Christian." He chuckled. "A wonderful thought came to me, that's all. God—or maybe the devil—what matter?—told me how to make you do penance for your sin. This penance is closely connected with your Jesus, and it's such a fine sort of penance I just couldn't help kissing his feet myself in gratitude to God or the devil—whichever it was—that planted the thought in my brain." He threw the crucifix on the table, the face of Jesus downward.

Meeka was still kneeling. He gazed at her fixedly, a smile playing on his lips. "Get up," he said. "Call me master."

"Yes, master."

"There's a new priest at the church, isn't there?"

"Yes, master."

"What's his name?"

"Father Gordnik."

"Father Gordnik! Good! I'm going to see him." He took his hat and went to the door. "Meeka!"

"Yes, master."

His eyes of hate burned into her even more scorchingly than Sarra's eyes of love had done. She trembled; her heart stood still.

"I am the master, Meeka."

"Yes, Zingare, you are the master."

He chuckled. "Kiss nothing while I am gone, least of all the ground where the Jew has walked, and not even the feet of Jesus. I am to regulate your kissing henceforth and always; I will tell you what to kiss and when to kiss it. I'll have an appetite when I get back, so cook me a good supper, as good a supper as if your Jew were still here." He laughed and was gone.

The master had his supper when he came home, and his three meals the next day and the next. Meeka buckled down to work as though nothing had happened. The frightful bruises on her back and shoulders were slow in healing, but she made no complaint to the master. True, when he was away in the fields she sometimes moaned, and beat her hands upon the air, and prayed to Mary to intercede with her Son to let her die; but when the master was around she gave no sign of her suffering. She did not want to irritate him. He feared for the harvest and was surly. "Yes," he reproached her, "if you had let the Jew alone I'd have help now when I need it. These cursed peasants will bleed me dry."

He was in very truth the master. Meeka was crushed utterly. The unspeakable beating he had given her had cowed her spirit and shaken her soul. She stood in mortal dread of those brutal hands. This fear, together with her vow to Jesus, would keep her straight, the master assured himself. He was so sure of it that he soon ceased to watch her and spy on her. But he was still planning her penance—ah, yes! If the harvest failed him, he would still have that penance to live for, to gloat over, the penance that was to be his meat and drink, his very life itself, the penance that would serve as the supreme model for sinful kissing women for all time to come!

Meeka still had one flower left of her garden that had never bloomed, one souvenir of the dream that had never been dreamed, one memento of the kiss that had never been consummated. After Sarras had gone she had looked in his room for something he might have left, something to remember him by. And she found one—only one—of the bright, sharp, cruel nails she had seen in the box with the written manuscript on the cru-

cifixion. This strange souvenir she would treasure always.

III.

One afternoon the Master surprised her by coming in from the fields several hours earlier than usual and gruffly ordering her to put on her black dress and go to church with him, declaring he had something there to show her. Full of vague fear, she obeyed.

It was a Saturday and many of the villagers were going to confession. On entering the church Meeka was astonished to see a large new Crucifix standing near the sanctuary railing. The figure of Christ was full life-sized. It was startlingly real, almost sickeningly so with the thorn-pierced brow, the nailed and bleeding hands, the agonized face. Meeka shuddered. Zingare smiled.

"Come," he said, "let's go closer. I want you to see the feet of Jesus."

The church was poorly lighted and the front benches had high backs, so Meeka had not seen the sacred feet yet. Zingare led her down the aisle, then they genuflected and sat down.

The feet of Jesus were now in full view. Shapely as lilies, white as the moon save for the sinister blood-stains, they thrilled the naturally devout soul of Meeka with their martyred beauty.

"What do you think of them?" whispered Zingare.

But she was speechless. She could only make the sign of the cross.

Zingare called her attention to the large number of worshippers at the chancel. Many of them were peasants who had come in from the fields without changing their clothes, and the odors of dirt and perspiration were almost nauseating. But Meeka was not squeamish; and just now her gaze was attracted to Father Gordnik, who was entering from the sacristy. He went to the worshippers, said a few words and then pointed

to the statue. They rose, formed in line, then one by one approached the Crucified One and kissed His feet.

Zingare chuckled. "That figure of your Jesus was made to have poor fools like those peasants—and you—kiss its feet. Many churches have them, and I've given this one to Father Gordnik in your name. And this is your penance, Meeka: you, who wouldn't kiss me but who would have braved hell to kiss the Jew, are to come here three times daily, every day of your life, morning, afternoon and evening, to kiss the feet of Jesus—feet that very soon will be black with the dirt and spittle from the mouths of those filthy peasants. What do you think of your penance?" he asked, triumphantly.

She did not dare to say that she thought it beautiful, wonderful, divine, for fear he would snatch this unexpected solace from her; so she put on a sad face (while her heart bounded) and went to Jesus and bent down and pressed an adoring kiss on His bleeding feet. She would have pressed ten, twenty, a hundred, if Zingare had not been there. When she rejoined him she was weeping softly. And Zingare, the unseeing, rubbed his hands and was satisfied.

And now Meeka's strange penance began in earnest. Three times every day, morning, noon and night, rain or shine, she went to the church and kissed the feet of Jesus. For quite a while Zingare accompanied her to see that she did not deceive him. He even left his work in the fields to do this. But after a time as harvesting drew nearer and he was worried to death by those lazy peasants, who were doing no real work and yet bleeding him of all his money, he decided to trust her to go alone. Why not? She could be up to no harm; the Jew had left the country. Besides, she was a thoroughly crushed woman. She feared God; she feared Hell; she feared him, Zingare

the Master! She had vowed to do her penance exactly as it had been laid down for her to do, and as fear ruled her life she could be depended upon to kiss the martyred feet even if the act meant her destruction. Thus Zingare reasoned.

He was not an observing man, but for some time he had been noticing a gradual, though striking, change in her. She was losing much of her flesh and high color. She had grown almost slender, and her face had taken on a mysterious delicacy. Her features had sharpened; her eyes glowed strangely; her feet seemed to grow smaller and daintier; even her housewife's hands had lost some of their coarseness, while her flaxen hair, always her glory, seemed twice as luxuriant, twice as golden. She dressed, too, with more care and more taste. And suddenly, tingingly, overwhelmingly Zingare realized that a miracle had been performed. Meeka was a beautiful woman, a woman infinitely desirable, more desirable than she had ever been! The feet of Jesus had made a lady of her. A lady! And she belonged to him, Zingare, Zingare the Master!

"Come, my dear," he said one day, "give me a kiss."

She shook her head.

He tried to be jocular. "Come, my dear, you've grown into a damned fine woman, and your kisses are too good to be wasted on anybody's feet, even the feet of Jesus. Come, here are my lips—waiting. Isn't it better to kiss a live man's lips than a dead god's feet?"

But Meeka had become deathly pale. "No," she said, "never! I shall never kiss you again."

Zingare seized her wrist and twisted it. "You—you—" he began, choking with rage.

She gazed at him steadfastly. "Go ahead, Zingare, beat me, kill me, if you like. But beating me, killing me won't

make me kiss you. And that's for always."

He raised his terrible arms as though to begin the beating then and there. She did not cringe; she did not move. He was dumbfounded; the awful arms lowered. What had come over her? Kissing the feet of Jesus had given her the unheard-of courage to defy her lord and master! And that was not the only miracle: her penance, instead of a thing of dolour, seemed a thing of joy; she wore her expiation not as a badge of shame, but as a decoration. This was mystery—the Devil's own. Zingare determined to fathom it.

Late in the dusk of the next afternoon he preceded Meeka to the church and secreted himself in the confessional, whence he could see everything that happened. She was not long in coming. Immediately following her came a man. Zingare's heart beat. He strained his eyes and recognized—Sarras.

Sarras the Jew! So . . . he had come back, and all the time they had been carrying on right here in church, in the house of God! The Jew's lips, and not the feet of Jesus, had made her the lady! A maddened fury seized Zingare. He was about to burst from the confessional and confront them in their sin, but the strange actions of the pair made him wait.

Instead of turning to greet her lover Meeka went on to the Crucifix, fell on her knees and in an abandon of adoration literally covered the sacred feet with kisses. And Sarras? He did not spring upon her and claim those kisses for himself. He simply waited motionless in the shadows, seemingly unmoved. Zingare could not comprehend this strange passivity any more than he could the passionate fervor of Meeka's penance. Such wild kisses he himself had never tasted, no man had ever tasted. She was

kissing the feet of Jesus with her heart and soul, her whole body and her body's passion, leaving on the sculptured flesh not only the imprint of her lips, but the very moisture of her mouth. The feet were wet—and not with the Divine blood!

Zingare marveled. But he was even more amazed when she suddenly sprang up and fled from the church, and Sarras, instead of following her, hurried to the feet of Jesus himself and kissed them as lingeringly, lovingly, passionately, madly as she had done.

Sarras, the Jew, kissing the feet of Jesus! What monstrosity was this? While the watcher still wondered the youth rose and swiftly left the church. Zingare hurried to the door and peered out. Was Meeka awaiting her lover? Ashamed to defile the house of God, would they hold their tryst outside? No! Meeka had already started home; already her form was dim in the dusk. Sarras, hesitated, gazed after her a moment, then turned and walked rapidly away in the opposite direction.

Zingare went home slowly, very slowly. He wanted to think; and he was stupefied yet. He was a dense man; but it did not take him long to come to the conclusion that Sarras' motive in kissing the feet of Jesus was not a religious one. Such a thing was out of the question. Sarras was a Jew, a Jew who boasted of his Jewish blood. And he, the Jew, had kissed the feet of Jesus, the Crucified One! It was inconceivable, impossible; and yet Zingare had seen it with his own eyes. What other Jew in all the world had ever degraded himself thus? There was but one reason for this monstrous act of self-abatement, one answer to the riddle. Meeka in keeping her penitential vow had refused Sarras her lips; and he in his mad passion was perforce contenting himself with kissing something she

had kissed, even the feet of a statute, the feet of a man, of the Christian's God, Jesus the Crucified One, Jesus the Jew!

And now Zingare realized why Meeka herself had kissed the sacred feet so wildly ecstatically. It was not penitence that prompted her, but passion. She loved Sarras! and rather than break her vow she was leaving the feet of Jesus wet, not with the blood from the cruel wounds, but with the literal moisture of her lips, the very essence of her being, so that her lover in kissing the feet after her could taste on them the transferred bliss! Ghastly, livid, undreamed-of penance! **Mad, morbid, subhuman.**

These were new fields of thought to Zingare, undiscovered countries of the emotions. He was stunned; he could only grope his way in these unfamiliar agitations of his slow and sleepy brain. But in all the maze, at the end of every vista of dim wonder one light burned brightly, steadily: Revenge! The penance he had imposed on Meeka, this woman of impure purity, this woman of saintly sin, had tragically failed. But his revenge should not! He ground his teeth as he said this to himself. He would injure her and her Jew as no pair of guilty lovers had ever been injured in the history of the world. His vengeance must stand as hell's warning forever.

