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10 Story Book

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The Devil's Model

BY RAY ST VRAIN

ERIC ROHN was that rarity, a rich artist. His studies in the female nude had made him famous. Critics often likened his flesh tones to those of that other rich artist—now gone to his reward—the indefatigable Bouguereau. They were pink-and-white—always ;like Bouguereau's. Beautiful certainly, too beautiful; like Bouguereau's again. But they sold amazingly.

Eric Rohn was a big blond handsome Thor of a man who had come to New York from the Scandinavian North. With success sweetening his days, still he was not happy—even in the somewhat phlegmatic way that characterizes his race. He had moved from his modest Greenwich Village studio to a palatial artists' apartment house uptown and thence to his Italian Renaissance mansion on the Drive; his great vogue had won him a wealthy and beautiful bride, the socially prominent Rosanne Van Pruyn, a member of the historic old Dutch family of that name . . . yet he was not happy.

"Why?" asked everybody.

His wife, who had dipped persistently into Bohemia before her marriage, supplied the answer:

"Poor Eric is so idealistic; he has never yet painted a picture that suits him. He has been unfortunate in having only models with pink-and-white flesh—never one with those exquisite green undertones that seem to have been the copyright of the great Henner. Really, it's his consuming ambition to become Henner's recognized successor; but where is he to find a model? He had searched everywhere without success."

Eric Rohn had an artist friend from the Pacific Coast, Ernie Clark, who was younger and less well-known than himself. Oddly enough, Ernie, a rather ingenious and attractive sort, was a victim of the same hypnosis that dominated Rohn—the eternal search for a Henner skin. When, therefore, it was whispered he was to exhibit an impressionistic Psyche at the forthcoming Independent Artists' Exhibition that would prove to be decidedly Henneresque, connoisseurs and the art-loving public alike were startled and incredulous.

Where had he found his model?

"Right here in the Village," Ernie laughingly answered his inquiring friends. "She's a supernal little blonde who has lived in the neighborhood of Sheridan Square for some time; but no other artist has seemed to notice her, not even the great Eric Rohn, who's crazy

for that kind of skin. Her name? Say, do I look imbecilic enough to tell? I'm going to cache her away! Seriously, when you see the picture maybe you can guess who she is."

Ernie did not disappoint his admirers. His Psyche, a life-sized nude, was the sensation of the exhibit. It much resembled a Henner masterpiece, rivalling the master's paintings in the Metropolitan Museum in the green fantasy of the flesh-color scheme.

On the first night of the exhibition Eric Rohn and his wife met the successful artist in front of his picture. Both graciously congratulated him.

"Well, Ernie, you found your model," said Rohn. "Henner himself couldn't have asked for a better one. May I inquire her name?"

Ernie flushed boyishly. "I don't want to be stringy, but isn't that asking a little too much?"

"Oh, I don't know. Don't we brother artists share our models?"

"As a rule, of course; but Burne-Jones kept Lenore White all to himself—and there have been many other instances—"

Eric Rohn, scowling, shrugged. "As you like. Come, Rosanne." And they moved away to look at the next picture.

"My dear Eric," said Rosanne, "why take it to heart so? Your fame is established—"

"So was Bouguereau's for time. Now what do people think of his peachbloom nudes? They laugh at them—and so will they at mine. I shall search New York from end to end until I find Ernie's model."

II.

He did.

He combed the Village, the entire Washington Square district, the uptown *ateliers*, the theatrical boarding-houses and dingy superseded hotels, the latter two for show girls who sometimes "double up" as models; then after weeks of futile effort he found her in West Fourth street, not a stone's throw from Ernie Clark's studio. He recognized her by her perfect resemblance to his friend's Psyche. Besides, she frankly admitted she had been Ernie's model.

She was Ruby Giddings, a little girl from the provinces, quite demure, quite unknown. Eric Rohn asked her to pose for him, she promptly agreed to do so; and the arrangements were made at once. That night Rohn told the good news to Rosanne, who felicitated him on his find.

"Don't congratulate me too soon," he said. "I have a suspicion she may not be a Henner after all—"

"What! when you recognized her as Ernie Clark's model—and she herself admitted it?"

He shrugged. "There's a mystery connected with it. I'm having her here tomorrow to fathom it."

The next morning little Ruby Giddings appeared at the Drive mansion on time, tripped into the vast studio, then disrobed and stepped upon the dais with all the calm assurance of the "altogether" specialist. The moment the dull north light fell upon her Eric Rohn, at his easel frowning, realized that his suspicions were verified. The model was not a Henner at all. No subtle green undertones made an artistic ravishment of her flesh. Instead it was a commonplace pink, opaque, uninspiring. Ernie Clark had simply used Ruby's face for his Psyche; some other model had supplied the figure, the Henner tints. Rohn, resorting to an excuse, dismissed the girl, paying her for a week's work.

The following morning came the great, the undreamed-of discovery. Rohn and Rosanne were at breakfast when a stray sunbeam, slanting through the high half-shuttered window, fell upon her velvety cheek.

"The Henner green . . . !" he cried.

She gave a start and then laughed it off. "Nonsense, my dear. There are certain green shades in every skin, as you know, but certainly mine can't lay claim to more than the average. I a Henner? I only wish I were." She pushed her chair back out of the sunbeam.

"Why do you do that?" he exclaimed angrily. "Do you begrudge me the happiness that tint in your cheek gives me?"

"What a wild imagination you have, my dear!"

He leaned on the table heavily. "Rosanne . . . will you pose in the nude for me?"

"Eric . . . !" she gasped.

"You say you love me. Now prove it."

She had grown quite white. "Not that way! Eric think. It's because I love you that I can't do this awful thing. If I were a professional model— But I'm your wife. You must credit me with some of the finer feelings. To stand up before you, nude . . . Oh, Eric!"

He fixed her shifting gaze with his glowering one. "Have you ever done it for any other man?"

She sprang up. "Your question is an insult—"

"*Would* you do it for any other man, Rosanne?"

Without answering she hurried from the room.

III.

Eric Rohn, staring into space, leaned over his futile breakfast a long time.

Why had he never noticed the Henner green in Rosanne's skin before? She had always used a great deal of cream, powder, rouge, more even than the average New York woman—and this morning she must have forgotten to apply them. Besides, the peculiarly wan quality of the sunbeam had accentuated the unprotected green. . . . Had she deliberately been trying to hide her flesh tones from him? He gritted his teeth, clenched his fists as he thought of Ernie Clark, of his Psyche, which had just been sold to a visiting Italian prince at a record price. . . .

That day Rosanne kept to her room. But the next morning at breakfast she was her old amiable self. Her husband, however, was not permitted to see the Henner green in her cheek. She was powdered and roughed more heavily than ever.

Weeks went by and it was rumored in the studios that Ernie Clark, who notwithstanding his brilliant success still elected to live in the Village, was at work on another Henneresque nude, an impressionistic study of a lady lying on a rug.

"Who is his model?" asked everybody.

"The one who posed for his Psyche, of course," was the unanimous answer." She has the only real Henner skin in New York."

Eric Rohn, scowlingly belligerent, called on little Ruby Giddings and bluntly demanded the truth. Quite unhesitatingly she admitted she was posing for Ernie.

"The 'altogether?' " queried Rohn.

"Why, of course. You doubt it?"

Rohn favored her with one of his rare smiles. "No, indeed. But my friend Mr. Clark, much as I admire his talent, can't do you justice. I am going to do a nymph. Will you pose for me?"

She seemed delighted and promised readily. He gave her money for flowers and bonbons and left in high good-humor.

For three mornings he watched the entrance to her lodgings in West Fourth street and was rewarded by seeing her issue forth each day at a few minutes before eight. His interested gaze followed her the short distance to Sheridan Square where she disappeared in the doorway of an old detached dismantled building which was occupied by Ernie Clark. Here were his lodgings, exhibition rooms and studio.

The fourth, fifth and sixth mornings Ruby Giddings did not appear. Evidently Ernie had finished with her; he had the face for his lady on the rug.

About this time Rosanne developed a *penchant* for motoring in Central Park in her smart sedan. "Don't you want to go with me, Eric?" she would ask each afternoon as she started. "Autumn in the park! What could be finer? Come."

But he always excused himself: "I don't care for motoring—you know that."

The fourth afternoon he followed her at a discreet distance in one of his least conspicuous cars. She drove to the park, stopped at a rather unfrequented place near the mall, veiled herself heavily (it was a chilly, drizzly day), and sped down to Sheridan Square, leaving her sedan in Sixth avenue and hastened on foot to Ernie Clark's house, entering with a wholly casual air.

The following morning Eric Rohn called at Ernie's studio ostensibly to borrow a certain rare pigment he was unable to find in any of the shops. His real object was to learn his friend's contemplated whereabouts that night.

"The Village Post-Impressionists open their exhibition this evening down at Ishobar's," he said. "You're going?"

"Couldn't think of missing it," laughed Ernie. "They say there's some awfully rich stuff to be shown. You'll take it in?"

"Perhaps; I don't know." There was some inconsequential talk (neither mentioned Ernie's forthcoming picture) and then Rohn took his leave, promising to have breakfast with his friend on the morrow at an Italian restaurant in the neighborhood.

IV

Eric Rohn was a frank nighthawk, so Rosanne was not surprised when he informed her that evening at dinner that he was leaving early and might not be home till morning.

"Amuse yourself," he said. "Why not try the Villagers down at Ishobar's? I'm told there'll be some rare things on exhibition."

Her lip curled. "You know I despise those lunatics. . ."

At ten o'clock that night Rohn entered Ernie's studio by means of a pass-key. Ernie, with temperamental carelessness, always left the street door unlocked; so Rohn had had no trouble in gaining entrance to the building.

The studio was large, dark, packed with canvases big and little, painted and bare. The disrobing-room for models—really only a curtained partition—was near the dais, which stood under the sloping north windows. Eric Rohn flashlit his way to it, stretched himself comfortably on the lounge and slept more or less throughout the night.

Towards eight o'clock he left the disrobing-room and secreted himself behind some large mural pieces on the other side of the room. A few minutes later Ernie Clark entered the studio to begin the day's work, arranged his paints and brushes, uncovered the picture on the easel—the Lady on the Rug in a half-finished state showing up ravishingly Henneresque in the vivid morning light—then sat down and gazed, transported at what he no doubt hoped would prove to be his masterpiece.

At eight o'clock Rosanne came in. She kissed Ernie with great tenderness, went into the disrobing-room, then after a short while emerged nude, mounted the dais, fell into her pose on a crimson velvet rug, her face toward the artist smiling saucily, her feet and lower limbs up in the air, like a playful child's.

"My dear," murmured Ernie, "you're a dream. How stupid that for fear of your husband I dare not paint your adorable face along with your body. . ."

Eric Rohn stepped from behind the mural pieces, a revolver in his hand.

"Rosanne," he said, "you will pose for me this morning, not for your friend."

"Eric . . .!" she cried wildly, springing up to hurry into the disrobing-room.

"Don't move," he commanded. "If you do I'll kill your lover."

She stood trembling, white-faced, head hanging, her arms spread futilely to cover her nudity.

"Ah," exclaimed Rohn, "that's a good pose. I'll use it in my picture. He glanced at Ernie Clark, who sat dazed, motionless. "Ernie," he said, "I shall not leave here until my picture is completed—even if it takes three days; and that, of course, would be a miraculously short time. Mrs. Rohn will pose with only half the usual rests. The same rule will apply to you—for you are to be in the picture. I shall call it some such name as *The Devil's Model.* The Devil has stolen your model and he sits and paints her for the shame of all souls, while you, the cheated artist, stand in the background, a victim of the most exquisite agony as you watch him transfer her beauty to canvas, the sinful beauty that drags men down to hell. That will be my *motif.* I shall call upon my imagination for the figure of Satan. . . I have already arranged for our meals to be left at the studio door by a restaurateur, and none of your friends or servants may enter. Every day my confidential manservant will call to see if the picture is finished. When it is he will take it away; and I—"

"Eric!" sobbed Rosanne. "Ah, God. . . !"

"And I shall follow," Rohn resumed, "never to set eyes on either of you again. Rosanne, I will divorce you and you can marry your lover and go away."

Ernie Clark, pale with anger, sprang to his feet—

Rohn leveled the pistol at him. "You know me, Ernie. You'd better do as I say—"

"Yes, yes, Ernie," begged Rosanne. "I love you! Let him hear me say it! I love you and want you to live. . ."

Ernie sank back upon his chair.

"Now," said Rohn, "we'll begin work. Ernie, will you pick me a canvas large enough for three life-sized figures? I think that one near that Salome will do admirably. Thank you. . . Now if you'll put it on the easel. . . I've brought my own stuff to work with. Rosanne, please keep that pose—only try to cover yourself with a little more desperation—and hang your head a trifle lower to express the uttermost of shame. Ernie, sit in that chair until I need you. Ah, friends, this picture will be my masterpiece. . ."