IV.

When he reached home he found Meeka quite the same as usual, silent, serene, cooking a good supper for him. And he, on his side, developed a craft that equalled hers; he dissimulated almost cleverly, veiled his hate and bitterness under sullen complaints about those dogs of peasants who didn't earn half their pay, rubbed his aching back with the cursed cheat liniment that never did him any good, and went to bed.

The next evening he went to the church, and the next. Day after day he

hid in the confessional, week after week. He neglected his work; he let the harvest wither and blacken and rot in the fields. And always the lovers' performance was the same: Meeka kissed the sacred feet, Sarras would kiss them after her. Then she always left immediately, casting one burning glance at him as she hurried down the aisle. He would follow her outside, watch her disappear in the dusk and then leave in the opposite direction. Sometimes Zingare met peasants and villagers at their devotions, and on Saturdays he had to be careful not to run into Father Gordnik, who generally heard confessions then; but usually the coast was clear.

Each day he vowed that the day should be the lovers' last; he was astonished at himself for delaying his vengeance so long. But he could not make up his mind as to what form it should take. One day he would provide himself with a gun, the next with a knife, the next with a cruel blacksnake whip. But he felt that all these means of inflicting punishment were ridiculously inadequate; they were childish, cheap, commonplace. Physical torture was too good for the transgressors; death was infinitely too merciful. What method, then, should he use. On two points he was firmly settled; his revenge must be had within the walls of the church, at the very feet of Jesus; and it must logically fit Meeka's sin.

The days went by. He was miserable; try as he would he could not plan his revenge. He could neither eat nor sleep; he grew thin, weak, ill. He avoided Meeka, everybody. Strange noises buzzed in his ears; strange pains shot through his head. He wondered if he were going mad. Perhaps; why not? And when at last he fell on his knees at the feet of Jesus to pray, to pray that he might be given the guidance of Heaven—or of Hell!—in smiting his hussy of a

wife as the God of Wrath—or the Devil of Torment—would have it done; when he, Zingare, knelt at Meeka's altar and called on Meeka's Lord, he smiled grimly, wanly, and told himself that in very truth he was mad, mad as he could be!

But as he knelt there, his lips mumbling blasphemous words rather than prayerful ones, his fevered gaze resting on the feet of Jesus, those divine feet the red of whose wounds had been kissed to white, the white to gray, he felt himself moved by a strange, compelling, madly seductive idea. It stole over him slowly, insinuatingly, then, bursting upon him like a storm, left him trembling and wonder-struck. It was the miraculous thought he had been waiting for, the inspiration from Heaven—or from Hell—and with a wild cry and a wilder laugh he leaped up and rushed out of the church, his prayer answered.

He went at once to Father Gordnik and told him that the beautiful statue of Jesus was getting dusty and soiled, that it should be covered with a black cloth as a mark of care and reverence, leaving only the feet exposed to receive the adoring kisses of the faithful. The priest was touched by this unexpected piety on the part of the unconverted Zingare and promised that the request should be granted.

The next day the statue, cross and all, was covered with the black cloth; only the feet of Jesus showed. Zingare, watching from the confessional, noted Meeka's surprise. She did not disturb the cloth, however. Neither did Sarras. What mattered to them the rest of the Divine Form just so they still could kiss the feet?

On the evening of the next day Zingare, excited, pale as death, breathing in spasmodic gasps, the livid light of madness in his eyes, arrived at the church earlier than usual. In the pocket of his

loose blouse were two knotted loops of stout hemp rope. He hurriedly took off his heavy shoes and socks in the confessional, then went to the Crucifix, climbed upon the chancel railing and slipped one of the hemp loops over each of the arms of the cross. Then he covered the whole thing again with the black cloth, this time even the feet of the figure. Creeping in behind the cloth, he leaned backward against the cold body of the sculptured God and slipped one powerful arm through each of the loops on the cross. He had calculated right; only his feet now showed. They—the real feet—rested on the railing nearly where the feet of Jesus had been. The feet of the statue, higher up, were now covered with the cloth.

Zingare waited, chuckling. He was sure they would not know the difference—at least see the difference, as the church was dark, with only the red-globed sanctuary lamp burning. If he could stand perfectly still, supporting himself by the loose loops through which he had thrust his arms, holding the pose of the feet of Jesus . . . ! He could not hope to rival their marble coldness, and feared that the warmth of his flesh might betray him. Yet his feet were feeling like lumps of ice.

The plan of the madman was very simple. He would receive the adoration of the lovers and then leap down and slay them at the altar of their guilt.

They came at the usual time. At the pressure of Meeka's hot lips, Zingare felt an indescribable, inhuman, unhuman sensation. He thought he must move, fall from the railing, bring down the sculptured Jesus with him. But he managed to stand motionless; and Meeka in her mad ecstasy was unaware of the monstrous cheat.

And now for those other lips, the lips of the Jew. This was to be the mad-

man's supreme vengeance, his supreme thrill. After the first kiss he would reveal himself, taunt Sarras with his unspeakable shame and then. . . .

But what was this? If the sensation imparted by Meeka's lips had been bliss, this was delirium. . . . And in a flash Zingare decided he would not kill them—yet. He would wait; he would experience more of this wild joy, this unheard-of revenge. He would prolong it; he would come here every day, many days. His feet should take the place of the feet of Jesus; let them, rather than God's, be the medium of their illicit love!

What—? Only one pressure of the lips? Why was Sarras hesitating, holding back? Had he discovered the substitution? Zingare peered out through a tiny hole in the cloth. Sarras was leaving the church! But the madman chuckled. The Jew would return—tomorrow, a dozen tomorrows, a hundred tomorrows!

The next evening Zingare repeated his performance. He climbed upon the railing took his position against the sculptured Diety, slipped his arms through the loops and covered himself with the cloth, leaving his feet exposed.

He had not waited long when there was a sound of someone entering the church. He peered out from behind the cloth and was surprised to see Sarras. No matter; Meeka would be coming in a moment.

He waited, intoxicated in the bliss of it, trembling in spite of himself. This cursed ague would betray him. . . .

Ah, something had touched his feet, something even colder than they, something sharp, metallic. God, God! Nails! His feet were being pierced with nails, like the feet of Jesus. He gave a wild cry; he struggled vainly back of the cloth. His arms were hopelessly entangled with his cunning loops of rope; he would have leaped down; but he could not. Those nails! They were piercing his feet, his hands, his heart. Was it a dream? Was it death? Was it Hell? He did not know. He did not know anything . . . except . . . this . . . this . . . this . . .

In the morning they found him dead, crucified, even as Jesus was crucified, nailed to the cross with countless bright, sharp, cruel nails, nails unlike any others in all the world. And his weight, added to that of the imaged Jesus, had borne the cross to the ground.

THE ETERNAL QUESTION

Twenty years ago today, a saloon was standing here,

And a man was free to come and go

And to drink a glass of beer.

The thing is somewhat changed today, that we will all allow;

The old saloon's still standing here,

But where's the old beer now?

P. S. *Old top; go right down the alley and in the last door on the left.*

Yes, you're right, Hootch. 'Nuff said.

C. G. H.



The Selfishest Man

By G. Lombard Kelly

WHEN Paul Cowan left the mountains of Western Carolina, and settled in the Windy City, he did not leave the simple honesty and straightforward manner of the people of that district behind him. After a long and tortuous road to the summit of the educational heights that his county had afforded, he had accomplished the well-nigh impossible and won his degree at Chapel Hill. So feeling that better opportunities offered in one of the country's larger cities, he had taken himself thither.

Now, he was a reporter on one of the larger dailies and bade fair to make a name for himself in the world of journalism.

This was not true, however, of his chum and roommate, Gilbert Durban. Durban was something of a cynic, and not a little pessimistic. In addition, he knew where the best cocktails were to be had and a great deal about the most frequented red light resorts, the kind that required for entrance a certain number of taps given at strictly specified intervals. As a result, Gilbert ranked low in the city editor's estimation and barely succeeded in holding his position on the same paper with Paul.

Not a fit companion for hard-working,

ambitious Paul Cowan, you will say. No—not exactly. But somehow, between these two opposites had sprung up a strong friendship, and while Paul recognized the shortcomings of his pal and tried to steer him back into a better way of living, Durban's personal charm in his lucid moments, his attractability when he was in the proper mood, generally prevented any break in the cordial relations that existed between the two young men, as strained as they became at times; but once—

The crow they happened to be picking that gives this story its excuse for an existence was not a crow at all, physically speaking, however black, Gilbert insisted her character was. Her name was Cassie de Saulles and her charms were many. She was that pronounced out and out brunette type that appealed so irresistibly to blond haired Paul Cowan, and in addition to her beauty, she possessed all the attractive little feminine ways that make a woman still more subtly appealing to a real man. When Paul met her in the course of his reportorial duties, she was living with her grandmother in a respectable neighborhood and to all outward appearances she was exactly what she purported to be a pretty girl of the

leisure middle class, with no greater ambition than to marry some sweet day, some honest hard-working, ambitious young man.

So it was that Paul fitted well into her scheme of things. He called on Cassie whenever he was able, which was not nearly so often as either of them would have liked, because his duties did not permit him to call regularly. But Paul's wooing made up in ardor what it lacked in temporal continuity and Gilbert came to sense an early desertion on the part of his chum for fields hymeneal.

Now that we have been carefully working up to the crow-picking for nearly three columns, it is high time that the performance begin.

Gilbert pulled the first feather.

"The first thing I know," he began, "you will be hitching up to that flossie, Cassie de Saulles, and then where'll I be?"

"Always thinking of yourself, Gilbert," replied Paul reprovingly. "And another thing: I've told you for the last time to lay off of those slurring references to Miss de Saulles. From the very time that I began calling on her, you have been hinting against her character. I'm tired of it and I won't put up with it any longer. Now, if you have anything of a decent sort to say, why, spill it. Otherwise keep your trap shut!"

Paul had worked himself up into an A-1 feather-pulling mood. And I suppose you have noticed that he had added a few words to his vocabulary since his debut upon the shores of Lake Michigan.

Gilbert saw immediately that his roommate was now several feathers ahead of him, but he feared to rush matters to a climax at this moment. Therefore, he sparred for time. He preferred to come in strong at the finish.

"Get off your ear," he replied with a half conciliatory smile. "You're too

dam' sensitive about your skirt. For all the thanks I'll get I know I had just as well have kept my mouth shut. Seriously, though, this double existence takes more than it would cost two single men to live, take it from me. I got a brother—"

"Oh dad drat your brother!" exclaimed Paul, getting hot under the collar and displaying a sample of his profanest cussing. "It all depends on the woman. Your brother's wife was reared in luxuriant ease, had everything she craved and more, too. Then the old mar cut down on her completely when she got married to Bob. I know all about it: I wrote it up when they parted their ways—interviewed him and got his viewpoint and then her and got hers. I got a brother, too, and he's saved twice as much since he got married as he did before. Besides, if you'll pay up and never touch me again, I don't know but that I couldn't support a wife on the proceeds."

That last pull jerked out a cloud of feathers and they seemed to blur Gilbert's perspective for a moment, but he came back strong.

"I see what you think, you stingy old money-bags; you think I don't want you to get spliced up so I can keep on being a leech on you, don't you? I didn't think it of you, Paul, I swear I didn't. But you never know what to expect from a fellow that's in love, and that's the gospel truth. You think I'm trying to queer the Cupid act so I can still hang on to you. You don't credit me with intending to pay you back the little loans I been getting or with trying to steer you clear of a bum proposition. But you're mighty mistaken, lemme tell you. I told you I had a thousand or two coming to me soon's Uncle Eph cashes in, and that's the gospel truth, too. I've kept account of every cent I've borrowed and here it is

right in this little book; one hundred and fifty-six dollars and fifty cents. And believe me, you're gonna get every cent of it back, whether I live or die, because this account here is as good evidence of indebtedness as you could want. I'll give you a receipt for it, if you say so. And that dope about Uncle Eph ain't no fairy tale, either."

Paul always swallowed the legacy story of his roommate with several *grani salis*, and now he smiled one of those knowing smiles that indicate more effectively than words not only doubt, but also positive unbelief.

"And that ain't all," continued Gilbert. "If you don't know certain things about this peach you're calling on, I would be the last one on God's green earth to invent any tales about her. For heaven knows she's a beauty and I'd love to see you marry as good a looker as she is, if she was all right. And while I don't know her over well, I used to go to see her and thought nearly as much of her as you think you do. And it don't take me any six months to get a flossie's number—one night is usually enough. Besides, Paul, I've heard fellows talk; I

never have heard any man say a good word about Cassie de Saulles except compliments about her looks, that's straight."

"Aw, you fellows make me tired," said Paul in disgust. "You go to see a good-looking girl and because she won't let you take advantage of her, you get peeved and start a bad name for her. You can't produce a man that can make an affidavit about one improper thing that Cassie de Saulles ever did," he concluded in sullen defiance.

"You fool!" exclaimed Gilbert, with an appropriate smile, "people don't swear out affidavits about things like that—not unless they're loony or starving and want to land in jail so's to get a square feed. You hit the nail on the head when you said the word "advantage." Maybe fellows have tried to take advantage of Cassie; they do of every girl, if she in the least invites it. Whether they succeeded or not, I won't say, in so many words, because I don't want you in your amorous fanaticism to lam me in the mug—and regret it later. But the question arises, Paul, have you ever tried to take advantage? If you haven't, all the faith in the world ain't worth a cent. You



know that quotation from Shakespeare, I reckon: 'faith without words is dead?' You got to try her in the crucible of your own ardent and transparent affection. When you have honestly done your darndest and she is just as high in your humble estimation as before, just tell me, and I swear, I'll never open my face about this thing again."

Paul smiled against his will, then bit his lip. Gilbert was serious in his misquotation and thought Paul's smile was but another of those dubious grins, the meaning of which he understood all too well.

"Scared to take me up, ain't you?" he asked meaningly. "Thought you would be. You don't dare to try Cassie out just one time—tonight. Then, if I'm right, you will forgive me my efforts to give you an honest tip: if I'm not then, marry Cassie, and if you'll have me, I'll cheerfully be your best man at the wedding!"

"I'll take you up on that," snapped Paul with sudden determination. "It's eight now, and I am due at eight-thirty. I'm darned tired of hearing you shooting off your mouth about my prospective wife, and you know very well that if you were not you, you wouldn't be floating around free and easy about this time. I've tried hard to believe you were sincere, and for that reason put up with it. Now, remember, tonight settles this matter once and for all time. Then if you open your mouth about it again, say just one word, I'll give you one week to get in training before I ram your tongue down your throat!"

"That's a go, Paul," replied Gilbert. "You can't say I break my pledges, can you? Even liquor can't make me do that. Just because I take a drink now and then and lose a little at Delmar's once in a while, you put the black tag on my character and close your eyes to any good traits a fellow has. I've played fair with

you, Paul; I love you like a brother. That's why I've talked frankly, and even then you have questioned my sincerity. Oh, well, maybe some day I'll be understood, by somebody, if not by my best friend."

He removed a cigarette from a gun-metal case and lighted it reflectively. He never offered Paul one any more than he would have invited the Rev. Mr. White to join him in a cocktail.

"And now, Paul, you don't know how glad I am you took me up on this proposition. I am going to trust you to do your best—or your worst, just as you choose to look at it. And to help you along, here's a five pound box of Whittler's I won in a raffle this afternoon down at the Albion Cigar Store. Now, if you're going, how about a little fiver? I know where I can turn it into fifty easy before morning."

He looked at Paul with an expression that might have meant that the candy was worth four dollars—and what was one dollar more, anyway?

With a sigh Paul pulled out his wallet and handed his chum the amount requested. He then took the candy under his arm and went out, wondering if Gilbert really believed that he "fell for all that bull," about paying back the money and Cassie's being anything but the very best.

* * *

Cassie never looked better in her life, Paul thought, when he saw her that evening. Her jet black hair was coiffed in a most fluffy attractive fashion, her heavy eye-lashes fringed pretty black eyes that were pools of perfect loveliness. Her white powdered face, set off by rose-red lips was a joy to behold, and the grace of every movement but added to the charm of her faultless medium-sized figure. After one glance at her, Paul was intoxicated with a voluptuous desire to pos-

sess her, ever for his own, for his only own.

"Oh, is this for me?" she exclaimed, asking that superfluous question, as girls will. Paul had never brought her a five pound box before.

"Of course it is," replied Paul. "For the sweetest and prettiest little girl in the world."

Cassie looked at him out of quick eyes. She concluded that he was perfectly sober, notwithstanding the change in his manner. She wondered what had come over her matter-of-fact sweetheart that he should blossom forth with an expression like this.

"How lovely!" she cooed, evidently pleased by his compliment. "How can we ever eat it all?"

She offered him some and he took one piece, remarking that he was not hungry, as he had only shortly before had supper. Cassie insisted, however, and within the next hour they had made quite an inroad into the top compartment of the box.

At the end of that time, Paul thought it was not too early to assume a more amorous attitude. He had had the privilege of holding Cassie's hand for some time, and when he put his arm around her shoulder and lifted her lips passionately to his for an almost never-ending kiss, she doubtlessly wondered why he had waited so long.

That first kiss went through Paul's veins like young wine; he had been intoxicated before, now he was drunk. Again and again he kissed her as she hugged him close and her breath came in little painful gasps. Their passion was mutual, and as they greedily quaffed that divine elixir without which no life has been complete, minutes flew like seconds.

* * *

"Oh, Paul, are you disappointed in

me?" sobbed Cassie, when he was ready to leave.

She could divine by his actions that he was none too well pleased by the events of the evening. She had looked for sympathy and understanding; evidently explanations were due.

"It was not my fault, Paul," she said, in an accusing tone. "I have never felt like that before; you did something to that candy."

Paul turned upon her quickly.

"It's not true, Cassie, I swear it!" he assured her. Then he thought of his own lack of control and the girl's accusation came home to him. A dark suspicion flashed through his brain.

"Then somebody surely did," argued the girl. "I was only myself tonight, Paul; you know that. Where did you get it?"

"From Gilbert," he replied, a little guiltily, she thought.

Suspicion now gave way to certainty in Paul's mind. He saw, he was sure, why Gilbert had acted as he had, why he had made it a point to furnish the candy. Evidently, he was determined at all costs not to lose his easy-going roommate, who could be touched ever so often for a five or a ten. "God!" thought Paul, "how can a man be so selfish?"

As the whole plan burst upon him, it left him weak in his fury. He clasped Cassie to him with a light of joyful relief in his eyes and mumbled words of loving pity into her ear.

"You were right, dear, after all. I see through his actions now, and by heaven he shall pay dearly for this!"

Cassie was still weeping and each swift intake of breath was a stab to Paul's tender heart.

"Wait for me a half hour, sweetheart, and I'll be back with Mr. White; I've had the license a week, and tonight's as good a time as any to use it—and oh, Mr.

Gilbert Durban, when I get through with you—!"

* * *

He had hardly closed the door, when Cassie dried her eyes and smiled with relief.

"Gee!" she sighed, "little Cassie sure forgot herself tonight sumpin awful—and poor Gilbert, I sure hate to get him in trouble—but my Paul, my darling Paul, I couldn't give you up—gee! he's so good lookin'!"

INTERVIEWS WITH CELEBRITIES

I Beard the Memory Man in His Den

By H. Allan Perrill

I entered the office of the famous memory man whom the editor had sent me to interview. As the office boy ushered me into his private sanctum, he gave me a scrutinizing gaze, then said:

"Your name is John P. Biggers. I met you at thirteen and one-half moments past eleven o'clock on the fourteenth day of July in the Pullman car, Glidealong on the Twentieth Century Limited.

"You wore a black and white check suit, a red necktie with green daffodils in it, purple socks and ox-blood shoes. Your shirt was a bright yellow with black polka dots in it. You tipped the porter an 1862 nickel with a hole in it after he had failed to notice the Canadian ha'penny you first offered him.

"You grew quite talkative after drinking the bottle of hair tonic that one of the gentlemen in the car absent-mindedly left in the dressing room and I recall that you told me that you had seven children and were operating a hand laundry—with your wife at the washing machine wheel. After the tonic had taken hold in earnest you shed a few tears on my shoulder and informed me that your wife did not understand you and only allowed you twenty-five cents a week for spending money. So pathetic was your grief that I loaned you a Garfield five dollar bill, number 1243217698356. I'd be greatly pleased to have it repaid at this time."

There was nothing for me to do but pass over the bill. Truly, the man's memory was marvelous! I could only recall the things he had mentioned in a very hazy manner. Regarding the five dollar bill, my memory was an absolute blank.

I had lost my enthusiasm about wonderful memories by this time. In fact, the realization came home to me that some things are better forgotten.