V.

Eric Rohn worked feverishly.

In two days the figures of Rosanne and Ernie were finished and on the second evening the manservant came and took the canvas away. Rohn, pale, haggard, followed, leaving the worn, half-dead Rosanne fainting in her lover's arms.

Rohn completed the picture in his own studio, composing a striking and malevolent Devil. Then, true to his promise, he gave Rosanne a divorce; and she and Ernie dropped out of world.

Quite naturally *The Devil's Model* proved to be the artistic sensation of the day.

Many men would give half their lives for the priviledge of spending the other half in bed—they to choose the bed.—*Ivan T. Dowell*

Prof and the Girls

~By Howard Philip Rhoades

PROFESSOR LAURENCE JACQUITH, M.A., Ph.D., (and all the rest) looked through the bedizened canyon of Broadway with all the restrained scorn which generations of scholarly culture allowed him, and laughed in soft, gentlemanly derision.

"I spend the evening watching a lot of semi-nude chorus girls?" he asked. "Not with all the reference work I want to finish at the library while here."

Kingdon Blake, who had just grasped the arm of the tall, distinguished-looking man with the picturesque Vandyke, and the dark, dreamy eyes behind large glasses, strolling northward past Forty-second Street, smiled oddly.

This lovable former instructor of his was such a paradox—this man with whom he had formed in college days an unusual friendship, so close and intimate that the psychologist, Jacquith, educated on two continents and prominent in the scholastic world, to him was "Prof," with whom he exchanged cigarets, whom he slapped on the back and called "Old Dear"—and who returned his old pupil an affection which was open and warm.

"Come, Prof," urged Blake. "I've just bought a ticket to 'The Sloe-eyed Girl' over at the Parnassus. I'm sure the one beside it is still left. And there's a girl—that is—there are girls—"

Blake's insistence was based on his memory of a warm evening four years ago in Chicago. Then a psychological discussion had led them into an adventure which revealed this odd professor, with his child-like simplicity and naivete so buried beneath a vast weight of academic erudition. It was an adventure which proved that Jacquith, hidden behind his scholarly culture had a wild, bacchanal, saturnalian side—or was it just a normal one?

Of course it had been only a beer garden—those were the days!—a sad melody from Wagner, some Barbarossa brew, a sweitzer sandwich, and a factory girl who held hands under the table with Prof. Then Wilhelm got rough, they made a Swiss Garden of the place, banished beer and Wagner, the girl put on overalls and began to make six dollars a day on munitions, Blake put on a uniform, and Prof went back to the University.

Now here they were together again—on Broadway this time. Blake, still single, had arrived in New York to take a position with his firm's Eastern office. Jacquith was down to meet his family which had been summering in Europe. But the

latter was still far beyond the three mile limit, and so the two men were discussing plans for the evening just as Broadway's glitter began to blossom above them.

"Listen, Prof," said Blake, "I've a fine little volume entitled: "Dampest New York, compiled for me by a friend at a cost of $300 and three arrests in raids. We'll get another ticket to 'The Sloe-eyed Girl' and then seek the sloe-dyed licker!"

A moment later they had tickets for two seats in the fifth row, and were eagerly thumbing the precious volume called 'Dampest New York' whose sole contents was addresses.

Mr. Volstead, it developed, merely had *framed* the law. After that they turned it over to the New York police department for enforcement. The soul of the grape was as irrepressible as ever, although now it was discreetly diluted to make sure ev-everybody would get a little, and was poured from bottles which one kept on the floor beside one's chair, so when the police sergeant looked in he wouldn't think too much was being sold and raise the ante on poor Dominic!

Be that as it may, 8:30 o'clock found Kingdon Blake and Prof. Jacquith in their seats in the fifth row, exceedingly genial and mellow, while the big orchestra strummed forth the theme melody of "The Sloe-eyed Girl," as the house darkened, and they leaned forward in their seats to enjoy the opening chorus.

It was a lively, tuneful piece, with scenery and costumes after the colorful, impressionistic school. The musical numbers whizzed past in a dazzling phantasmagoria, the comedians were well-dressed and full of the wheezes of the hour—and the girls! Read any catalogue of pet press agent phrases. Only these *really looked that way!* Prof. Jacquith took them in with a sweeping survey. Blondes, tall and statuesque, brunettes, short, rounded, vivacious as if set on springs, dreamy eyes, sparkling eyes, shimmering shoulders, shimmying shoulders—girls, girls!

But Blake was concentrating. He was most interesting when a certain little girl, perfect in her slim contour, demure of face, dark of eye, full of grace, broke away from the chorus of which she was a part and presented bits of song and dance. These entranced him. Her best bit came just before the end of the first act. Then Blake leaned forward, his whole attention centered on this whirling, beautiful creature, so light, so frail, yet inspired with such vital, smiling grace.

She was his very antithesis, as he sat there fascinated—broad of shoulder, blue of eye, solid, strong, lost in admiration. She had fallen back into the ensemble which ended the act, and glistened there a moment, a glorious glittering figure, before the curtain came down and he was roused from his concentration.

"Come out for a smoke," invited Jacquith. Blake followed, his head in a whirl. In the smoking room, his cigaret under way, the tall, dreamy man with the Vandyke leaned back in his luxuriant seat and asked, with a trace of cynicism: "Well, what did you think of them?"

"Of—"

"The girls."

Blake fancied he detected an undertone of disparagement, a trace of faint contempt—something he didn't like, but which amused him.

"Well—I—"

"Do you know, Blake," said Jacquith, "I believe the chorus is the greatest gathering place for feeble-minded girls in the country!"

Blake turned, a repressed irritation in his curious smile.

"Feeble-minded girls?" he asked. "I don't get you."

"Morons," said the other. "You remember the term, of course. A moron is above the ordinary imbecile in intelligence.

He—or she—is difficult to recognize. They are apparently normal except that they do not have a properly developed sense of moral obligation. They look, talk, act as a normal person up to the point of being morally tested. There they have the morals of a child with which to battle the temptations of an adult. Morons—I call them feeble-minded only in the technical sense for they are seldom confined to an institution—do not plan crime. They simply cannot tell the difference between right and wrong—and take the easiest way."

"I don't know any chorus girls," said Blake. "But I don't think—"

"I never examined any in a psychological clinic," admitted Jacquith, "But look at the evidence: scandals involving them fill the papers. A revue director recently said in an interview that he wants only frivolous girls in the chorus. Serious ones won't do. What he meant is, sound-minded ones won't do. What girl other than a shallow, mentally defective, vain, flighty creature would bare her body, forget her morals, virtually 'make a show of herself'. Look at their vapid, expressionless, baby-doll faces, consider—"

"Now, wait, Prof," said Blake. "I believe you're wrong."

"I'm sure I'm right," said Jacquith, warming against the opposition. "Looking them over tonight convinces me. I'd just like to take one of them out and see!"

There flashed back to Blake a vision of himself and Jacquith passing that little beer-garden in Chicago, and then turning back as the learned professor raised some question regarding the recreation of the working classes. Blake's eyes glistened as he proposed: "Well, since you express the desire, let's take a couple out. You say they're morons. I doubt it. We'll see!"

"But I—that is—"

"Don't welch, Prof. "You choose one, so will I."

"You want the leading woman, I suppose."

"Not much. She has some millionaire or producer to waft her off in a rolling Royce—"

"Which proves just what I say. Defective moral sense. But who—"

"Let's see." Blake studied the program. "Yes, I want Eloise—Eloise Summers—"

"Summers!" scoffed Jacquith. "Bet it's nearer Winters, and—"

"Come, Prof," cut in Blake, just a suggestion of fire in his eye, "Whom do you want?"

Jacquith near-sightedly examined the program. "Loretta De Vinne, Salye Provence, Dionette Romaine—well, how do I know which she is? I want a typical one—the big blonde on the end in that "Dreamy Japan' number."

"I'll fix that."

"You're going to—"

"We'll send separate notes to make sure we get the ones we're after. They might not be friends, and might not want to go out together. We'll send the notes in just before the start of the third act. That'll give them a chance to look us over—"

"Yes," said Jacquith, straightening a little, and stroking his Vandyke, "That ought to help."

Before the second act ended Blake went out. At a nearby hotel he drafted notes to Miss Eloise Summers and the large blonde on the end. Both notes were the same in substance. A gentleman, seated in the fifth row, center, on the aisle, would like to have a lady of the chorus sup with him. By oiling their path with a bill Blake actually saw the notes through the stage door.

The large blonde on the end smiled sweetly, openly, before the initial number of the third act ended. Once or twice as Blake watched the slim, perfectly con-

toured, graceful girl with the dark eyes and black hair do a wonderful bit of dancing during the act, he fancied he saw her smile, quietly, demurely, but approvingly at him.

Then they were at the stage door, for the first time in their lives, awaiting girls from the chorus. A rather large figure, face strongly rouged, eye-lashes heavily beaded, yellow hair somewhat too yellow, the entirety enveloped in a heavy fur coat, came up to Jacquith.

"Hello, dear!" she greeted. "You're new to the street not to know *my* name. It's Celia Vandervelt. You're alone, dearie?"

"My friend is waiting."

As they turned toward Blake he had gone up the very edge of the sacred precincts to greet a small, trim girl whose delicately-shaped head was set off with a wonderfully chic little hat, and whose correct, quiet taileur was befurred with artistic restraint.

As Celia Vandervelt saw Blake approach the other girl she raised her eyebrow in wonder. "Oh-ho!" she marveled. "Even as yours truly. Well, the old street gets them all. Where do we go from hither?"

Soon they occupied a table in a corner of a showy Broadway cafe. There they drank liquors more vivid than vivifying, and subtly it developed that this was merely a starting point. Celia showed her contempt. "This?" she asked with a wry face. "Oh, really, dear, you can't get anything that's—well, you know, *here!*"

Eloise Summers looked at Kingdon Blake, her dark eyes filled with the same shy demureness with which she had glanced down from the stage. It was a shy demureness which suggested talks, or walks, or just eloquent silences—alone.

Celia broadly threw her arm around Prof. Jacquith and whispered something in his ear. Eloise stirred a little, nervously, and, with a quiet smile at Blake, said: "Really, I believe I must be starting home."

At which Blake looked across at the somewhat perturbed Jacquith. "If you don't mind—" he began. Then to Eloise, "Do we go in the same direction?"

"We take the Broadway subway to 145th street," she said.

At the mention of the subway Celia looked mildly horried and thankful. "So glad we're not going in that beastly old crowded place, dearie," she said, taking Jacquith's hand. "We'll taxi up. My place is so hard to reach. Now I must phone."

Eloise Summers also excused herself to use the telephone and Jacquith winked across at Blake. "We must look good," he said, "The way they're breaking previous engagements."

"Listen, Prof." said Blake, "I've plenty of room for you over at the Builthigh, where I'm staying. Wait. I'll scribble them a note. Give that to the clerk if you get there before I do, and make yourself at home."

"Thanks," said Jacquith. "And remember what we're setting out to prove. Can't you just see it in her shallow, baby-doll face?"

"All right, Prof. Be sure you don't forget. See you by two at the latest."

So while that great spirit which reformers picture as a monstrous devil, smiling sneeringly down over glittering frivolous Broadway—but which really is more like a greedy, shirt-sleeved cashier who hauls in the money spent on five-dollar seats, thirty-dollar-a-quart whiskey, and given exorbitant chauffeurs, extortionate waiters, usurious hat-boys, coercive ushers, conscriptive starters, "hogging" it all and short-changing everybody with gray mornings after, empty pockets and headaches on the side—while this spirit brooded over Broadway, two men

fared forth with chorus girls to find out if they were morons.

And came back—reaching the Built-high Hotel around two o'clock—Jacquith first. He was in a preoccupied, nervous humor. Once inside Blake's room he paced up and down restlessly, muttering disjointed phrases from which, now and then, a gentlemanly, cultured oath stood out.

He had been there nearly half an hour when Kingdon Blake entered. His face was strangely lighted, and he went over to the other man quickly, his hand extended.

"Prof, old colonel!" he said. "How did you come out?"

Jacquith looked at him as if about to shower vehemence. Then he repressed his feelings, and continued to pace.

"Well, Prof," urged Blake, "Come on, tell me. Was she a moron?"

"It makes me fighting mad to speak of it," said the professor, "But it's due you, as a fellow scientist, to know. Listen and judge for yourself."

"Shoot, scientist!" said Blake.

"She wanted to stop off at a cabaret further up town," began Jacquith. "She seemed eager to go there, and I consented. It was a place where the music was loud, the dancing spirited, and —er— nude. A waiter came in and looked at me doubtfully. Then, looking at her and back at me, he said he could send out for a quart of the real stuff, if I wanted it."

" 'Oh, yes, dear, please do,' she said, leaning over lovingly, and rubbing her ankle against mine. I ordered. The bill was thirty dollars. The firm which made that whiskey certainly was strong for prohibition—it puts so much water in its product. Some of her friends came over —she seemed to know everybody in the place—and helped us drink it. Just as I began to feel the kick a little she proposed a second round. I paid for it. Her friends had a great time on it. A flower girl came around and she ordered roses. They were five dollars. As I was looking for the change she said it was time to go.

"After I'd got my coat and hat—they cost me fifty cents—I began hunting Celia. I may have been a little befuddled, for pretty soon I got into a small room where she was talking to a man at a desk. 'Sixty dollars liquor and five dollars flowers,' he was saying. 'Total sixty-five. Your twenty per cent is thirteen dollars. Right?' Celia gave a little yell when she saw me, as she turned, but hurried me right out, probably thinking I didn't know. And I didn't until I'd got to thinking it over.

"At the door we met a Spanish-appearing girl, with a Bridgeport, Conn., accent, who was with a large, gray man, carrying a cane and breathing very heavily. Celia made a fuss over the girl, but I could see the latter was bored. In the taxi Celia began crying, and said she didn't see why she never could have a bit of luck. Here was this Spanish-appearing person who's only known this elderly man a month, yet who rode in her own limousine, and was going to be fixed for life pretty soon, Celia said, as he wasn't going to last long. And here am I, Blake, with degrees from three universities, twenty years of scholastic training, making less than the price of a limousine yearly—while my family rides in a Ford. Who is going to make me comfortable for life—if I teach a hundred years?

"She went on crying, telling what a hard time some chorous girls have, and I comforted her. I may have kissed her a couple of times. Anyhow she clung to me, and told me how good I was, and how she hated those hard old millionaires who only go with girls for what they can get out of it—and how I wasn't that kind.

Then we got to her apartment house. It was dark in the hall, and she cried some more in my arms, and told me she had to meet the rent in the morning, and, not being like the Spanish-appearing woman, didn't have a friend to turn to, and would I—just until Saturday? I loaned her twenty.

"She stood in front of the door, waving good night, and calling me pretty names until I left. Just as I was getting back into the taxi I felt for my diamond stick-pin, and it was gone. Mrs. Jacquith gave it to me. She had always insisted I have a safety catch put on it. But I hadn't. It wasn't worth so much, perhaps a hundred dollars, but my wife gave it to me, and—"

"But didn't you try—" Blake began.

"Of course. I called to the chauffeur, 'I must have dropped my pin' and went back. I rang the door of the apartment in front of which she bade me goodnight. After a little a large surly man, wrapped in a bathrobe, appeared and grouchily demanded what I wanted. I told him I wanted Miss Celia Vandervelt, a chorus girl who lived there. He said he'd never heard of her. I was growing pretty angry, and I insisted he must have heard of her. He pointed to his name on the door plate. It was Mr. Adolph Tilftolff. When I started to tell him what I thought of things generally he slammed the door in my face."

"Well—" Blake started to speculate.

"Maybe she *didn't* live there. She could have walked to another floor expecting to leave when I departed. I went back to the car and we looked all over the floor. Foolishly I'd mentioned my loss to the chauffeur before I went into the house again. Judging from the fact he just took a ten dollar bill out here in front of the hotel, and merely saluted and drove off with the dollar-fifty change, I should say he was a robber all right. Perhaps Celia didn't get the pin even if she did have all sorts of chances while I was comforting her. Perhaps the chauffeur didn't get it. It may have fallen on the ground. But the fact remains if I'd gone home, and not—but—well—what about yourself?"

Blake smiled quietly. "After such a recital," he said, "I don't think I've much to say. We went to her home on the subway, stopping at a delicatessen for a few things for which she insisted on paying half. She lives in a modest walk-up apartment in a good neighborhood. Her mother was waiting up—"

Jacquith whistled.

"While Eloise—that's her real name—prepared about the jolliest little supper I ever ate, her mother, a sweet, interesting, most cultured woman, talked to me about Chicago, and Evansville, Ind. That's their home town. Eloise took dancing at college, and wanted to go on the stage. So her mother came over with her. After supper her mother withdrew, and for an hour we sat and talked of plays, and books, and cities—just as you and I might. One thing I didn't understand: how she had made a date with a stage door john. Then she smiled and mentioned my uncle, Kingdon Blake, the Chicago architect. They met him here last week, and he'd told them of having a nephew, a name-sake, who was coming to live in New York. So she took little chance."

"Not as serious a chance as I," said Jacquith, with a sad shake of the head. "Let's see: diamond one hundred dollars, refreshments sixty, flowers five, loan twenty, taxi ten—total one hundred and ninety-five dollars."

"Celia made you a bargain," said Blake. "Probably it costs two hundred to get acquainted other evenings. But, Prof, I want to thank you. I'd fallen in love with Eloise just by seeing her picture out in front of the theater. So when you sprung

that moron thing—You'll come to lunch with us tomorrow, won't you, Prof. I want to cultivate the girl who's to become Mrs. Kingdon Blake—"

"You do work fast!" Jacquith gasped.

"She doesn't know—yet. And leave the telling to me. Some day I'll get up nerve. If I only had your way with women!"

The dark, dreamy eyes shot fire, and the Vandyke bristled. "Yes," Jacquith boiled over: "Now I can frame a night letter home for money. Two girls going away to school this fall, and you know what that means, and Mrs. J. looking over hard and wondering about the diamond. Why, damn it man, these girls like Celia rub on a little rouge and toss off a few tears, and in two hours make more money than I do in two weeks. They may be morons. Even so there's one grade lower in mentality than that; plain imbeciles. That's where I fit in!"

PHARMACEUTICAL KNOWLEDGE

Old Dr. Jeff had opened a new soda fountain in connection with his village drug store, and hired Charlie Wilkins who was more remarkable for his neat appearance than his pharmaceutical learning. During the noon hour, Charlie was in charge of the entire establishment and the airs he put on soon became the talk of the town.

So a couple of "live ones" decided to have some fun with him. One of the girls went in and said: "Doctor, I am suffering with a violent headache, and would like about a dime's worth of 'pulverized mosquito eyebrows.'"

Tickled to death at being called "DOCTOR," the young clerk made a most vigorous and thorough search for the required headache remedy, but without success. The girl was "so disappointed," but thanked him very kindly for his search.

Soon in came the other, and she wanted some "desiccated chigger whiskers." But Charlie searched in vain. "Oh, I'm so sorry," the customer told him. "I suppose I will have to send to town after them." Then a happy thought struck her. "Doctor, can't you put them on your 'want list'? I will call again in a few days."

Charlies assured her that he would indeed put the needed article on his list, and the girl departed giving him a smile that wouldn't come off.

When the Doctor returned from lunch, Charlie gave him the "want list."

"'Skeeter eyebrows' and 'chigger whiskers'," he grunted, then turned his face aside to hide a smile.

"Charlie, someone is trying to make a fool of you," the doctor explained. "There are no such things as 'skeeter eyebrows' or 'chigger whiskers.' You will have to get wise, or the people will be laughing at you. Hereafter, when anyone asks for such foolish items as these, tell them very plainly that you are not quite as green as you look.

So Charlie promised that he wouldn't be taken in again.

But in a few days a lady called and wanted some moth-balls.

Charlie looked at her very hard for a moment, then said:

"Lady, I'd sure like to oblige you, but maybe I'm not quite such a fool as I look. A 'skeeter' has no eyebrows, and a 'chigger' has no whiskers, and you know there is no such thing as moth-balls."

—H. F. Jamieson.

Friend in Need

by Chas. W. DeRose

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Terry Fielding, a bachelor...30 years old
Laura Webster, a singer.....25 years old
Guy Middleton.....27 years old
Max Kuehne, solicitor.....60 years old
James, a secretary-valet.....55 years old

Scene: *The smoking room in a bachelor's apartment, carelessly but luxuriously furnished. A mahogany table at center, with an electric lamp on it, also a telephone, and a bouquet of American beauty roses. A small table, with cigarette and cigar boxes, matches, etc., at the left, by a fire place in which there is a crackling fire. Photos, etc., on the mantelpiece above the fireplace. A large opening up center, through which a large hallway is seen. Another door, to the right, leads to other rooms of the apartment. The outer door is off left and connects with the hallway. There isn't a single piece of ornamentation on the walls. The floor is covered with expensive rugs.*

Discovered: *Terry Fielding, a good looking chap of thirty years, sportily dressed; at this particular moment bearing an overcoat and derby. A cane and a pair of gloves are lying on the table. He is sitting at the table speaking through the 'phone.*

Terry

(*Through the 'phone*)

Yes . . . I see . . . Operator, get off the wire, please. . . What? . . . I didn't ask you for any number. I was connected with a party. . . I'm telling you I didn't ask for any number. (*Impatiently*) Operator, please get off the wire. . . You're excused. . . Hello! Hello! . . . We had been disconnected. . . Now, listen here, counsellor, I'm not in a position to pay that note now, and you know the understanding with your client was that he was not to deposit the note, that he was going to give me a renewal and I should pay the interest. . . That's not true. . . (*Angrily*) I'm telling you, that's not a true story. . . (*Excitedly*) I don't give a rap, you can do whatever you feel like, but I am going to hold you. . . You'll be my witness, I assure you, and you'll have to tell the amount of money I received and the amount the note calls for. Good bye.

(*Abruptly hangs up receiver and rises*) The rotten crook!

(*James, the secretary-valet, appears at center. Seeing James*)

What do you want, James?

James

Mr. Middleton is outside, sir.

Terry

Guy? I'm not at home.

James

I told him so, sir; but he insists. He said it's something very important.

Terry

Let him in, then.

(*James is starting off*)

Terry

Wait. Send this night letter to my mother.

(*James stops. Terry goes to table and sits down; James takes a pad from his pocket and makes notes*)

I thank you heartily, dear mama, for the roses you sent me, together with the letter of felicitation for my birthday.—*Terry.*

And now, let Middleton come in.

James

Yes, sir.

(*Exits center and off left*)

Terry

(*Picks up the roses and smells their perfume*)

Dear mama wishes me many happy days like this one. . . If she knew how happy this day is for me—with a note due and no money to pay it with.

(*Guy Middleton, a young man, 27 years old, a man of pleasure, a sport, but easily scared, "a sissy," appears at the center opening where he stops. Terry sees him*).

Come in, Guy. How are you?

Guy

(*Crossing to Terry and shaking hands with him*)

You'll excuse me if I insisted and almost forced your old James to violate your orders. I'll be brief; it's only a question of a moment.

Terry

Sit down. What's the trouble now?

Guy

(*Sitting near the fireplace*)

You said it—some trouble!

Terry

(*Takes a cigarette from the little table, lights it, crosses to right and sits on the arm of a cushion chair*)

Tell me this "some trouble" of yours.

(*Starts to walk up and down, puffing at his cigarette. Guy, almost discouraged, follows Terry with a surprised glance. A pause*)

Well?

Guy

How can I tell you the reason that brought me here, when you walk up and down and think of something else?

Terry

Don't let my walking worry you. Besides, I am a little nervous. Nevertheless (*crossing to little table and sitting opposite Guy*) here I am. Have a cigar, Guy.

Guy

(*Taking a cigar from box and lighting it*)

Thank you, Terry. Ladies?

Terry

(*With indescribable air*)

That's right. Ladies.

Guy

Then we'll understand each other magnificently.

Terry

Why?

Guy

Because, if you are nervous, I am in despair.

Terry

Are the ladies the reason of your desperation?

Guy

Ladies? It's one and one's enough.

Terry

(*Cautiously*)

Tell me about her.

Guy

You know all about my approaching marriage.

Terry

I do. What's wrong now, doesn't she care for you any more?

Guy

Who? My fiancee? Oh, she loves me.

Terry

What then?

Guy

Laura. Laura! That crazy girl—

(*Rises, walks a few steps; suddenly stopping*)

She threatens to stop my marriage by creating some scandal.

Terry

And you permit a singer—I might say, a chorus girl—to impose laws and regulations on you? You are not the same Guy Middleton I've known, my boy.

Guy

"Impose" is not the proper word. I never permit anybody to impose upon me. But she's got the goods on me.

Terry

I really must say, I know as much as I did when you first came in. If you don't try to explain—

Guy

Please, Terry, don't guy me. The matter is of the gravest importance.

Terry

Tell me what's all about, then.

Guy

(*Sits down on the same chair he was sitting in before*)

You know that my fiancee is the daughter of the Reverend Doctor McKenna, of the First Unitarian Church, and the Chairman of the Society for the Prevention of White Slavery.