However, it was my duty to secure the interview and I determined to test this superman's brain still further.

"How many particles of dust to the square inch are there in the air?" I inquired, glancing at a list I had previously prepared.

"86214793651829 2/31," he correctly replied without hesitation.

"What is the capital of Bohemia?" was my next question.

"Cedar Rapids, Iowa," he informed me without batting an eyelash.

"Marvelous!" I exclaimed.

"I never forget the most trivial things," he informed me, simply.

"What is the date of your wedding anniversary?" I next queried.

A wave of red surged over his face as he knit his brows in a spasm of concentration.

"Ah—why—er—Show this gentleman out, Robert," he ordered the office boy, as the latter appeared in the doorway in response to his ring.

And thus was the interview ended.

The Dead-Aliveness of London Johnny

By Wynn Logan



“YOU say you saw only his hands, Miss Gem?”

“Yes—or it would be more exact to say I saw only a pair of hands playing or groping in the moonlight about the wall—there—at the side of my dressing-table.”

“And you, Mrs. Gem, did you see the intruder?”

“Bless me, no, Mr. Sheffield. Just a pair of the most horrible yellow hands I have ever seen. I had been dozing in my chair at the table in the living room when I must have fallen off to sleep. It seemed I had been hearing something at the door for a long time when I awoke, but in this apartment building one gets used to things like that you know. I heard the clock strike 2 and there was a rustle near me. ‘Is that you, baby?’ I called to my daughter, who had long before retired. And as I did so, I saw these hands approaching me in the semi-light from the night bulb in this low table lamp. They sprang at me—I felt terrific blows on my head and knew no more until baby found me.”

Inspector Josman Sheffield, having noted these facts, again turned to Mrs. Gem’s daughter, Louise—a charming bit of gentleness and soft beauty.

“And so, Miss Gem,” he said, “when you heard your mother call—”

“I did not hear her call, exactly, but I heard a commotion in the living-room.

I opened my eyes, and, by the moonlight that poured in through this window, I could see some one’s hands feeling over a part of the wall. I do not know why I did it but I reached for the electric light switch, turning on the light. The room was no sooner flooded with it than the hands, and their owner, too, were gone; for I found the hall door open and mother unconscious on the floor in the living-room.”

“And, then, I take it, the people across the hall heard you scream and came in, and soon the police were here. Now, with your permission, we will see the wall where the hands were groping.”

Sheffield and his friend Carter were shown into the heavenly little bedroom that was peeking with paradise blue. There were little pale blue Persian silk rugs, a tiny mahogany bed, its spindle posts exalting themselves ceiling-high over their charge of shimmering blue taffeta. The one window in this room was heavily shrouded with filet and taffeta drapes and lambrequins. The dresser, with its dainty burden of silver, stood at the wall opposite the side of the bed. A dressing-table with two blue-silk shaded lamps, looped with silken fringes and spotted with motifs of real lace, held the wall opposite the foot of the bed. The doorway into the rest of the apartment was at the side of the dressing-table. Just inside the doorway, also on this wall,

was indeed evidence of last night's visit in the shape of a long, lean hand mark.

Sheffield eyed it with a look of the most absorbed astonishment. From his pocket he withdrew a small reading glass and studied the prints, each in turn. His small, kindly black eyes became piercing as he scrutinized every detail. "These," he said to Carter, his young colleague, as he dropped the hand glass back in his pocket, "are the lines of London Johnnie Corp."

"Why, that famous crook," replied Carter, "went down on the 'City of Otumwa' only two weeks ago in Lake Michigan, did he not?"

"Of course he did. He was trying to make a grand exit to Canada, I have good reason to remember, for I was waiting to pounce upon him at Mackinac Island when the ship was cloven and only a few of the women were saved. His body was picked up the day after the disaster, right near Chicago, here."

Sheffield turned to Miss Gem.

"This mark was not upon your wall previous to last night?"

"No," she assured him. "I should certainly have seen it. It attracted my eyes the very first thing this morning. I can assure you that it is absolutely new and strange; that it was not there when I went to bed last night."

The two men gazed at each other.

"A dead man cannot get up from his grave and rob wall safes," proffered Sheffield.

"Maybe he worked the lady's night dress stunt and got rowed off with the women," said Carter. "It may have been some other body they picked up."

"Excepting," put in Sheffield, "that we took the dead man's fingerprints to close up his record for good. No need to tell you, of course, Carter, that fingerprint lines remain engraved upon the fingers after death until the very flesh

falls into powder; and that no two individuals have ever been found to have fingerprints alike. And yet I could almost swear that, when we go down to the bureau of identification we shall be told that these are unequivocally London Johnnie Corp's fingerprints. Could it be—could it be—that our old fingerprint law is, after all to prove unsafe?—that there can be two individuals with identical fingerprints? But it has not been proved yet! I cannot believe it. Still——"

Sheffield examined the mark on the wall again.

"I suppose this wall is pretty bright with the moon full upon it," he commented. "I say! Interesting face—this."

Stooping he took from the floor under the dressing-table a small photograph. But as he did so the young girl started, flushing.

"A lad I know; that is—I used to know him."

"Why, Louise!" exclaimed Mrs. Gem. "Coleman Algers!"

The young woman made an uneasy movement as the other woman continued.

"You wonder now that I did not approve of your friendship with him?"

"No—no, mother! That is a photograph he gave me. I had it tacked at the back of my dressing-table. The burglars must have knocked it down."

"Oh, I knew he would try to harm us some day," and the woman started a series of hysterical denunciations.

"If you please, Mrs. Gem. You suspect this young man of being the intruder of last night?" asked Sheffield.

"What better evidence can you have?" she replied.

"Oh, mother, I know Coleman has nothing whatever to do with this. I really had this picture at the back of my dressing-table. Maybe—maybe——"

The girl thought in desperation for

some moments. "Maybe it was that man who had this apartment before us—some misunderstanding about our being tenants!"

"You know he died, Louise."

"But why couldn't it have been just a plain burglar?"

Here Sheffield spoke.

"I am afraid," he said gently, "that such a burglar as this man seems to have been would have had his license revoked by his fraternity long ago. Take, for example, this handprint. In all my experience, I have never encountered a professional burglar who was madman enough to leave a piece of blatant evidence like that!"

As Sheffield measured these phrases out in his circular manner of gesticulation, he hit the handprint many times with the edges of his finger-nails. As he finished, he gave the wall a little whack somewhat below the mark. Hereupon, his kindly, penetrative black eyes became vibrantly concentrative and his lank features became obsessed with uncommon animation. He rapped upon the wall repeatedly, listening earnestly. His companion, Carter, and the two tenants watched with bated breath.

"You have no safe here in the wall, Mrs. Gem?—No?—But I believe one is located here. Carter, let's move this piece of furniture a bit. So! Here are two coats of wall paper! Under them—yes—as I expected, the plaster is besmeared considerably. Let us scrape away this unsightly patch of it. Ah! it falls out in chunks; nicely fitted chunks! And here within are some documents. Gun plans, eh?—Gun pla— As I live, Carter! The plans of the Boyle Rapid Firer!"

However electrifying this statement upon Carter, Sheffield proceeded pauselessly.

"Now, Mrs. Gem," he said, "two sig-

nificant questions, if you please. First, would the hands, in your estimation, be those of an—er—Japanese? And second, let us hear about the previous occupant of your apartment."

The account was not particularly singular. The hands had been "horrible, yellow hands." As for the previous occupant, a man had rented the apartment upon completion of the building the spring before, had shown himself very seldom, and was nowhere to be found at the expiration of the lease. He had paid his rent quarterly by money order, and no one had seen him for weeks, when it came to an issue and new tenants had to be given the apartment. Nor did the agent get any replies to his letters, for they were found unopened in the man's mail box. The little furniture and few personal effects he had were never called for after the flat had been rented to the Gems. From descriptions, however, it was supposed that he was the man who had been run down by an automobile at about the time of the tenant's last disappearance, and who had died. The facts were scraped together so long afterward, however, they were of the barest kind.

A visit to the agent of the building supplemented these statements with the facts that the man's name was John Barcole; that he was a bachelor, that no one had ever been known to come to see him or inquire about him and that his mail, if he received any, did not come to the house. His effects were advertised and then sold, and the flat redecorated for occupancy of its present tenants.

"Well, one thing is certain," remarked Sheffield, "the stolen plans of the Boyle Rapid Firer have been found."

"Gad! man," replied Carter, "but there was sweating over that thing in Government circles when they thought Japan

or Mexico might have gotten them." Then, suddenly, from the corner of his eye, he surveyed Sheffield's hands and began to ponder.

II.

It was still early that morning when a cautious little form stepped from the be-palmed and carpeted marble entrance of the apartment building where the Gems lived and proceeded down the street. A tall, lean, masculine figure kept an almost even pace on the opposite side of the street, followed the feminine form into a drug store and occupied a telephone booth adjoining the one where the young girl had secreted herself.

"Mr. Coleman Algiers, please," he heard voiced in sweet contralto after a number had been named. And then: "Coleman! At last! This is Louise. Some one broke into our apartment last night and the police found a picture of yours on the floor and are trying to find out your present address. I only want you to be careful—Coleman—"

The young girl stood brooding for a moment after having replaced the receiver; then left the booth and the drug store.

"Found anything?" asked Carter as his friend rejoined him outside.

"Quite a nibble; Coleman Algiers; not living at his father address. What came of the accident statistics?"

"Nothing much, Sheffield. There have been two unidentified victims of which this Barcole must have been one.

"Young Algiers, then may be badly mixed up in this international sneak-thief game. His father is wealthy, but very often these young spendthrifts find themselves hard pressed. It is just possible that some pal of the dead Barcole ingratiated himself with Miss Gem's frowned-upon lover in order to get the lay

of the flat. Our clew, I believe, may start at his door and wind up at the door of the Mexican who has turned international burglar."

"Where does Algiers live?"

"Let us see. Kenwood 291 was the number she called, and my phone directory gives it as 4110 Combark avenue. Come. That is on the opposite side of the city."

III.

The air was still heavy when they reached the opposite side of the city; the mist made pastels out of every house. All the streets had a mirage appearance. The dim gold of the sunlight was reflected from neither brick facade nor casement, but seemed to drift on through, as though these were ethereal projections that would condense with the mist into drops, at dew-point.

The mirage included a lad in his early twenties standing as in indecision beside a house of fairylike architecture.

"Let's have another look at this photograph. I brought it away with me. H'm! No mistaking! He's the lad."