Terry

You didn't have to tell me all that because I know it. You haven't said a word relating to your immediate troubles.

Guy

Wait, don't be impatient. Laura, having learned about my coming wedding, doesn't want to be abandoned; threatens that if I don't break the engagement and the rest within twenty-four hours, she will do whatever she thinks best.

Terry

No!

Guy

Surely. And you know she would be successful. It would suffice for her to go to the Reverend McKenna and come out with the truth—for instance, the suffocation of our baby before it was born, and that positively would be enough for Doctor McKenna to order me out of his house.

Terry

(*Throwing cigarette in ash-tray*)

You're exaggerating. Doctor McKenna was and is a man of . . . . the world Don't let that slip your mind, boy.

Guy

(*Worried*)

This is not a matter of exaggeration, my friend; it is simply a fact. Besides, I don't know whether Doctor McKenna was ever a man of . . . the world, as you say. The naked fact is: that he is no longer what he was. Now he is a silly bigot and wouldn't stand—

Terry

Even a bigot must understand that a man is not perfect in every detail, during his celibacy. Pshaw! Is there any wrong if a man has had an affinity?

Guy

For you and me, there's no wrong. But for him—

Terry

He must be like us, no less, no more; and possibly worse. Who knows?

Guy

You don't know him, I tell you.

Terry

(*Walking toward the right*)

And I tell you, you see double. You've always let yourself in for scrapes. Couldn't you deny her story in case? Couldn't you declare you're not the father of the suffocated infant, as may be the fact?

Guy

No, Terry. Laura never deceived me, believe me.

Terry

But let us suppose she did deceive you, she'd deny it; can't you do the same?

Guy

I may be a pessimist; I wouldn't argue. But your optimism, excuse my frankness, is of the kind that makes one laugh. I've told you, the situation is of the gravest kind; do you want me to tell you the truth?

Terry

What's the truth?

Guy

The more I think about it, the more disastrous it seems to me.

Terry

(*Sitting on the arm of the cushion chair, at the right. Carelessly.*)

That may be. Nevertheless, what can I do?

Guy

(*Throwing cigar butt in ash tray and rising, with a ray of hope showing in his face*)

You will speak to Laura; you'll have to persuade her. You know she likes you.

Terry

No, my boy. I will not. It would be worthless. And furthermore, you found me in the proper frame of mind to be a diplomat. I have a worry for each hair on my head.

Guy

(*Disheartened*)

What? You refuse me?

Terry

Yes, I refuse. Besides, it would be worthless—if she's so dogged.

Guy

(*Pleading*)

You don't even care to make an attempt?

Terry

No.

Guy

(*Crossing to Terry; pleading*)

Terry

I'm not joking. I mean every word I say. I have enough trouble of my own; I ask you to consider if I can bother with others.

Guy

What others! A friend's trouble, you must say.

Terry

Let it be a friend's. It's always trouble.

Guy

(*Hopelessly*)

What's your last word, Terry?

Terry

No. I am sorry but I can't. First of all, because I'm sure I couldn't accomplish the least; secondly, because I am all upset.

Guy

But you ought to try—Disinterestedly—

Terry

Why do you insist? Why do you want me to continue to tell you no? It hurts me as well—

Guy

(*After a reflective pause, patting Terry on the shoulder*)

You will do it for me.

Terry

(*Rising*)

Nothing doing.

(*Walks to fireplace*)

Guy

(*Smiling*)

You will, I am sure.

Terry

(*Conquered, he also smiles*)

Are you sure?

Guy

(*Relieved*)

Yes; and do you know why?

Terry

No. Why?

Guy

Because I am in a hurry to—

Terry

That's a fine reason.

Guy

And being in a hurry, I sent word to Laura that you wanted to see her today, here, in your apartment, at four p. m.

(*Looks at his watch*)

It's three-thirty.

(*Pockets watch*)

Terry

You did do all that?

Guy

I did. I ask you to forgive me for that.

Terry

And what if I should go right out?

Guy

You'll not do that, surely.

Terry

On the contrary; I'll do it.

(*Crosses to center table and takes cane and gloves and starts*)

Guy

(*Runs to center door to bar Terry's way*)

Your going away would be acting something like—*trying to fish out a word that would not hurt Terry but unable to, proceeds*—cowardice. And I, being your friend, won't permit you to be such. (*Pleadingly*) Be reasonable—Do me this favor. She'll soon be here. Tell her anything you like, but save me—Put up any kind of a story—you're intelligent. And, lastly, (*Taking an envelope from coat pocket*) give her this.

(*Hands Terry the envelope*)

Tell her to enjoy herself, to forget about me. There's an amount that ought to cure her!

Terry

(*Thoughtfully*)

I agree with you, Guy.

Guy

Time flies. I am sure I couldn't choose a better man than you. You have a certain magnetism for women and when you have conquered her, you'll give me a telephone call so I can proceed with my plans.

(*Terry tears open the envelope and counts the bills*)

There are ten one thousand dollar bills. Now, don't forget—a telephone call.

Terry

But I haven't said that I will undertake the job yet.

Guy

It doesn't make any difference. I go. Thank you heartily, Terry.

(*Walking up, sees the roses*)

What a bunch of beautiful roses!

Terry

Mama sent them to me. Today is my birthday—

Guy

(*Stops, with admiration and surprise*)

Is that so? And you told me nothing.

(*Crosses to Terry and shakes hands with him*)

Many of these happy days. Bye-bye.

(*Exit center and off left*)

Terry

(*After a moment of perplexity re-opens the envelope given him by Guy and takes out the bills. Murmurs*)

Ten thousand dollars! The exact amount I could use to pay that note—

(*Remains thoughtful*)

James

(*Appears at center*)

Mr. Fielding—

Terry

(*Lifting his head*)

What is it, James?

James

There's Mr. Kuehne, waiting outside.

(*Rising*)

Kuehne?

James

(*Apologetic*)

Being you were busy with Mr. Middleton, I told him to wait.

Terry

Tell him to come right in.

(*James disappears off left. Terry in a swift movement pockets the envelope*)

Let's hide the treasury. One can never tell—

Max Kuehne

(*Appears at center. He is an old man of not less than 60, still energetic. He is short and stout. His movements and general appearance show plainly he is a shrewd man of the kind that make their living by usury. His dressing is nothing too decent. He wears eye glasses. His voice and his doings are unctuous*).

How do you do, Mr. Fielding?

Terry

(*Between the serious and the droll*)

Come forward, you rascal.

(*Max advances a little toward center*)

Were you the one to advise that ruffian, your boss, to deposit that note of mine in the bank? And did you introduce him to that crook of a lawyer? If so, you may receive my congratulations.

Max

I know nothing about all you've said.

Terry

That's right; you never know anything. Nevertheless I must pay eight thousand dollars by tomorrow—

Max

(*Flattering*)

And what's that little sum for you? You have so much money. Besides you may have that money back immediately you have paid it.

Terry

On the same basis. Again one hundred percent interest. Thank you.

Max

Business is business; you know that.

Terry

(*Crossing toward Max, threatening*)

I know that I'll send you to prison if you don't get me out of this mess!

Max

(*Drawing back, alarmed*)

What do you mean?

Terry

I mean that. I'll not give the money to you or the bank.

Do as you please—You know I have nothing to do with that affair; I am simply a poor secretary—

(*Seeing the cigarettes on the little table by the fireplace*)

Can I have a cigarette, Mr. Fielding?

Terry

Go ahead, help yourself. And tell me what you came here for?

Max

(*Crosses and takes a cigarette*)

Nothing in particular. Passing by I felt like coming up to see you. I knew today was your birthday, and I thought it my duty to come and congratulate you.

Terry

(*Sarcastically*)

Very good of you. Thank you, Kuehne.

(*Max lights up cigarette and smokes*)

Max

You're very welcome. Do you want me to go?

Terry

Just a minute. What about those eight thousand dollars?

Max

(*Confidentially*)

The money must be paid. And before 3 p. m. tomorrow.

Terry

And in case I shouldn't have it to pay?

Max

(*With a cunning smile*)

Wish I had your money.

Terry

Now, listen here, Kuehne, go and tell your boss I'll give him $500 if he'll wait another fifteen days. As for you, I'll see you later.

Max

It's impossible. Do you know that since his steamboat caught fire and went to the bottom of the Hudson, my boss is as penniless as I am? That was the reason he deposited your note. He is ruined. The insurance company refuses to pay for your boat, claiming the fire was not accidental.

Terry

It would be like him to set the boat on fire, himself.

James

(*Appears at center*)

Pardon me, Mr. Fielding.

(*Crosses to Terry and whispers in his ear*)

Terry

(*To James*)

Immediately.

(*To Max*)

You go in there for a moment.

(*Points to door to the right. James exits center and off left*)

Max

(*Parrying*)

No, no, no! I must go—I am very busy.

Terry

(*Smiling, still determined*)

Get in there, I tell you.

Max

(*Afraid, tries to disobey*)

I can't—believe me, I am overloaded with business—

(*Laura Webster—this name is fictitious, like most actresses' names, but we don't know her real name—appears at center, accompanied by James who bows and lets her pass. She is a blond creature, beautiful and fascinating. She is conspicuously dressed and appears to be young, possibly because she has read Lena Cavaliere's articles "How to keep young." Nevertheless, she cannot be over thirty*)

Terry

(*Seeing Laura, crosses toward her*)

I beg your pardon—(*Very amiably*) I didn't even come to meet you—I was very busy talking with this *gentleman* about—a horse I want to buy. Come right in, make yourself at home. May I be allowed to help you take your coat off?

Laura

(*Assenting*)

Thank you.

(*Offers to be helped. Terry takes the seal coat off and lays it, gently, on a chair*)

Terry

(*To Max*)

Then, my man, ten minutes of intermission for you. You may step in here.

(*Leads Max, who has been looking at Laura in bewilderment, to door to the right, opens it and gently shoves him in, whispering*)

And don't you dare to move until I come in.

Max

(*Trying to repeat "I am busy"; but Terry closes the door*)

But—

Terry

(*Returning toward the fire-place, near Laura*)

Won't you sit down? Come—

Laura

No, no. I am going right away. Tell me what you want of me.

Terry

Surely you have five minutes to concede me.

(*Gently compelling her*)

Sit down.

Laura

To please you.

(*Sits down by the fire*)

Are you satisfied?

Terry

Thank you.

Laura

And now, tell me the scope of your invitation.

Terry

Are you in a hurry?

Laura

Very much so.

Terry

Then without preamble. It's all about Guy.

Laura

(*Disgusted*)

That wretch? You may spare your words. I hate even to hear his name mentioned.

Terry

I haven't started yet.

Laura

It's just the same. I can imagine what you want to tell me. You know all, isn't it so?

Terry

I do.

Laura

If you think he is doing something good, then you have a right to defend him.

Terry

This is not the time for exaggerations.

Laura

Am I exaggerating? I?—All men are alike. That's why you're talking that way.

Terry

No, Laura; I protest.

Laura

It's the truth. Today, you meet a young lady you like, you flatter her in a thousand different ways, and you conquer her. Tomorrow, you meet another one, you also like this one; then you leave the first for the second one. Then, as if all this weren't enough, you speak of getting married, fixing the day for the wedding. (*Defiantly*) We'll see if he will succeed. Tomorrow I'll go and see his prospective father-in-law, the Reverend Doctor McKenna.

Terry

(*Calmly, interrupting*)

It would be below your dignity.

Laura

(*Defiant, insists*)

I will go! Yes, I will. And I'll take with me the letters he sent me, his photos—And I will repeat everything over and over again. (*With sarcastic determination*) Mr. Guy Middleton doesn't know me yet. He doesn't know what I am capable of doing.

Terry

He surely knows your *capability*—He has been with you long enough.

Laura

(*Understanding Terry's meaning; slightly annoyed*)

Don't be silly!

Terry

Then, if you want me to talk seriously, allow me to point out to you that by doing what you just said, you will make him an excessively important person; he is not worth it; and what he is about to do is still worthy of him. He wishes to get married? Let him break his neck.

Laura

Is that so?

Terry

If I were you I would send him a note of condolence: it will be infinitely amusing for you.

Laura

(*Sarcastic*)

Really? After we've lived together two years? After I renounced my future, on account of him; the offer to go to England to play in the Music Halls; to go to Paris? I am not one of those creatures that can be abandoned with an offer of something like a thousand dollars. And I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he should go as low as that—

Terry

A man that offers money is never a low person—nevertheless—

Laura

(*Interrupting*)

"Nevertheless" nothing. Let him keep his money. I don't want any.

Terry

And what do you want, then?

Laura

(*Contemptuously*)

I want to enjoy myself a little.

Terry

For love?

Laura

No; for caprice.

Terry

You're wonderful. Were you not angry—

Laura

You would try to make love to me. Is that what you wanted to say?

Terry

You say it—(*Taken by an idea*) And why not? Surely. I would make love to you.

Laura

You would spend your time in vain.

Terry

Do you think so?

Laura

I do.

Terry

You're mistaken. I know I have no special fascination; but I have a great gift; that of being sincere. I'll bet you would convince yourself. And do you realize that that would be the best vengeance?

Laura

Naturally. Especially for you.

Terry

No, no, for both of us. Pay attention to me, let us leave him to his fate and let's start a true love.

Laura

Don't be foolish, please.

Terry

No, no, for both of us. Pay attention to me, let us leave him to his fate and let's start a true love.

Laura

Don't be foolish, please.

Terry

(*Seeing his victory, insists*)

I am not. I am not going to give up the fight. Let's give the matter a thorough examination. Where do you think you'll get if you persist? Nowhere, I am sure.

Laura

That's what you think.

Terry

Let us suppose that your disclosures will break the engagement of Guy with Miss Isobel McKenna. Do you think that he would like you any more? He would hate, detest you.

Laura

But he wouldn't get married just the same.

Terry

That's no satisfaction. I would, if I were you, prefer that he should get married. A wife is always a disaster, anyway.

Laura

Very well. And then?

Terry

And then—you would surely fall in love with some other man just the same. You have too exquisite a sensibility for your heart to remain empty. At any rate, you would remain in the very condition you're in now.

Laura

Why so?

Terry

Because Guy would be free and could undertake some other—adventure. I, on the other hand, would consider myself unlucky for being refused your love. Isn't it clear?

Laura

Very clear. Only you have forgotten a little circumstance. Very little, I understand, but it's something one cannot help noticing.

Terry

What do you mean?

Laura

My will.

Terry

What? You won't accept?

Laura

Not even to think about, my dear Mr. Fielding.

Terry

Possibly you haven't thought about the advantages—

Laura

What advantages are you talking about?

Terry

Guy is a wretch; you said it yourself; I am a gentleman; Guy is getting married; I don't even think about it; Guy doesn't love you; I feel I will adore you; Guy has sacrificed you; I will, instead, surround your existence with the truest devotion—Don't you call these advantages?

Laura

(*Recognizing his spirit*)

Do you know that you are a fine fellow?

Terry

This is not the first time I have heard it. But let us not get away from the subject. You and I have known each other a long time. You've always expressed a certain liking for me. Liking and love are not very far apart; everybody says so. A little courage is required from you and the transfer is possible.

Laura

Something telegraphic like, then.

Terry

Swifter! That's my way of doing things.

Laura

I don't believe you.

(*Pointing to the photos—all ladies' photos, we admit—on the mantelpiece above the fireplace*)

And besides, all those up there—

Terry

Those don't count. Past occurrences. I'll have those photos removed—destroyed presently. (*Rises*) Permit me to offer you a first homage of my tenderness—

(*Crosses to table at centre, takes half of the roses and, returning, offers them to Laura*)

some roses.

Laura

(*Takes the roses and smelling them*)

Magnificent. Thank you. Who were these for? Tell me the truth.

Terry

For me.

Laura

(*Incredulous*)

For you?

Terry

Yes, for me. I received them from my mother. Today is my thirtieth birthday.

Laura

(*Sincere, offers to shake hands with Terry*)

Allow me to felicitate you.

Terry

(*Flaming*)

Say you will, first. Don't try to be coaxed. It's so totally spontaneous, all that's happening, that refusing or insisting, on your part, would spoil it. Let's permit it to take it's natural course. I'm not using big phrases, I'm not acting the part of the simpleton that is deadly in love and doesn't care to reason it out. Nothing of the kind. I like you; I feel I will like you much more. I'm alone; you're alone also—Let's unite our lonesomenesses and warm up each other's soul.

Laura

And who knows how to like?

Terry

I, Laura, I!

(*Comes closer to her; with warmth*)

Tell me that you consent, dear—

Laura

(*Interrupting*)

And so he wants to win.

Terry

No! We must win. Don't mention him. He doesn't exist—He's gone—Tell me that you consent—

Laura

(*Interrupts*)

Let me think it over; we'll talk matters over again—

Terry

When?

Laura

I cannot tell you. In a day or two—

Terry

No! I want to know it before tomorrow —Before three o'clock tomorrow.

Laura

(*Surprised, suspicious*)

Before three o'clock? Why?

Terry

(*Recovering*)

Excuse me. I had made up my mind to go away. What three o'clock; what tomorrow! Today! Right away!

(*With the former ardor*)

Tell me that you will. We'll go together; a week of happiness, a week of forgetfulness—We'll go wherever you prefer—

(*Laura doesn't answer*)

Laura!—

Laura

(*Takes a rose from her bunch and gives to Terry*)

I do wrong, I know—

Terry

(*With dash*)

Thank you, Laura, thank you, darling!

(*Takes her hand and kisses it with effusion, then he surrounds her with his arms and holds her*)

Laura

I do wrong—

(*But she is conquered*)

Terry

Don't speak, dear—Let's stay this way forever.

(*then thinking plan may be discovered, adds after a moment's pause*)

I warn you, though—

Laura

Of what?

Terry

Guy is to be dead for you. You must promise me that you'll never meet him again; that you never speak to him anymore—I want you all for myself. Will you promise me that even if he should ask you, you'll not meet him?

Laura

(*Laying her cheek against his*)

He won't look for me.

Terry

I understand that; but in case—I'd suffer deeply. I want you to think he is dead. And besides it is more dignified.

Laura

I hate him, dear.

Terry

I am so glad. I knew you would be reasonable, even when I first heard you were in a hurry and conceded me only five minutes of your time, that it wouldn't be five minutes but—(*looking at his watch*) an hour or more—

Laura

Is it so late? And I was supposed to be at the dressmaker's at five o'clock.

Terry

You're in time yet. It's only ten minutes past five—

Laura

(*Rising*)

I must go. You'll not be angry.

Terry

No, dear. But can I come to take you from your dressmaker's?

Laura

If you care to.

(*Takes a card from purse*)

This is the address.

(*Gives card to Terry*)

Terry

(*Eyeing the card*)

Bye-bye, darling.

(*Kisses her. Then with one arm about her, walks off with her. He asks her within*)

Are we agreed about Guy?

Laura

(*Within*)

Don't let that worry you, honey.

(*Terry and Laura kiss again, because they can be heard*)

Terry

(*Returns*)

I am safe, by jingo, safe! And now let's go to free that rascal.

(*Crosses to door to the right and opens it, calling*)

Come out here, now.—Come here, I say!

(*Max appears at the door, rubbing his eyes*)

What were you doing, sleeping?

Max

(*Yawning*)

What else could I do? You delayed or forgot to come and open the door—

Terry

You may go.

Max

(*With some meaning*)

I go—It must be late.

Terry

Tell your boss that he'll have his money, in the morning.

Max

I knew you would pay. But you—

Terry

What?

Max

(*Cunningly*)

Too many ladies. And the one that was here a while ago, I fear, is your ruin.

Terry

Go on, you don't understand anything. She is my saving angel.

Max

(*Crosses to center opening*)

By me. But I don't believe it. Good day.

(*Exit off left*)

Terry

(*Watches Max off with a victorious smile, then crosses to table, takes receiver and calls*)

Madison 17024...Hello, Guy?...Is that you, Guy?...Go and get married and good luck to you...The best success...I am always ready to do you such (*taking envelope and displaying the money*) favors...Goodbye, old boy.

Curtain

BROTHERLY LOVE

The following event came under my notice while vacationing, last August, in a small town on the west shore of Lake Champlain; my personal acquaintance with the boys will vouch for the truth of it.

Two young men, twins, were in love with the same girl, Irene. Now both boys were equally handsome, generous and desirable in all things, so that Irene, not having been able to decide which one to marry after a courtship of over a year, had to a certain extent soothed their annoyance by being equally generous in her affections to both of them.

When she finally had to break the awful news to them, and not yet knowing which one she loved the most, they agreed that one of them would have to take her to Niagara and Johnny, being unemployed at the time was chosen. In August, Harry received the following telegram from John: "Dear Harry:—It's twins, mine died, what the hell will I do with the one that's left?"—*Erny Rochester.*

When Things Pickea Up

by Lloyd Borden Tennis

NO TICKET, NO MONEY, and the conductor coming toward me—Edo Scone, was enough to throw a man into St. Vitus' dance for a month trying to invent a touching hard-luck story. When it was given, the brain cells of the crusty old railroad official refused such chicken feed. He then suggested Koffemup, and gave his reasons. I, of all the passengers was best equipped for survival (he did not explain why); it was a good dancing-off place for a man with means to get.

The train stopped. A peremptory grip on my arm admonished me to "fade away." To the accompaniment of the conductor's remarks, bright bits of wisdom garnished with satire, I and my satchel rattling with two collars, a mending plant, two paint brushes, a copy of Tolin's "How to Paint Houses Without Paint," not to mention sundry other articles, landed in a cornfield.

The green corn beckoning on every side did not hustle to offer confidence. I had just raised my fist in safe and vindictive protest against my speeding enemy when, lo, and behold! there loomed in sight half a mile away, a timid depot and a grain elevator.

I burned a soft place on the railroad making a bee-line to Koffemup. A wide detour after I reached the Union Station took me by stingy men's cows stealing a handout of grass along the highway and the town-pump with its railing and horse-trough.

While my eyes went roving, I issued and accepted an invitation to drink—the village's water. It was good, and I drank again, this time out of my hands, because of the respect I had for the drinking-cup.

The four ramshackle, dingy stores and two dozen or more houses deserved obituary notices. They were so small that I doubted if a needle could "bunk" in them without sticking its head with its point.

Down the street in the direction of the village Forum, came a six by forty-four-man. He was about fifty and wore neither a vest nor a coat. An old striped shirt with its collar on a vacation and a shabby, baggy pair of trousers were his earthly habilments. Stubborn gray tufts of hair fenced in a shrewd face to which I was strangely drawn.

By way of introduction, I ventured:

"Your business must open early?"

"Not extry airly. You're a stranger, ain't you?" and the Koffemupite looked me over lengthwise and sidewise with his little ferret eyes digesting my shrunken mustache, that I had neglected to wash with wool soap, and dollar-shaped face. Yet the gaze was not unfriendly and my pores gushed hope.

"I want work."

Had I announced my intention to go

man-killing with a paper-knife, I could not have begotten more astonishment—and a worse guffaw.

"What kind of work?"

"Painter of houses and signs."

"Paintin' horses and signs," ejaculated the native.

"Houses," I corrected.

"Axcuse me, I'm a leetle deef," the man apologized.

"Somebody will want something painted—— There I see one shop needs it worse than any—the one with the sign: 'Silas Tapp, Blacksmith,' would scare a a scarecrow at night."

"Jumping frogs! That's me. That paint is good nuff," the old blacksmith declared with more than a tinge of anger.

"Yes, but I'm in Koffemup, and I must make some pin-money to get out of here."

There was a long silence.

"Wa'al you ain't in heaven by a good sight. Painters don't do no good here. You'd better take my advice and move on."

"Not on your life! Some one in Koffemup is going to give me some money. I swear I'll leave this burg with a nest of greenbacks in my pocket—Mr. Tapp, where's the hotel?"

A hint of mystery lit up Si Tapp's sober eyes, then his expression grew cold and disdainful.

"Ain't got no hotel. Widder Fagan and her ma run a sort of boarding-house three doors north. They got three section-men tho."

"Much obliged. Sorry I haven't a smoke."

I had gone about three paces when Tapp called:

"Hey! Ain't asked the meanin' of Koffemup."

"That's so. It is a funny name. Why, ain't you going to tell me?"

"Nope—the widder, she'll tell you Icaklated as how you might have such a thing as a chaw of tobaccy."

"Sorry, Tapp, I haven't. Wait till I get that money."

This pleased the blacksmith, for he tore off another guffaw and slapped his thighs as if they had been guilty of a misdemeanor.

I stood on the porch of the boarding-housekeeper's dingy cottage and knocked. A woman came to the door. She was perspiring, and, in wiping off her face with her apron, she had carelessly rubbed in some kettle-black.

"Are you Mrs. Fagan?"

"I am," she replied, applying her apron and more kettle-black.

"I'm Edo Scone."

At once I realized her husband had lost her by dying. How shall I describe her? She was a late descendant of Eve, petite, with blue eyes like a Bertha M. Clay heroine, brown hair and ways too numerous to mention. Then that god they call Cupid shut my eyes to any defects she might have had and I got down to business.

"I want board and room for a while."

"I haven't but one spare room and that's took. What's your business?"

"I paint houses and signs."