Suddenly, without seeming to begin to go, "the lad" was making down the street at a great pace. The two detectives followed him through many by-ways. Then, after a westerly walk of three-quarters of an hour, he reached a little street of shambly brick houses that bordered a small and old cemetery. He slipped in at the gate of the corner house and rapped on the door. A middle-aged, aproned woman opened to him and, after some prolonged conversation, indistinguishable to the two who had followed, the woman motioned the lad into the house.

Sheffield and his colleagues made a tour of the outside. It was a prison-like, one-story, atticless little dwelling; every window had iron bars built into the masonry.

Through one of these windows they looked into a moderately furnished bedroom and saw that young Algiers was seated in a rocker there, apparently in deep study.

Sheffield led the way to the front of the house again and knocked at the door. They heard a low, savage whine, a word of command, gently spoken, and the middle-aged woman again opened the door.

She was a short, asthmatic, work-a-day soul, with streaks of gray through her thin hair, a placid countenance and quick, bewildered blue eyes. Crouching low near her, but with a hideous watchfulness permeating its attitude, lay the most fiendish-looking and monstrous bulldog the two men had ever seen. But it gave absolute obedience to the simple woman, whom Sheffield now started to question in low tones, first showing her his legal right to do so.

Upon his asking to see the gentleman she had just admitted, she indicated a door in the hall where she stood, immediately to the right. Sheffield entered the house door, but just as he raised his hand to rap upon the bedroom door his attention was seized by the long and ghastly handprint that showed itself brightly upon the shabby wall paper beside the doorway. His eyes glittered as he took from his wallet the square of rich wall covering he had taken from the Gem home.

"Identical!" he noted.

Then, with the keenest blade of his pocket-knife, while the woman stared dumbly, he cut an oblong on the dingy paper, wedged it loose from the wall and procured a replica of the first hand print.

He reached into his pocket, drew out a specially prepared sealed envelope, addressed fictitiously, in a wide, flowing hand, to "Mr. C. Andrus."

"Hand this to the man in there and ask him if he is the party to whom it is

addressed. Hold it by this corner, if you please, and give it to him, and when he hands it back, bring it by the same corner."

As she hesitated, he again turned back the lapel of his coat, exposing the corner of a gleaming detective badge.

The woman took the envelope gingerly, eying Sheffield the while with animal wonder, and disappeared only to bring the envelope back after a few moments.

"Did he take it into his hands?" whispered Sheffield.

"Yes, sir. It wasn't his'n and he give it right back. He don't room here. I never see him before. He just came askin' for a man that has that room and he said as long as he wasn't in, he would wait for him."

"Don't you know who he is at all?"

"No, sir. But he must be a friend of Mr. Simpson's."

"Mr. Simpson," Sheffield repeated, inquiringly.

"Yes, sir. He's my roomer. He's the only roomer I ever had. My daughter married in February, and one day this man come to the door and said he just come out of the county hospital and I let him have my daughter's old room till he got well—he looked so sick and bad—and I found I didn't mind him—he's quiet—and no one comin' 'round to see him and making noise—I told him he could have the room permanent. He gives me twelve dollars a week for it."

"Pretty good rental." Sheffield paused. "Did he have the bars put on the windows?"

"No. They were on when Mr. Kelly, my dead husband, bought the house, when Minnie was a baby."

"I see. Thank you, Mrs. Kelly; there has been a mistake and would you be kind enough not to mention our visit here? Would you just forget it altogether?"

He handed her a bit of green paper.

"I understand! Yes, sir! I see," she answered, with laughter twinkling in her eyes. "I know; my husband was a policeman."

CHAPTER IV

One of the most pulsing moments of a detective's life comes when a fingerprint is about to reveal itself. Sheffield stood at a lamp with the envelope addressed to C. Andrus in his hand. Upon a shelf beside him were the two large squares of wall paper with the lank, ghastly, duplicate prints upon them. Sheffield tossed the envelope into a far wastebasket. Carter looked glum.

"That clears the youngster," he remarked. "I thought possibly he had painted his own hands yellow—but no. Now back again to the Mexican or Japanese hand theory."

He then did something that startled Carter into wide-mouthed staring: Sheffield removed another envelope, addressed similarly to the first. Carter gazed in complete astonishment as Sheffield walked across the floor and sprinkled some lycopodium powder on the envelope, shaking it carefully.

"Have you both your automatics in readiness? Because we have here—well, examine them first yourself, Carter. You're nearer the lamp," and he tossed the envelope.

"Whose fingerprints are these?" Carter inquired.

"Don't say you don't recognize them!" Sheffield made a bound toward him.

"It's not the 'wall-paper print.'"

Josman Sheffield craned his neck and peered at the envelope a pulsing second.

"I see it is not, indeed. When we were stalled in the taxicab at the graveyard corner a half-hour ago, on our way home

from our friend Mrs. Kelly, and you were helping the chauffeur fix the engine, I saw a tall individual go to Mrs. Kelly's door. Having followed him, I overheard him say to her when she came to the door, that he would be back in the course of the afternoon and that he intended to sleep for the rest of the day when he returned. As he came down the street again, I handed him this envelope and asked him if he could direct me to the man whose name was upon it. He had no gloves on, and he took the envelope into his hand, and this is his print. And it is not the print we are seeking. Yet I have now a profound conviction that Simpson is Mr. Barcole, supposedly deceased. I could almost swear to it, tho I have never seen Mr. Barcole and may not have seen Simpson this morning. But one thing is certain: The man who visited the Gem home—tho he were a Japanese confederate, has visited Mrs. Kelly or her roomer also, as these bits of wall paper tell us.

"We have three moves to make. Our last will be to Mrs. Kelly's again, on Thorne and West Harrison streets. But on our way we shall stop off near the Loop and have the bureau of identification photograph and enlarge the index-finger and thumb of one of these wall-paper prints and have the loops, deltas and whorls numbered; then submit them to the clerk for identification. And after that, I have a little added data to look up—a matter of a half-hour or so."

And so the two men were soon speeding in a cab toward South Clark street and the bureau of identification. The enlarging and numbering of the print was a matter of not many minutes and as they handed the finished work to the clerk to be looked up in the card index of crook finger-prints, the latter sighed wearily and started to forage amongst the systematized records.

It was not long, however, before his face lighted with interest.

"Why, these are the fingerprints of London Johnnie Corp," he declared. "Went down in the City of Ottumwa; body picked up the day after disaster; buried in a little cemetery on Thorne and West Harrison streets. Grave X206. Buried by his son, it says here."

"And you are quite positive that every whorl and delta, every loop corresponds?"

"Oh! Absolutely, Mr. Sheffield. Won't you step in here? You can see for yourself that it does."

CHAPTER V.

In Mrs. Kelly's little sitting-room, two hours later, the problem took on an even deeper tone.

"I swear, Mr. Sheffield—and I'm a good Catholic," the poor woman said, after Sheffield had been questioning her for some minutes, "that no one but Black Douglas—my dog—Mr. Simpson and I have come in this house for months—this is September—for seven months, before this morning; not even last night, when I sat in the front door, it being so hot. Mr. Simpson has been away in Pittsburgh and came back about 3 o'clock this morning, as he said he would. But he was all alone, as always. And Black, here, would tear anybody into shreds who even tried the doors, back or front. The graveyard is right at the back here, you know."

"But you may have gone out shopping or marketing."

"Oh, I hardly ever go out, and when I do it is only across the street to the little store. And then I lock up good, and Black keeps house for me and I am always back in a few minutes. And I haven't been out for two or three days now, anyway. And Mr. Simpson has never had an outside door key, for I am always here to open for him."

"Could he have procured an impression from your key?"

"No, sir. He could never do that. I keep it tied around my neck under my dress. It's a Yale. I sleep with it on."

"And yet these fingerprints on your wall. It's uncanny, Carter."

"And ain't they Mr. Simpson's?" Mrs. Kelly turned white as paper. Her jaws dropped and one could almost see her knees quake under the ample folds of her dress.

"No. Nor the young man's," Carter informed her.

"I knew that," she replied, "for I remarked them there before the young man came this morning. I intended to rub them off the paper." She suddenly sunk to a terrified whisper, and tiny pearls of perspiration began to form over her brow and face. "It—it must be a hant," came faintly from her.

"Mrs. Kelly, were the fingerprints there yesterday?"

"No."

"How can you be sure?"

"Why, I washed all the woodwork around the doors yesterday afternoon, and I swear the dirty fingermarks were not there then."

"You sat in your front doorway all night long and did not leave once?"

"I did not even go to sleep, Mr. Sheffield; not even so much as close my eye, it being so hot. Mrs. Casey and I chatted once in a while. Most of the people on this street were in their doorways gasping for a little breeze."

"You may have dozed without knowing it?"

"Oh, but I didn't. Even if I had, nothing could escape Black Douglas, who was right beside me."

Sheffield looked at the creature. "No, I quite agree with you, Mrs. Kelly," he said:

"You see, the front door," she resumed,

"is opposite the back door in this middle hall; so Black can watch both doors at once. I was sitting right in the doorway and that handmark isn't a yard from where I sat. And then look at those bars across the back door. And look at those iron bolts."

"One more question, Mrs. Kelly: Why do you keep this ferocious animal?"

"Well—I suppose I don't mind telling you, a detective, Mr. Sheffield. My husband did not leave me bad off and—this is between you and me—I'm not trusting to busting banks! There."

At the moment the front doorbell rang. Black Douglas whined savagely, but was quieted by a word from his mistress, who in another moment brought in Coleman Algers, excited; anxious; at the breaking point.

"Has this Mr. Simpson returned yet?" he almost demanded of Mrs. Kelly, ignoring the two strangers.

"What do you want of Mr. Simpson?" Sheffield asked, kindly.

"I want to know what his business was in a certain apartment I know of, at 2 o'clock this morning!"

"My dear Algers," replied Sheffield, "that is precisely what we want to know, too. Perhaps we can work to our mutual benefit."

The youth was greatly taken back. But his astonishment soon gave place to apprehension and he begged that Louise Gem's name in no way be made public property.

"She is the dearest girl you can imagine," he said. "And I wouldn't have her name become public property for the world."

"Her mother doesn't favor you."

"No—nor does my father favor her. It is hard for us for a little while yet—but not for long. When I become of age, next month, I come into my own fortune."

"Tell us," queried Sheffield. "Why did you happen to think that this Mr. Simpson broke into their apartment this morning?"