Knitting her brows, she asked uncertainly:

"Will—you paint my house for your board and lodging?"

"I will," I agreed, trusting to Providence to send showers of paint.

"All right. But you'll have to make good with Patsy or he won't share up his spare room. Come in to breakfast."

"Pardon me, but you have some kettle-black on your face."

"I must be a sorry spectacle," she lamented.

"No, you aren't that nor a glass eye, either."

The next instant she had vanished to emerge again, her face shining like an angel's. With difficulty she gathered up the threads of her self-possession and showed me a place at the table.

She introduced me to Patsy Dawk, a low-browed native specimen of a section foreman, and to Jake Millar, and Swan Johnson, who hardly took their eyes from their coffee, in which they were sopping their bread, to mumble my name. Later they mutinied, refusing to pass me the sugar-bowl or the syrup-pitcher. Here Mrs. Fagan showed both her interest and principle by refilling my plate and coffee cup until I had eaten so many pancakes and had drunk so much coffee that I felt like a cross between a frying-pan and a coffee pot.

When I went out to the kitchen to wash my hands, Mrs. Davis, Mrs. Fagan's mother, a portly, good-natured woman, was frying cakes for herself.

She looked up a minute from her hot work to say pleasantly:

"Hope you get paintin' nuff to do to keep you here a spell. You'll liven things up."

"If I don't get much painting I guess I'll have to thrash oats."

"Good boy. How old are you?"

"Thirty-two."

"The same age as my Dolly—Now Dolly's man wouldn't do nary a thing but work in the hemp mill, and that ran only a few months. He was allers talkin' of makin' hisen fortun off in some furrin country. No use to talk 'bout him, now he's gone——"

"Ma, you're burning your cakes with your talking!" exclaimed Mrs. Fagan, rushing into the kitchen.

The heavy smoke from the burning cakes forced me out into the summer air. I sat down in the shade of an old apple tree to refresh myself with my copy of Tolin's "How to Paint Houses Without Paint," after which I felt competent to fare forth to look work in the face. Was it an evil day in which to solicit paint orders, or was it because Koffemup desired to remain among the great Unpainted? Anyway, I came back at 6 o'clock, my pockets jingleless.

After supper I thought something was due Mrs. Fagan for taking me in, so I washed the dishes. Just as I was putting on the finishing touches I awkwardly dropped the dish-mop.

"Some one is coming," laughed Mrs. Fagan.

"Why?"

"You dropped the dish-mop. I dropped it this morning and you came."

"That's funny," and then we both laughed.

She asked me into the parlor. There were a few moments of silence when she, by way of entertainment, drew my attention to a picture of Mr. Fagan. It was a crayon drawing and none too beautifying. The bold, dark eyes looked out at me kind of jealous.

"Do you know, Mr. Scone, that my husband was the cause of the town being called Koffemup?"

"How so?"

"Well, this village was like a baby with no name. Nothing seemed to fit it. My husband was little then. One day what did he do but up and swallow two dimes. Si Tapp patted him on the back and yelled Koffemup——"

"Koffemup——" a voice yelled at the back of my chair.

Mrs. Fagan and I wheeled. A man six feet tall, sunburnt, with a shock of grizzly brown hair and dark eyes, in which the light of triumph burned, confronted us.

"Jim Fagan!" she cried, in alarm.

"Yes, your husband turned up again. You don't look right glad to see me."

"I'm not," her breath came heavily. "You stayed away so long this time I

thought I was a sure-enough widow. Folks called me one. Now I won't get my house painted for nothing," she faltered, looking sadly at me.

"Aw, cheer up, Polly, I've been to Australia and made my pile——"

"You have—really?" she gasped, her expression changing.

"One of your boarders told me that this fellow here was sweet on you. Can't blame him much."

Then to me: "What will you take to forget her, and Koffemup?"

The question made my mind stagger. I wanted, oh. how I ached to hand it to him for his insolence, but she was his wife, and her attitude toward me had changed. He was offering a balm—a heart-balm. I reasoned this way: There was a balm of Gilead, why not a balm of Koffemup?"

"A hundred dollars," I replied, not expecting to get half that amount.

"Here they are, all greenbacks, to go with your clothes."

The first and last thing I did before leaving Koffemup that night was to buy Si Tapp his promised tobacco.

THE TEST

Amelia, though not particularly brilliant, was a nice girl. Every one said that. She was prominent in the Epworth League, and the Onward and Upward Club, and she believed in good literature. One could always find "Just David" or "Bambi' or "The Winning of Barbara Worth," or some equally good book on her dresser.

For many years she cherished the delusion that every man she passed regarded her with an evil eye. When this belief failed to be confirmed by action, she switched to the conviction that she was the victim of various bodily ills.

Discovering one day that her chest expansion was less than six inches, she concluded that she had lung trouble. She had read that if one can blow out a candle at three feet, there is no weakness of the lungs.

She tried this without satisfactory results, and took her troubles to a friend who was a believer in Christian Science.

"There is nothing the matter with you," the friend told her. "Go back home and make yourself believe that, and in a few days you will be able to blow out your candle."

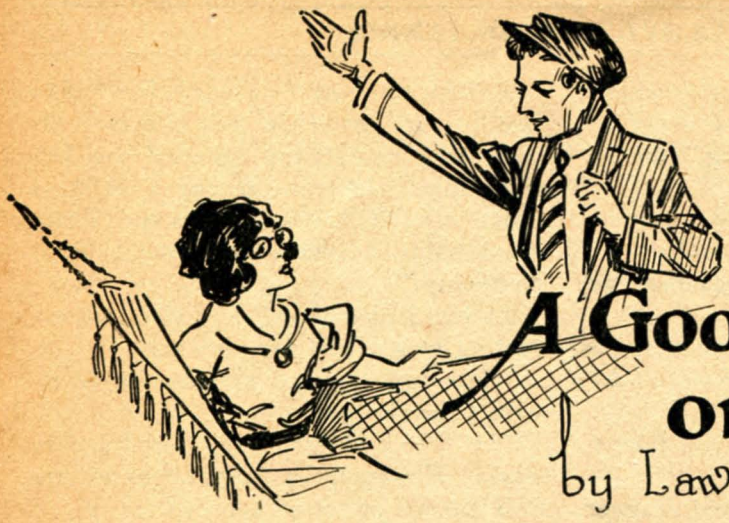
After a week Amelia returned.

"It has failed to work as you said" she told her friend. "I have not yet blown out the candle."

"There is something wrong," answered the friend. "I will go to your home and assist you by my faith."

Accordingly they proceeded to Amelia's home and the friend soon discovered the reason for the failure.

Amelia had overlooked lighting the candle.—*Hartley H. Hepler*



A Good Joke on Myrtle

by Lawrence Riley

WHEN the story came out, as it eventually did, everybody laughed and said it was a good joke on Myrtle—perfectly killing. People chuckled about it for years, and it was still being told when Myrtle had ceased to be Myrtle and had become that queer Miss Higgins, the old maid. It was even funnier then, of course.

You remember the old Higgins house on the corner of Walnut and Alma avenue, across from the Central Fire Station? Sort of mud colored, and covered with straggly woodbine. Myrtle was born there, her father died there, and it was there that her mother started to take in roomers, when it turned out that Mr. Higgins had neglected to keep up the payments on his insurance. Myrtle was nine then, and in the third grade of the second ward school. Nobody liked her, not even the teacher. The reason was, I suppose, that she was so aware of her own goodness. She never passed notes, or threw chalk, and she had finicky gesture of brushing away the crumbs of rubber with her little finger after one of her infrequent erasures that stirred a sensitive observer to madness. I can see her now, starched, prim, spectacled, with a set smile of Christian forebearance. After school she sat on the front porch and read "The Five Little Peppers," and was consciously oblivious to the little boys who hooted her as they went by.

At fifteen Myrtle was in high school; still spectacled, awkward, and just beginning to be aware that life was more complex than she had supposed, and that a girl whose only attribute was an unmodified goodness might sometime find her reward in Heaven, but had rather a poor time of it on earth. She decided that she would rather be popular at the Lincoln High than at the First M. E. church, and she began to compromise with her ideals. This was a mistake. She started taking dancing lessons and lost what prestige she had held as organist for the Daughters of Ruth class without getting into that care-free circle of girls which she had previously characterized, and too freely, as frivolous and boy crazy. She had started too late in the race.

She finally found her natural level in a congenial group who, like Myrtle, wanted to be Puritans without renouncing all the lesser vices. They went in a crowd to the high school dances, and, after waiting a fearful, hopeful hour to be favored with masculine attention, finally gave up and danced with one another. They said they liked that better, anyway. They gave chaste little feminine parties, with tissue paper favors made by direc-

tions in the "Woman's Home World," and played guessing games.

About this time Myrtle wrote to her cousin in California that she "went with the dandiest crowd of girls. We have ever so much fun. One night last week Ella Hanson had a masquerade party and what do you think? *We all went dressed in boys' clothes!* Wasn't that *terrible!* And Ella—she's the *sweetest* thing, but ever so daring—had a real cigarette, and she pretended to smoke it! Mamma would just die if she knew about it. But we don't neglect the serious side of life, either, and every week we have an evening of readings from some of the well known improving authors."

Graduated from high school, Myrtle found herself rather at a loss. The other girls of the "crowd" were all working—teaching, giving music lessons, bookkeeping, or clerking in a shop, but Mrs. Higgins, whose family had lived in Oilville long before Center street was paved, had a tradition of gentility, and insisted that Myrtle stay home, and "help round the house." With a small house, and only two roomers, that didn't take up much of the girl's time, and so she read, and made fudge, and taught Sunday school and took lessons successively in china painting, music, French and pyrography. At twenty-two she was fat, thought vaguely of going to the city and doing social work and had the largest selection of picture post cards in Oilville.

Then Homer Lewis appeared.

On a warm afternoon Myrtle sat on the front porch alternately crocheting and reading from "Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall." Across the street, in front of the fire station, a group of adolescents was shooting craps, consuming cigarettes, and telling low-voiced stories.

A man turned the corner from Walnut street and was advancing towards her. He stopped at the end of the short brick walk and lifted his hat. He was nattily dressed and a suitcase was in one hand.

"Pardon me," he said, "But is this—I was told I might be able to find a room here."

Myrtle rose to her feet, impressed. She noted his natty clothes and gold watch charm and hoped that her mother had changed her gingham house dress of the morning for the more formal afternoon costume of dotted percale. How providential that Miss Willis, the teacher, had been taken sick, and that there was a room vacant!

She ushered him into the gloomy coolness of the hall.

"Won't you be seated? I'll call mamma."

He sank onto the hall seat and mopped his forehead with a silk handkerchief. Simultaneously Mrs. Higgins appeared from the kitchen. She was a large, neat woman, who moved ponderously and spoke with a kind of vague dignity. She always seemed a little removed from the present and to be thinking about the time before Center street was paved.

"Mamma, this gentleman wanted a room. And I thought as long as Miss Willis will be away for the rest of the summer we could let him have that one."

"He could look at it," Mrs. Higgins agreed.

They displayed the room, and after the necessary formalities, Mr. Homer Lewis, as the rolling script on his calling cards proclaimed him, was accepted as a member of the Higgins *menage*. He told them that he had accepted a position with Morris and Crawford, the jewelers.

"Of course," he said, laughing pleasantly, "I don't expect to settle here. I'm quite a rover. A person ought to get out and see the world while he's still young."

"Oh, yes," Myrtle breathed.

"That's what Mr. Higgins always said," her mother agreed. She always

marked the close of a discussion with that remark.

That evening, just as Mr. Lewis was going out to supper, Myrtle was on the porch again, reading "Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall."

"Ah, reading, I see," Mr. Lewis said in his modulated voice.

Myrtle admitted that she was.

"One of my favorite novels," he observed, approvingly. "I do like a nice, entertaining story like that. I always say there's enough sadness in real life, without having to read about it." He lifted his hat, with a pleasant smile, and passed down the steps. Myrtle felt that agreeable glow that comes with converse with a kindred spirit. She felt that here was a man of the world, and of no mean intellect.

A few days later, Oilville was started at the sight of Myrtle Higgins—fat, spectacled Myrtle Higgins, walking down Main street with a man. They stopped at the Cut Rate Pharmacy and had a soda apiece, at a table right in the front of the store. When it was whispered that he was working at Morris and Crawford's and that he was rooming at the Higgins, at least part of the phenomenon was explained; it was, nevertheless, a triumph for Myrtle. She paraded her escort up and down Main street twice, beguiling him with manufactured errands, before she was satisfied.

By August, Myrtle and Homer Lewis were, in the phrase of their circle, going together. It was surprising how the girl blossomed out in those few months. She sparkled and dimpled and even, at time, achieved an air of actual vivacity. People began to say that poor Myrtle wasn't such a bad sort, at that, and wasn't it nice that she finally had a man who would provide for her and her mother, and Myrtle would certainly make a good housekeeper if she wasn't much on looks —don't you remember that grand potato salad she made for the Christian Endeavor picnic? Indeed, pale, near-sighted Mr. Timmons, who was floor walker in the Boston Store on week days and who taught the class next to Myrtle's at Sunday school, began to reflect that he might have been more attentive to that nice Miss Higgins, and that perhaps he had let slip a precious pearl (to say nothing of a good Christian wife) from under his very nose.

Although Homer Lewis had not proposed marriage to her, Myrtle began to think of herself as being engaged. Her manner toward the other girls in her crowd became distinctly superior, and she was prone to use sentences starting, "Well, when I'm married—". Her whole life became wrapped up in this one man. From the sentimental, school-girl regard she had felt for him in the beginning her feeling had grown to be a real, burning, vivid thing—the first touch of reality her muffled life had ever known.

One stifling August night, Myrtle, passing along the upper hall, noticed that the door of Homer's room was ajar. She thought that he was inside reading, and she playfully peered in. He was in his shirt sleeves, with his back toward her, and he was draining a whiskey bottle. At the sound of the door creaking he turned, putting the bottle down on the bureau and wiping his lips with the back of his hand. Myrtle leaned against the door jamb, feeling faint.

"Well!" There was anger as well as surprise in his tone. "Where the hell did you drop from?"

Myrtle, with all her inexperience, could see that he was a little drunk.

"Homer—" she stammered. "Why—why I never saw you like this. I didn't know—you told me you didn't drink."

He sat down on the edge of the bed and drew her down beside him. His was

the kind of nature that demands a women's passive complement, and he had paid attention to Myrtle simply because she was the nearest woman to hand. Now, inspired by the whiskey, he thought it would be amusing to conquer her.

"Listen, dearie." His voice had dropped its veneer of refinement. "You don't want to be a hick all your life, do you? Why, you don't know what the world is yet. You're still living in Sunday school."

He kissed her, his unshaven cheeks rasping her skin. She drew away, keeping him off with her pudgy hands.

"Don't, Homer, she wispered. "You mustn't. We're not engaged. Let me go!" She rose awkwardly, her eyeglesses awry.

He stared at her, keeping a grin from his lips. She was a homely young cow, he reflected, but after all—

He dropped his head in his hands, affecting despondency.

"You're right, Myrtle. You're a good girl—I know that. I kind of lost my head for a minute." He looked up at her. "I suppose I shouldn't make love to you when I can't ask you to marry me—"

"You're married already," she charged, wildly.

"No, not that. But I haven't a cent. How can I ask you to marry me? My salary—why it's nothing. I couldn't ask a girl to live on what I make." His head dropped again.

She put her hand on his shoulder.

"Listen, Homer. I—I've got some money. Not much—some Grandma left me—a few hundred dollars. We could start on that."

"Myrtle! Do you think I'd live on my wife's money!"

"But why not? It's mine. We'd be sharing it together." All evasions and mock modesty had dropped from Myrtle now. She wasn't going to lose the only chance she had ever had.

"You mean it well, dear." He drew her to him again. "But you don't understand. I'm not built that way. I couldn't do it."

In his embrace, her regret was submerged in her pride. Even the sight of the amber whiskey bottle over his shoulder did not disconcert her. After all, her lover was a man of the world, strong, virile . . ..

A sultry September night. They were hurrying down the back streets to the station, to catch the midnight train for Buffalo. Rain threatened, and gusts of wind blew the street dust up at them in little flurries. From the railroad yards drifted a nauseous smell of coal gas. Homer, carrying their two heavy bags, sweated and occasionally swore. Myrtle lumbered at his side, too happy to mind the discomfort of their flight.

It was the climax of two weeks of arguments, tears, kisses and recriminations. Homer, wearied to death of his paltry job and spurred by his inborn wanderlust, saw in Myrtle's offered money manumission, for an interval, from the daily grind, and a month or so of glorious living. That was an end worth working for. When, having subjected the girl's ignorance to his experienced guile, the five hundred dollars lay in his pocket, Myrtle believed that he had taken them against his will. And, as he had been so nice about the money, she thought, it was only right that she should fall in with his desire to run up to Buffalo and have a quiet wedding, and tell no one about it until afterward, not even her mother.

The station platform was deserted and they were the only ones to board the train. They found a seat in a day coach, heavy with foul air and a-sprawl with disheveled passengers, most of them half asleep in tortured, constricted attitudes.

Homer dropped into the seat with a grunt. He was too tired and too near the

end of the adventure to maintain a very gallant demeanor. Myrtle, inclined to sentiment, was repelled by his heavy indifference. Finally she relaxed against his shoulder, staring at the shiny black window. She began to feel a terrible sense of reality. She could not connect herself with the ingenuous girl who had sat on the porch a month before reading, "Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall." She had gone so far since then. A grim feeling of futility enveloped her. Who was this man beside her? Why was she going away with him? She began to sob, softly, flabbily.

"Oh, damn it, Myrtle, shut up! You don't act very happy for a girl on her wedding trip, I must say." She stopped crying and took his hand. He shook out a newspaper and read, stolidly . . ..

It was dawn when they reached Buffalo. The switch lights gleamed green and red through the morning mist. Dirty, and with puffy eyes they stumbled from the train and into the cold echoing station. He checked the bags, and he gave her the coupon for her own. "You'd better keep your own, in case something'd happen," he said. She was too tired, and her head was too stuffy, to attach any meaning to his words.

They drifted out into a shabby street, along which a trolley car rattled with early morning emptiness.

"Let's get a cup of coffee," Homer suggested, yawning. They found a little open-all-night restaurant, and over the ketchup spotted tablecloth gave their order to a pasty-faced waiter who looked at them vacantly.

Coffee revived them a little. Homer lit a cigarette and Myrtle straightened her hat, peering into a mirror above the table.

"I know a nice little hotel up the street," Homer told her. "I'll take you up there and you can freshen up a bit while I go for a minister. Drink up the rest of your coffee and you'll feel better." He manipulated a toothpick, veiling its operations daintily with his hand.

It was full light when they stepped into the street again. The sun was dispelling the mist with a fierceness that suggested another scorching day.

The Hotel Grand was around a corner. The lobby was deserted, save for a clerk, and a negro sweeping up cigar and cigarette butts. The place was shabbily ornate and stuffy with green plush armchairs. Homer showed her the swinging door that led to the women's rest room.

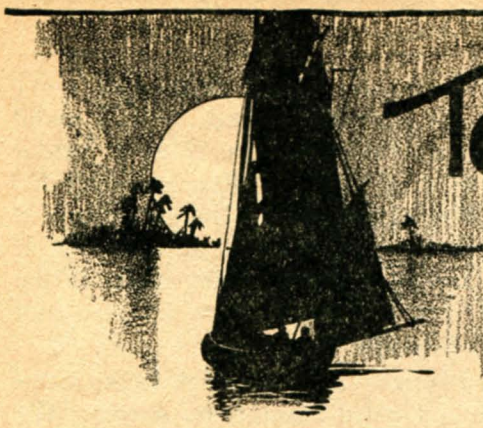
"Now you go in there and have a good wash, and I'll meet you here in the lobby in half an hour."

He kissed her hastily and turned away. Then, feeling an inward glow at his own generosity, he went back to her and held out one of her bills. "Here, take this, in case you should want anything while I'm away. So long."

"Thanks, Homer," she said, taking the bill. She pushed open the door and paused a moment, looking near-sightedly after him. Yes, after all, she loved him, he was hers.

Inside, in the dressing room, she unpinned her hat and combed her hair. She was very dignified before the negress who was in charge, and furious that she did not know how to work the contrivance for emptying the basin, and that the negress had to show her. Very precise, she walked out into the lobby again and settled herself in a worn green plush chair, crossing her pudgy ankles neatly. The clock over the desk pointed to a quarter to eight, and he had said half an hour. At a quarter past, then, he would be back.

She composed herself to wait . . ..



To Skin a Feline

by Manthus P. Bridges

ALL the way down the coast from Sierra Leone to Benguela. Touching in at the Gaboon and finding nothing. Slipping by the Congo because Captain Jed Pratt had just come out therefrom swearing as a typhoon at the lack of business. Away down to Benguela with the hold still half full of Yankee notions untraded and with the stink of the African coast in our nostrils, its taste in our mouths and its fever in our blood. Boston three thousand miles away and Christmas a-coming with seven-leagued boots on. I knew my uncle, Captain Pogram, would never leave the coast until he'd filled his vessel and there was a mighty good chance of our frying bananas Christmas day instead of eating pumpkin pie at home on the lee of a coal fire.

"I've never seen business so pesky dull, Asahel," says Uncle, "we'll drap into Loando. Mebbe we'll hear of sumpthin'."

When our mud hooks was in the ground at Loando, Uncle and I puts ashore and lays our course for McDougal's. He was an old Scotchman who had been so long on the coast and had had the fever so often that his face and bald head were as yellow as a gourd.

"Ye're not lookin' as good as usual," he says, to Uncle. McDougal was a crusty old chap but did a good trading and ship-chandlery business.

"Things are awful flat, McDougal," replies Uncle, "Can't get a cargo for love or money. Can't think what's come to the coast and the niggers."

"There's na the matter wi' the coast or the niggers," grinned McDougal, "they are as the guid God made 'em. It's men like you and Jed Pratt a gallivantin' up the coast cheating the puir creatures that's spoiled business."

This sounded good from McDougal, who, everybody knew, had made his money not only in cozening the niggers but in selling them outright.

"An' it'll be waur for ye twa," continued McDougal. "Tom Kitchen is on the coast wi' a new schooner called Marcia Webb of New York. He's beating you all in getting cargo."

We had heard that Kitchen, a former mate of Jed Pratt's, was coming on the coast in his own craft, but we had not met him.

"What's he done that's so all-fired pert?" asked Uncle.

"Why, he's made friends wi' Antonio up at the Gaboon. He traded out half his cargo wi' him and he's going to get rid of the balance on the Congo at one of Antonio's trading posts."

"Didn't know Tony had a post on the Congo," said Uncle.

"Yes, at Koba. About a hundred miles up. But ye needn't wriggle in y'r chair. Ye can't get that cargo awa' from Kitchen. Tony has sent word that the

trading's to be done wi' the Marcia Webb and no other craft."

Captain Pogram was very glum as we rowed back to the schooner and I attributed it to his feeling sore over the new comer getting business where he and Jed Pratt had failed. As a rule these experienced coasters wouldn't deal with the Portuguese traders, but preferred to deal direct with natives, as there was more profit in it to them.

When we reached the schooner he laid a course due north.

"Where are we bound, Uncle?" I asked.

"Plumb into the Congo, my boy," says he.

"But there's nothing there if Cap'n. Jed couldn't find it."

Jest before we had reached the mouth of the river Uncle calls me below. He was sitting by the cabin table, and when I came down he says, solemn-like, "Asahel, you've been sailing with your old uncle several years, but I'm duberous if I've ever told you of my affliction."

"Rheumatiz?' 'says I.

"No, Asahel, I walk in my sleep. When I do it I ain't responsible for what I do and if any one was to wake me up I'd drap dead, Asahel."

"I've never seen you do sich a thing," I says. "You've always been wide awake when you've been on deck."

"I feel it comin' on, Asahel. It comes when some sentiment takes hold of me. Now, what do you suppose was the fust girl I ever loved, Asahel?"

"Couldn't guess, Uncle," says I, wondering if the old man has a stroke of the sun.

"Her name was Marshy Webb."

"That's the name of Tom Kitchen's new schooner—was she named after the girl you loved, Uncle?"

"It might, and then it mightn't. There are lots of women named Marshy Webb, but soon as I heard the name it started me a thinking of old times and sentiment is powerful, Asahel. I was awful sweet on that girl. Purty as a pictoor and as good as gold. But fate separated us, Asahel, and left a bleeding wound in my buzzum. I tell you this so that if you see me doing anything queer in the next day or two don't be alarmed and don't interfere."

We steered into the Congo in the afternoon and sailed leisurely up stream. We had as crew two Kroomen only. Captain Pogram intending to take on men at Loango or Sierra Leone for the homeward passage. After we had passed Boma, Uncle ordered a stage swung over the stern.

"This old hooker is getting kind o' dingy, Asahel," he says, "while we are in smooth water I think I'll touch up her name a bit. You didn't know when I was a youngster I was apprenticed to a sign painter afore I went to sea, did you?"

Uncle made no move to go to work after the stage was over, but mooned about the deck mumuring "Marshy Webb, Marshy Webb," until I was plumb sick of the name.

Jest afore sundown Uncle lays down in the cabin and goes to sleep. In a half-hour I saw him walking across the deck with a pot o' paint in each hand.