Young Algers plucked at his cap for a moment. "Well," he said, finally, "Louise leaves a letter for me in their mailbox every night before she retires. She has given me a key for the box and—er—I call for my letter and leave one for her. I always do this pretty late in the night. Well, as I came out, and looked up at her window, the light in her room suddenly lighted and I heard Louise scream. Then a man—or a shadow of a man, he was so gaunt—slid out of the vestibule of the house and down the street, with the least exertion and greatest speed I have ever seen displayed. And with all my athletics, I could not keep up with him. But I did manage to keep him in sight, on and off cars for an hour, and when he got just about at this corner, he absolutely disappeared. At first I thought he had actually slipped into a grave in that cemetery—"

Mrs. Kelly hereupon nodded her head knowingly.

"—but then I saw a light in that barred window across the hall. And at present I would be willing to save the State a boarder if it would not entail dragging Louise's name before the public."

At this moment the doorbell again sounded. It was ten minutes past 6. Mrs. Kelly put her fingers to her lips and left the sitting-room, closing the door after her. The opening of the outer door, a moment's conversation, and the closing and locking up of the door again were heard.

Mrs. Kelly returned to the sitting-room, closing the door after her most carefully.

"It's him," she whispered.

CHAPTER VI.

It was immediately decided to have an interview with "him."

Following a knock upon it, the door to Mr. Simpson's room was opened noiselessly by a tall, fleshless man of perhaps 45 years of age. He had the air of an aesthete; it transcended every feature of his dress and manner. His hair was a light brown;

his face extremely thin, almost hollow, but with finely molded features and pale, tired blue eyes that showed the whites beneath. He bade his callers enter with a quiet courtesy that was to make their task very difficult.

"He's the man I saw coming out of her house," young Algers breathed to Carter.

"You will pardon our intrusion," Sheffield said, taking the initiative and showing his passports, "when you know it is a matter of relatively great importance that brings us here. People are everywhere being questioned, for there is a citywide catechism in progress. Some have taken it unpleasantly, but the majority have shown a true patriotism in telling whatever they could of themselves and their actions so that we could strengthen our premises."

"I shall be glad to give you any information I have on anything you wish to ask," Mr. Simpson attested.

"Good! Without losing any time, then—what is your occupation? And I should like to have you account for your movements from 12 midnight until 3 o'clock this morning."

Mr. Simpson proceeded upon the two questions with gratifying directness.

"I am an assistant accountant with the Pitkin Accounting Firm of this city. As for my movements: At 12 last night I was sitting in the library car of train No. 3, from Pittsburgh, where I had been sent to go over the books of Rynold, Smith & Co. of that city. At 1 a. m. I was still in the library car. At 1:45 the train pulled in and I alighted. After I had walked a way from the station, I thought I should like to smoke. I had no cigars in my pocket, but I saw a drug store lighted up in the distance. I felt wakeful and in need of stretching my limbs. When I got to the drug store I noticed I was on Hampver avenue. I wondered if I were near the home of a ward-fellow of mine at the county hospital. We

had both been struck by the same automobile in the latter part of March, and taken to the same ward. He was much more seriously hurt than I—was growing weaker constantly, in fact, when I left the hospital. I happened to come across his name and address in my pocket, night before last, and when I saw I had come to the very street where he had lived, I thought I should like to determine whether he had ever recovered."

"What was this man's name?"

"He gave it to me in confidence, telling me that no one else in the hospital knew who he was. He seemed to fear something. But—the poor fellow is undoubtedly dead now—his name was John Barcole."

"I see. And did you succeed in finding his former place of residence on Hampver avenue?"

"Yes. It was some four or five blocks east—near the park; a beautiful, large apartment building. I went into the entrance and looked over the bell plates, but there was no Barcole there; so I went on, got to a street car and was home by 3 o'clock a. m., I believe."

Mrs. Kelly corroborated it gravely.

"I thank you very kindly," said Sheffield, opening the door and shaking the man's hand, in spite of the fact that he still believed Barcole and Simpson were the same man.

"I am afraid the ghosts have it, Carter," he said, once outside of the house. "I should almost believe that Simpson himself were the ghost, but for the fact that his fingerprints are different from our ghostly ones of the wall papers. I have already assured myself—short tho the excursions have been to and within this house—that the bars and windows have not been tampered with, that the floorings, walls and ceilings are intact, that the bulldog is non-approachable and Mrs. Kelly irreproachable. In fine, Carter, I am afraid now"—his voice grew quizzical

—"we are dealing with the dead; that we should not find that handprint if we took every human being's impression, yellow and white, on this planet. In fact, it is up to the dead London Johnnie. I am in earnest. Our wall-paper prints show the fingerprints of a dead man. Why, did you notice that neither Mrs. Gem or her daughter saw anything but a ghastly pair of hands? Come—it's getting dark. Let us dig up the grave, X 206 I think the clerk said."

Carter was used to Josman Sheffield's vagaries, but he now thought he saw strange lines of relationship between his present "aberration" and his late increasingly nervous state.

"We shall dig up his grave, Carter. Ah! Here is Mrs. Kelly now, with the spade and the lamp and the blotting-paper. Thank you, Mrs. Kelly—and the pins? Ah! a whole paper of them! This will make a capital dark-lantern. We shall want to return shortly without ringing the bell."

"This young gentleman and I will be watching at the window for you," she assured the men, scarcely breathing.

As soon as the door was closed, Carter started the most profound tirade in whispers against Sheffield's proposed actions, a tirade which only shivered to fragments against the stone wall of his companion's silence. The latter tiptoed around the sitting-room side of the cottage, and into the small cemetery at the rear. Carter watched from a distance the indistinct form of his friend, who dug up the earth in what appeared to be a recently made grave, lighted now and meagerly by the improvised dark-lantern. The soft shovelfulls fell noiselessly to the side. The rhythm of motion was ghastly. It was many minutes before it ceased. Then Sheffield came toward the little gate where Carter stood.

"Are you too chicken-hearted to bear me witness?" he demanded. "I find the lid off;

the glass exposed and tilted. Come and see."

Carter could only follow.

"My dear friend," said Josman, feelingly, "I thank you. It is as ghastly—as sacrilegious to me as to you. But it is not we, you'll admit, who have torn the lid and cover away. Look! The hands are gone. Johnnie Corp's hands are missing. That's all, Carter. Now, let us return to Mr. Simpson."

But Sheffield paused as he finished this sentence, bowed his head in profound silence and remained thus for a full minute. Then he led the way back to the house.

But when they got back to the house they found a scene had been taking place during their absence. Coleman Algers held an aimless gun, while the dog battled with Mr. Simpson, snarling and biting with death menace. Mrs. Kelly lay upon the floor unconscious. Carter seized a gun and beat upon the beast with the butt of it, while Sheffield jumped off to one corner, covering Simpson.

The dog was soon reduced to a point where he crept whiningly away.

"First hand over those corpse-skin gloves that you tanned," Sheffield dictated. Mr. Simpson reluctantly produced from an inner pocket a pair of yellow coverings—coverings of thick but flexible human skin—that laced down the backs of the hands and fingers.

"And so, Mr. Simpson, ex-Barcole, ex-Rainee, you thought that dead London Johnnie could carry a few more tricks to his debit, and that his burial in this obscure little cemetery directly in back of you would give you the golden opportunity of securing that clever device of a pair of human skin gloves—gloves that we thought for a long time were the hands of some Jap who was trying to get the stolen plans of the Boyle Rapid Firer! I arrest you, not for desecra-

tion of a grave; not for attempted murder; but for the theft of the Boyle Rapid Firer plans, which you stole when you worked as John Raine, draughtsman, in the Government arsenal at Rock Island. You realized, didn't you, old man, that if you went back to the flat after your recovery from the automobile accident and asked permission to dig back in the wall for your private possessions, they'd have suspected something crooked. And that was why you dropped in, in the dead of night, with your old latchkey, hands all nicely laced in Johnnie Corp's whorls and deltas. You knew you were the only former occupant of the apartment; that you had been employed at the Government arsenal. These were incriminating facts, were you to be picked up in this affair. You knew that if you wore—

say—rubber gloves, and turned the finger of suspicion away from you, it would be waving about in the air and likely to fasten upon you again. But if you could make it point directly at an internationally famous crook—who was dead—what then?"

Sheffield's eyes glittered.

"It would be the cleverest revenge ever devised against the fingerprint experts who for seven years running have refused to adopt your 'Raine System of Fingerprint Cataloging.' You would place a flaw in the fingerprint system because of your consuming hatred for the clan who pointed out the flaws in your own successive treatises on it.

"But you didn't get away with it. And as for your saffron customer for the Rapid Firer plans—he will have to lick his chops a while longer. Call a taxi, Carter."

SAUCY ESSAYS

MARRIAGE

Marriage is a legalized form of mutual suicide. After marriage death has no victory and the grave has no sting.

Marriage is the half-way point between two courts: You go to court, before and after.

There are two famous sentences in the English language. One is: "I sentence you to be hung by the neck until dead." The other: "I now pronounce you man and wife."

Before marriage, the man makes love to his girl in the moon-shine; after marriage, he drowns himself in it.

Marriage has a new champion in Golf. That game is about to get more husbands than the divorce courts.

Don't get the idea that marriage isn't all right. It is—for others.

—Geo. Butler.



THE EMERGENCY CASE



BY ALBERT J. KLINCK

IT was not a matter of obstinacy on the part of Miss Sewell, the head nurse. She was merely adhering to the rules of the hospital. The doctor knew as well as she did that no operation was performed on Sunday unless it was an emergency case. When he came in she was just leaving the institution for her home, where twice a month she was privileged to remain from Saturday evening to Sunday evening. Perhaps because he did not wish to detain her, no further argument was made on his part.

"Why don't you operate tonight, Doctor Holcomb?" she asked.

"Well, I may," he replied. "You will not be back, of course?"

"No," she said, "I shall not be back in the clinic until early Monday morning."

"Very well."

Miss Sewell could see that the surgeon was not in his most agreeable mood. He had a way of being brief on such occasions which conveyed all that was necessary to her.

"Nurse Stone will have charge during my absence," she informed him, with her usual politeness. "So if you decide to operate tonight—"

"I don't know," he interrupted, somewhat brusquely, "whether I'll operate at all or not."

Without further parley he walked away. Louise Sewell waited until he banged the door after him. Then she touched a button, and shortly Miss Stone made her appearance.

"Doctor Holcomb may operate tonight," she told the younger nurse. "See that everything is made ready for him. And if he should come back and wish to arrange for an operation tomorrow, impress upon him the fact that no operation is performed in this institution on Sunday unless it is an emergency case. I expect you to be firm with him in this, Miss Stone."

"Yes, of course," the latter said.

On the way home Miss Sewell allowed her mind to dwell upon Doctor Holcomb and the hospital she was leaving more than was her wont. Why did he persist in being so close-tongued about things connected with the institution? Why did he not state outright as to whether or not the case was an emergency one? The mere fact that he did not, led one to be very suspicious. Conflicting decisions were formed in her mind, out of the chaos of which one rose predominant; she would call up the hospital tomorrow and find out definitely if he had reappeared. The more she thought of it the firmer she became! But once home, away from the scenes which she felt were daily hardening her, with no inclination to bring them back, she allowed the matter to drop from her memory as far as possible.

Late Sunday night she returned to the hospital—that is, to the separate structure which housed the female heads of departments and the nurses under them. She was no sooner in her room than, strangely, Doctor Holcomb again entered her

mind. She went to a window and looked down upon that part of the institution which contained the operating room. Ordinarily, at night she could never bring herself to cast even a glance in this direction. As she stood there now she wondered what the outcome had been in regard to the doctor and his rather veiled allusion to an operation. Had he come back and performed it on Saturday night? Or had he broken precedent and done his work on Sunday—a work not in the nature of an emergency case? And again, why did he speak of performing it at night? Was not this, after all, along lines of proof that it was an emergency case? But why did he not offer some sort of an explanation?

Miss Sewell turned away from the window. He never explained anything, she mused. He held it to be unprofessional to tell aught of his patients beyond the bald routine of treatment he prescribed. She half laughed at herself for allowing the thing to so disturb her. Here she was, risen to the head of the clinic, knowing Holcomb and his ways so well, away from the institution repeatedly on a Sunday, with never an advantage having been taken—here she was actually losing sleep over it. She hurried off with her clothes and tumbled into bed.

After breakfast the following morning the impulse was strong upon her to make straight for the record book to see what, if any, use had been made of the operating room during her absence. But she conquered herself sufficiently to go through the usual routine and allowed her eyes to rest upon what they sought only at the time her associates expected her to. In the meantime she could not question Nurse Stone. The latter was off duty until noon.

Finally Miss Sewell stood at a small desk and was turning the pages of a book. The last entry caught her eye for it was

not in her handwriting but that of Nurse Stone. She started, and read to the end. She compressed her lips, and looked again. There was no mistake about it. Doctor Holcomb had used the operating room between 9 a. m. and 10:30 a. m. on Sunday, and it was not an emergency case!

She closed the book. In the first heat of her discovery she made the determination to report the matter to the proper authorities. Hereafter Doctor Holcomb should be forbidden the use of the operating-room if he did not obey a law, unwritten, to be sure, but one no surgeon had ever broken before.

And in face of the fact that she herself had cautioned him. But sterner duties now confronted her. She had to direct her mind elsewhere. The first case of the day was due in the operating room at any moment.

By noon, the time Nurse Stone was to return, Louise Sewell had reasoned out that she must not be hasty in a matter which might be after all satisfactorily adjusted. However, Doctor Holcomb's open defiance still assailed her.

She called Miss Stone aside when they met.

"How is it," she asked, "that Doctor Holcomb used the operating room on Sunday if it was plainly not an emergency case?"

"He declared it was an emergency case, Miss Sewell," she was at once told.

"He declared it was an emergency case?" cried out the other. "How dared he? What does he think we are—idiots? You know as well as I do that there have been no emergency cases in the place during the last week."

"Yes, I do," acknowledged the understudy. "But he came early yesterday morning, bringing his patient with him. I at once asked if it were an emergency case and he said it was. We began to

get things ready. Then I suspected that it was not an emergency case. I told Doctor Holcomb so. He insisted it was. Of course it was not a time for argument, with the patient already upon the table. I felt it was my duty to go to the superintendent. But it was too late. Doctor Holcomb took entire charge himself. All I could do was wait on the outside of the room in case of complications. Which I did. What should I have done, Miss Sewell?" she ended.

The head of the clinic knitted her brows.

"If he had only explained," went on Miss Stone. "But he didn't. And he wouldn't."

"No," said Miss Sewell. "He wouldn't in the face of a legion of devils. Its not the nature of the beast."

"He did make one statement, however," then announced Miss Stone.

"Did he?" came from the other woman. "Is it possible? And what was it?"

"He said he could prove it was an emergency case."

After a moment, Miss Sewell said:

"Well, he'll have to, and to me."

She turned away. But again faced Miss Stone and asked:

"How is the patient?"

"Oh," broke out Miss Stone, "don't you know? Haven't you heard? The strange part of it is the patient left bright and early this morning—just after I had breakfast."

"Left? Early this morning?" Miss Sewell was wild-eyed. "Do you mean she has gone from the institution—actually left the building?"

"Yes."

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed Miss Sewell. "It is impossible. After an operation of any sort, why—"

"The patient is no longer here," said Miss Stone. "I know it because I helped her out to a taxicab."

"What is the world coming to?" were the words that escaped Miss Sewell's lips.

She left Miss Stone and hurried over to her room in the annex. Here she sat down and tried to figure out just what was to be done in the matter.

At the end of the day she had not called up Doctor Holcomb. And during this same period of time he had not called her up. Having charge of that department, as she did, the whole thing was in her hands to dispose of as she should decide. Professionally, she knew it was her duty to find out why Doctor Holcomb had seen fit to break one of the rules of the hospital. Was it, after all, an emergency case? But how could it be? No item of her long term of learning could so diagnose it. Still, if a patient, after an operation of any sort, could rise from her bed within twenty-four hours and leave the hospital, why almost anything might be possible.

Several days passed without Doctor Holcomb's visiting the institution. There was no actual need of his coming. He had but two patients there and they were so far on the way to recovery the internes were able to take care of them. Then, unexpectedly he appeared. At the time Miss Sewell was free from duty. She was in the office alone when he entered. Instantly she became alive to the situation. Would he mention the operation first or would it become her duty to do so?

She greeted him with her usual cordiality. In return he was the same Doctor Holcomb—scant of speech, tense, restless. He was bringing in a new patient in the morning. The fact of his coming to the hospital to make it known Miss Sewell at once set down as an act of condescension. Heretofore he had always used the telephone for that purpose.

Somehow she felt he had more than this to say. She waited to find out. But he ventured nothing, and reluctantly, as Miss Sewell seemed to see it, he started

to go. She was in no mood to have the thing drift on further and finally submerge itself into nothingness. So though she had hoped to have him take the initiative, she made the plunge herself by saying:

"Now in regard to that operation you performed last Sunday morning."

"Yes?" With the word he came closer to her.

"You know the rules of the hospital as well as I do," she told him. "Why did your perform that operation then? It was not an emergency case."

For a moment he eyed her. "Wasn't it?" he then asked.

"No."

"Why wasn't it?" he put to her.

"Don't talk nonsense," she broke out, almost pettishly. "I have looked at the record book. And I have talked with Miss Stone, who had charge during my absence. Don't you suppose I have any knowledge of what an emergency case is?" This with a voice rising to falsetto.

"Whatever your opinion in the matter, Miss Sewell," he said, "it was an emergency case and I insist upon it."

"Absurd," the woman cried.

"My dear Miss Sewell," he began, in a voice entirely new to her, "there are emergency cases and emergency cases. I might have explained all to you when the subject was brought up last Saturday evening. But circumstances kept me from doing so. Now, before many minutes pass by, I hope to be able to explain as I wish I might have then. First of all let me tell you that my patient was a chorus girl."

"Chorus girl?" came from Miss Sewell.

Why was he eying her so keenly? Did he expect her to start? If he did, he was not disappointed.

"Yes?" With the word she sighed.

"The musical comedy in which this girl was appearing," he went on, "is in the

first weeks of its run. Rehearsals are still being held daily. If a member of the company falls out now, it means in all probability no engagement before next season. There are hundreds waiting to step in. A chorus girl is a human being and has to have food and a bed to sleep in. Is it a wonder then that she will hang on with grim death? My patient was hanging on in that way. If you know what I mean, then you know what would have happened to her eventually without the operation. I need not go into the unpleasant details about that. But what you do not know is this: her manager refused absolutely to give her even one night off. She had asked for at least three, which, with a Sunday, would have made about four days to recover from an operation which in some cases has required four weeks. That's all she asked for—three days off. But the manager said no. So she came to me for advice. She told me her story. I suggested the operation. I told her I could perform it on Saturday night after the performance. If not then, in all probability early the following morning. With the coming of Saturday night she lost courage. But on Sunday morning, before I was out of bed, she 'phoned that her mind was made up. I hurried, picked her up in my machine and brought her here."

Miss Sewell was now strangely agitated. There were traces of tears in her eyes.

"Was it an emergency case or was it not?" Doctor Holcomb coldly put to her.

She turned away.

"Do not ask me," she replied in a broken voice. "And her leaving the hospital as she did—did she know she was courting death?"

"I warned her."

"Did you think she would leave when she did?" Miss Sewell asked.

"I knew she was a brave little girl. I

expected almost anything. One of the internes 'phoned to me that she was going. Before I could reach the hospital she had gone. And by the time I got to the station her train had pulled out. The company was playing Buffalo that night."

The two of them stood silent, gazing into space.

"I kept wondering how she was standing it," continued the surgeon. "She had my name and address. Would she let me know? And then, a short time ago, I received this."

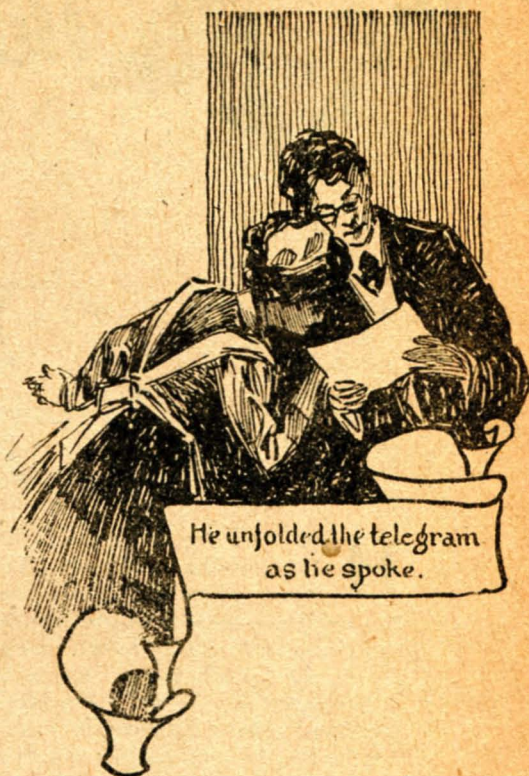
Slowly he drew a telegram from his inside pocket.

"She's—dead?" cried Miss Sewell at sight of it.

Holcomb said nothing for a time.

"She ran away from home to go on the stage." He still spoke in that strange tone of voice. "So many girls do, and the stage is not the best place for a girl. It's a fascinating calling—the stage, just as medicine or surgery is, just as nursing is. It seems that—"

He unfolded the telegram as he spoke. Miss Sewell was trembling from head to foot. She did not wait for him to place the message in her hands. She seized it



and devoured the contents through tear-dimmed eyes.

"Oh," she sobbed, "I—I was afraid it would be so. Mazie is dead—Mazie, my own little sister, Mazie!"

Teacher—"What gender is boy?"

Johnny—"Masculine."

Teacher—"What gender is girl?"

Johnny—"Feminine."

Teacher—"What gender is cat?"

Johnny—"Let me see the cat."

—Fred K. Little.

The Handmirror Something to Read at Your Leisure

A black and white illustration of a woman in profile, looking into a hand mirror. She is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, dress with a high collar and long sleeves. The style is reminiscent of late 19th or early 20th-century magazine illustrations.

THE PROFILE

By

Henry Wills Mitchell

HE'D seen her many, many times, from afar and dreamed of her fully ten thousand times. But that which baffled him was, that no matter when and where he saw this face, in dream, or in its satin-like reality of flesh, it was always in profile. Her beauty left him weak and inane, and it began to tell on him. It got on his nerves to an alarming degree—plainly it was playing the devil with him. He could neither eat or sleep in comfort. The face was always present in profile, and there was always the desire present to stretch out his hands and turn the head. Ah, how he longed to feel his fingers pressing against her chin that he might turn her head in another and more desirable position—the position—just as the photographer does. At first he felt foolish, for why should this thought come to him? He could not answer, and, indeed, the more he tried to reason out the thing, the more he became obsessed with it.

* * *

Now, had it been some horribly shocking face, with a birth-mark, or, perhaps, a scarred face, that he was seeing so persistently day after day, and night after night, he could well imagine why he should experience this unrest that was fast driving him mad. But, this face was divinely fair, or, rather, this half of face. It was this kind of a face that was haunting him. He found that it was not because the face was so beautiful that he wished to see the other side of it, but simply because he knew that he'd seen but the one side of it! This he knew in a thousand ways and was conscious of it as one knows on which side of the street one's house is situated when approaching it from the north, south, east or west. So, thus it was, the face in profile became to him the one torturing thought. It swam before him! It cried to him! It smiled! pouted, laughed, grimaced at him, and of late he noticed that the eye winked at him. It was a beautifully full heavily lidded, fringed eye, but God, it was but one eye. At these times his mind would go off at a jump. No wonder!

* * *

Months he haunted public places in hope of seeing the other side of her face. He even lied and practiced all kinds of schemes that he might

be given cards to public and private affairs, hoping that she would be there, and that he might but catch one glimpse of the other side of the face. He felt if this were granted—indeed, he knew it—the spell would be broken.

* * *

Now, I wish to be understood as not trying to build up any Poe-like plot with any array of words, that I might play on your imagination. I am but laying the cold facts before you for consideration.

* * *

I have said he devised various plans in hopes of seeing the other side of the face—or, her face. You or I, reader, would, I am sure, have been quite content to see one side of this face. Not so with him. In the first place, he was an artist. Secondly, he was a very nervous man. Why, what would you think of a man who would ride miles and miles on trolley cars—leaving his work that netted him over a thousand dollars a day—that he might count the letters of trolley car signs, or see how many words he could spell from such names as "Sapolio," "Verribest," "Bull Durham," "Littlepigsausage" or "Steelcutcoffee?" Then, too, he would try—spelling words backwards, you know—to see if they made sense.

* * *

He also told me that three months before he was born his mother was at death's door with lockjaw. He said she was three days in spasms. Then he was born.

* * *

One day he went to a certain art gallery. As he was about to enter a side door, he saw the beautiful face in profile. The owner was standing in rapt wonderment before a Millet. He quickly withdrew, with the object of entering by the other door on the opposite side, thinking to surprise her, thereby obtaining a view of the other side of her face. He did so, only to find the woman calmly looking at another picture on the opposite wall. Was it fate? Had the woman some way of divining his intentions? Was it a huge joke on her part that he should be made the fool? What of telepathy? Perhaps she had or was thinking on the matter as intently as he! Was it some deep mystery the fringe of which he had but just touched? All this, and more, gyrated through his brain like some crazy panorama. It was then the idiotic came. A question that might be associated with De Maupassant's *Horla*, so wild and illogical was it. Suppose there should not be another side of the face? What if there was nothing there? Nothing tangible? Horror, think of there being absolutely no other counterpart of the beautiful half of the face on which he'd looked? No other peach-like cheek. No other half of that beautiful chin, the dimple of which he saw but half. No other deep fringed eye with that world o' witchery within? Thus he questioned, thus he whispered all the day long, only to take these thoughts in dreams, and the same theme on the morrow.

The cold, beautiful women of Russia he'd painted. The voluptuous beauties of Spain, France and Italy, but never had he been so consumed with burning desire to paint a woman before as to now paint this creature. But mad as he was, he knew he would never be satisfied unless he could paint this being full-faced.

* * *

He had always loved women. When but a boy of ten or twelve they lavished their affection on him. At sixteen they pressed him to

their full, warm bosoms, murmuring, "He's only a boy." They allowed him the freedom of their castles and mansions, nor was he forbidden the inner shrine, where they powdered and perfumed him and called him their "bon vivant" and "bonne bouche." So, at the age of twenty-five, is it any wonder he begged their love and desired to paint them? Then, too, is not this reason enough why he should so desire to see this fair one full-faced?

* * *

"Tomorrow," Crenling, the noted society physician, had told him that he should meet her—he would present him. All had been arranged. "But," said he, "you will not care to paint that face in full."

The artist cried in anger frightful, "You're a fool! I not care to paint that face? Man, you're beside yourself!"

"Today I shall see the beauty!" The artist cried in excess of abandonment.

* * *

The doctor had access to her home, for he was her physician. The two men entered the magnificent mansion, warm in its Oriental splendor. The door of her private salon opened at the doctor's touch. They entered. She was sitting at the far end of a long room. She looked very beautiful, very ethereal, in the semi-darkness, seated as she was beneath a window set high in the wall, through which the amber light filters. Her face was in profile. Was her pose studied? Why the Oriental make-up? Why the mysterious soul-breaking quietness? Why had she not met them as a polite hostess should do? Why the overpowering perfume that pervaded the room till the artist's head reeled? What did it all mean? Was he about to be punished just because he had been so persistent in trying to see the other side of a woman's face? Hardly, and yet—

* * *

The doctor spoke: "Madam, I have brought Clyde Kinlock, the artist. The inimitable one. He has desired, with the desire of a Saint, to paint you full-faced. Will you not turn your head? He is a very presuming one, and yet he tells me he has always obtained that for which he has sought sooner or later. He is the knowing one. He is not satisfied with the half of your face, but must needs call on me for intercession with you. I have done so, Madam, as you know. True, you said that were he to look on the other side of your face he would only laugh, but in spite of this he must come. But, rest assured, lady, it is because of his art alone."

* * *

The artist was about to refute part of this accusation, but before he could open his lips there were horrible sounds of skurrying feet and distant lamentations, punctured with sharp cries of despair. The door at the far side of the room violently opened. A footman in plum-colored livery stumbled into the room. He rushed and threw himself at his mistress' knee. "Madam," he wailed, "the master is dead!"

The woman in the velvet chair, under the amber window, feebly threw out her long white arms, and slid unconscious to the floor.

The artist sprang forward. He raised her in his arms, bore her to the divan, where he gently laid her down. As he did so, her head fell to one side. The artist cried out, for he saw the remaining side of the face. It was the precise counterpart in color and contour of the other side.



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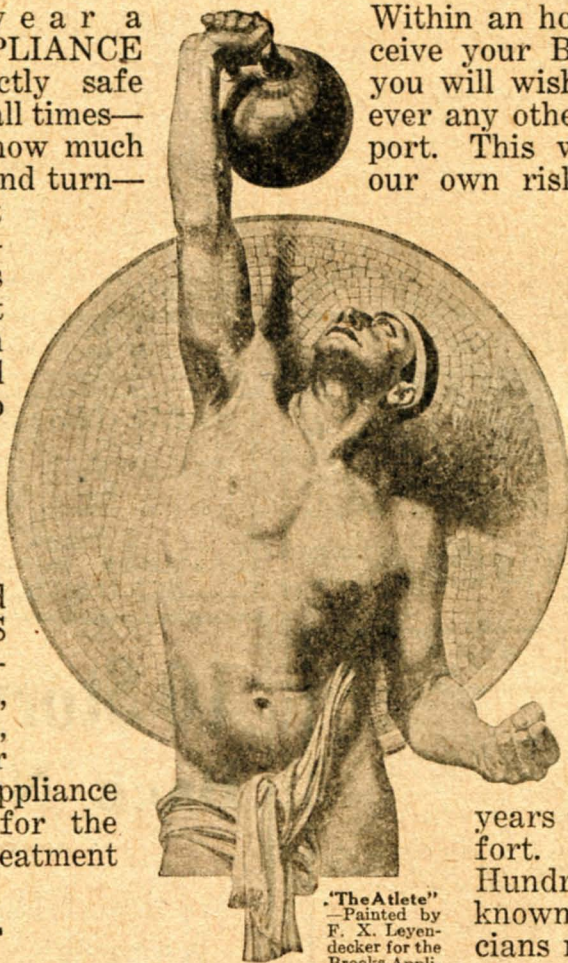
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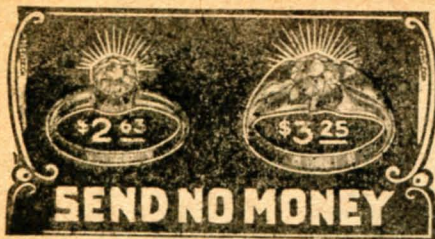
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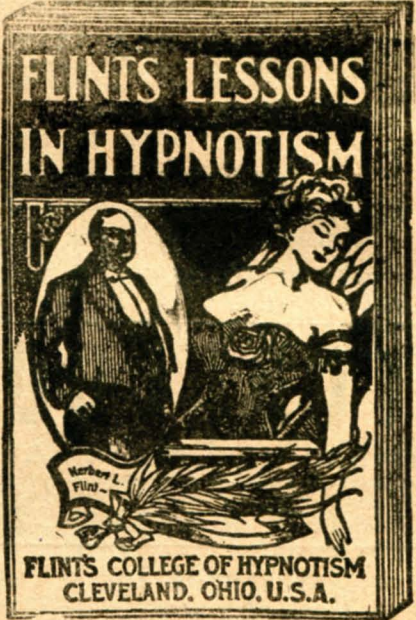
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