"Going to paint, Uncle?" I asks.

He stared at me with a glassy stare and goes on over the rail onto the stage. I heard him singing to himself:

"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand
And cast a wistful eye
On Canaan's fair and happy land
Where my possessions lie."

Bye and bye up he comes and goes below without saying a word. I climbed over onto the stage and there on the starn was the name:

MARCIA WEBB OF NEW YORK

I ran down into the cabin and Uncle was sitting blinking on a locker. I told

him what he had painted on the starn of the schooner.

"Asahel," he says, solemnly, "the pressin' of the name of my old sweetheart was so powerful that it's made me walk in my sleep."

"Hadn't you better paint it out?" I asks.

"I'd be powerful glad to do it," says Uncle, "but there's not a bit o' paint."

About noon the next day we came off Koba and drapped anchor. A slobby lookin' Portuguese comes out in a boat and rows around to the starn of our schooner. Then he comes aboard and he and Uncle palavers awhile in the cabin. After he had left Uncle says, "I'm goin' ashore airly in the mornin'."

I had the anchor watch about 4 o'clock in the morning and when I saw Uncle come on deck I spoke to him. He merely stared at me and says never a word, but draps into the gig and pulls himself ashore. At 7 o'clock here comes a half dozen native boats loaded with coast produce and we begins takin' out cargo and puttin' in ebony, elephant's tusks, coffee and palm oil. Jerusalem, we worked hard and not a sign of Uncle When we had all the stuff delivered and what was traded in the hold Uncle comes off in his gig.

"What have you done, Asahel?" he asks.

"Why," says I, "I've taken in a lot of produce and put out the cargo we had in the hold."

"It was all done while I was walkin' in my sleep, Asahel," he says. "I wouldn't have had it happen for worlds. But it's too late now."

We got under way and when we were jest in mid-stream Uncle comes up with a grin on his face and a bucket in his hand.

"Jest found a bucket o' paint, Asahel," he says, "don't know how I could have missed it."

He swings over the starn onto a stage and paints out "Marcia Webb," and puts, "Sarah Chapman of Salem" in its place.

We ate our Christmas dinner in Salem, boys.

"What did Captain Kitchen say when he met your uncle?" asked the ship chandler.

"Bein' a perfessin' member of church I wouldn't repeat his language for any money," replied Asahel, "but you see it was all done while Uncle was a-walkin' in his sleep."

ACROSS THE COURT

Thursday she was dancing before her mirror to the hurdy-gurdy waltz. She did not see me.

Friday I threw her violets across the court. I played Rubinstein's melodie on my piano: she caught the tune with her voice.

Saturday: He came; the bulbs lowered. I heard a kiss. "Good night; good bye."

Sunday: I threw her roses as she stitched. Our eyes met; the roses at her lips.

Monday: I saw his face. I had seen it before. I heard him plan their marriage.

Tuesday. He took her away in a taxi; I followed in another to the Westchester Roadhouse.

I snatched her from him, reminding him of his wife.

"Pshaw!" she laughed. "Bob got his divorce this morning; I got mine yesterday. Stop for supper with us; do."

—*Frances Aymar Mathews.*

SUNBEAM'S CHILD

by

Harry Stephen Keeler

"GUNTON, you're an unnatural father," declared Payne, as the two men sat smoking in Gunton's library. "Do you think that if I had a boy fifteen years of age I'd keep him marooned in the care of a private family in England? Not for an instant. I'd have my son with me. I'd take him around to the theaters and cafes. I'd be his companion and pal. At any rate, I'd act as a real father. All you've ever done, though, is to write out a check every three months. I repeat my assertion, Gunton. Your attitude is wholly abnormal."

The older man removed his cigar from his lips and regarded the speaker contemplatively. His face bore a perplexing look which seemed to indicate that he was pondering over some very involved question. Finally, after a full minute had passed, he broke the silence.

"Payne, you've made that same accusation against me on several occasions during our seven years of acquaintanceship. Often I've felt that I'd like to tell you more about the boy—and his mother—and other things as well. But it seems that something has invariably held me back." He paused and blew several smoke rings ceilingward. "Tonight, though, I'm going to explain things to you. You understand, of course, that my words are between the two of us only?"

"Have I ever violated your confidence in these seven years?" asked Payne.

"No, you haven't—and for that very reason I'm going to unburden myself." Gunton leaned forward and placed his hand on the other man's knee. "And the sole remaining reason," he added simply, "is because I've learned that you are my —friend. Now listen.

"I've never mentioned Sunbeam—my wife—to you. The circumstances under which we met were quite ordinary. Her father was a business acquaintance of my uncle. She was the only child. We were introduced one evening at a private dance. And the result for each of us, I daresay, was love at first sight. Yes, the whole affair was quite ordinary—so I'll pass quickly to other things.

"As to the name, Sunbeam. Rather fanciful, even for a pet name, eh Payne? But you should have seen her to have understood I'm sure that you've noticed these fragile little flaxen-haired dolls in the windows of the big stores around Christmas time. Just such a living, hu-

man doll was Sunbeam. She was dainty, small, delicately featured. Her hair, which fell about her temples in the most entrancing ringlets, was the sunniest yellow. Her cheeks would have reminded you ineffably of the pink roses we see in the old fashioned flower gardens. And her eyes—big and blue and trustful as those of a child. In fact, Payne, she was a child with woman's years, a beautiful unspoiled child, and when I was first introduced to her by my uncle, my peace of mind left me instantly. After I had known her for but a few weeks I realized that I could never, never adjust myself to a life which did not include her. But my lucky star must have been in the ascendency, for she gave me her love—and herself as my wife.

"I don't believe, Payne, that I shall ever forget the four weeks of our honeymoon. For quite a number of years I had been enjoying a splendid salary, and I had saved the greater part of it. So, just before we were married, I erected a charming little bungalow out in Hyde Park; in the rear of it I put up a small brick garage and purchased an expensive limousine. Then, after several wonderful days of shopping for furniture, we were quietly married and left for a leisurely tour of the East. We took in Pittsburgh, Washington, New York, Buffalo and Cleveland. By the time we returned to Chicago, our little nest was all complete; every piece of furniture was in place, and in care of it was a motherly woman whom I had engaged as housekeeper.

"But now came the unpleasant part. I was compelled by the exigencies of my work to leave Sunbeam, since it was necessary for me to continue traveling for at least a year longer. I tell you, Payne, if you have never had to leave the woman you love for periods of time averaging a month, you cannot realize what a soul-grilling experience it was for me. It meant that I must go bumping about the country enduring all sorts of hardships and inconveniences, instead of being able to sit at home evenings in my big overstuffed rocker with Sunbeam on my lap, her smooth pink cheek snug up against my own, and her warm kisses coming at the most unexpected moments. But depart I must.

"Now at this point I must digress a bit in order to tell you about an individual who was connected with the events which followed. If only he had never existed, then . . . But, after all, things are as they are; none of us must cavil at the immutable law of cause and effect. At any rate, to continue, this man's name was Dyke. It seems that long before I had met Sunbeam he had been a regular caller at her father's house and had shown in numerous ways that he was anxious to ingratiate himself into her good graces. He was a fairly good-looking chap in spite of the fact that there was a somewhat tricky look on his face. I have but one thing to tell about him; this I remark upon because you are always talking about the Laws of Heredity, the Mendelian Theories, and what not. This fact constituted an oddity of nature which should interest you.

"On his left temple, Payne, was a dark patch of red which had been there since his birth; its size was, perhaps, that of a twenty-five cent piece. And the odd thing about it was that his father had borne the same peculiar mark in the same place. And, to add to the strangeness of the fact, his grandfather, too, had carried a patch of reddish skin at the left temple. This was true beyond any doubt, since there were many who had known Dyke's father and had seen the tin-type of his grandfather. So much for that. Explain it as you wish.

"Well, no sooner had I been out of town a week than Dyke had made a social

call on Sunbeam. By no means, Payne, do I wish to give you the impression that she concealed it from me. Almost as soon as I reached the house after my first trip, she met me in the hall, snuggled up to me on her tiptoes and said. 'Dear, do you remember Mr. Dyke? While you were gone he made me a visit. And he asked whether he might drop in again some time.'

"I tell you, Payne, a blind ungovernable rage seized me when I thought of that shifty-eyed, birth-marked Dyke daring to call upon my fairy-wife in my absence. Old stories that I had heard about him recurred suddenly to my memory. And then and there I mentally determined that if he ever repeated the action he should receive a lesson which he would never forget.

"So after supper that evening I made my way alone down to an employment office in the black belt, that portion of Chicago's South State street lying between 18th and 35th streets; it was here that the city's negro population lived and moved. And I found just the specimen of a man I was looking for. His name was Skoko—Skoko something or other—I've forgotten now what. He was a gigantic, brawny, ape-like negro, a veritable black Hercules. I'll warrant there wasn't a nigger wench in existence that could have helped but go crazy over him. He was a typical African, Payne, with carbon-black skin, flat nose, great thick lips, and kinky hair. His long muscular arms, low forehead, and sloping cranium put me in mind of the stuffed gorilla that stands in the Academy of Sciences at Lincoln Park.

"Here was the man I wanted, I told myself, mentally calculating what chance of defense Dyke would have if this black gorilla in human form ever began a chastisement. So I called him to one side and stated the details of the position for which I required a man.

" 'Now, Skoko,' I said, 'the manager of this agency informs me that you've been employed in the past as a cook, chauffeur and general caretaker. I require a man for those duties at my residence in Hyde Park. I should expect you to drive my wife out along Michigan avenue on those afternoons when she wishes to take the air or to shop in the stores of the downtown district. So far so good. There is one more duty—a very unusual one—and one which will never have to be repeated. If a man'—and I described Dyke very accurately in name and appearance—'ever comes up my steps, rings my bell, and asks for my wife, I want you to beat him within an inch of his life so that he'll never show his face around there again. And in such an event I'll see that you're fully protected so far as the law is concerned.' Then I named a salary that caused that nigger to enter my employment on the spot.

"Sunbeam did not seem to be very glad when she learned that I had engaged a servant who could act as a combination chauffeur, housekeeper and cook. But she finally agreed with me that it would perhaps be a more advantageous arrangement for her, since the man who had been coming every day to look after our house had proved to be extremely unreliable. So I discharged the woman housekeeper that night with two weeks of advance wages; the following morning Skoko was duly installed as general utility man and protector to Sunbeam. During the week I remained in Chicago, he demonstrated that he was a very efficient servant. Hence, at no time did I regret the generous salary I was paying him. After that, while on the road, I was no longer preyed upon by the dread fear that Dyke might come around and worm his way

into my household—as I felt instinctively he would if he could.

"Seven or eight months flew by. My trips on the road were now averaging but two weeks apiece and my stays at home were of about the same duration. Apparently, Dyke had made no further attempts to call upon Sunbeam at the house, for she never made any mention of him again, and, in addition, catechising Skoko elicited the fact that the only time she was ever out of his sight was for the two or three hours that she spent inside the great downtown stores. And I, very sensibly, never brought up Dyke's name again.

"Well, Payne, after these eight months had elapsed I learned something that set me beside myself with joy. I had been at home for about a week when the family doctor called me aside one morning and told me the news—that later on there were to be three in our family instead of two. My heart leaped with gladness. Oh, how I longed for a boy—a little tyke with the yellow hair of his doll-like mother. Immediately I secured a leave of absence of a year from my firm. Then I made all the necessary preparations for taking Sunbeam over to one of the Italian lakes where we could wait together in quietness and happiness for the great event to take place. Three days later I closed up the Hyde Park residence. I paid off my faithful black, giving him a one-hundred-dollar bill as a bonus. When he left the house to return to the agency from which I had hired him, I tried not to show that my heart was heavy at breaking off from the home ties; and Sunbeam must have felt it more deeply than I, for the tears glistened on her eyelashes. And so, all this gone through with, we sailed for Italy.

"I rented one of the numerous villas that lie along the eastern shore of Lake Como. Built on the front of it was a long porch where we used to sit together and watch the glorious colors of the Italian sunset. In fact, she herself remained on the porch the livelong day, saying nothing, never moving, her face bearing the strangest, most baffling expression. And how that expression troubled me, Payne, for I knew that her heart must be worried. Then, as never before, did I do everything in my power to give her all the love and comfort I could.

"'Dear heart,' I said to her one day, 'don't look so sad and forlorn. Am I not the same to you any more—or is it the fear of the coming ordeal? You must not be afraid, my own. I promise you that we'll have the best medical attendance that the region affords, regardless of expense. And after it's all over with, we three will go back to our little Hyde Park nest and everything shall be just as it used to. I'll get a house exactly like the one we had; I'll see that each piece of furniture is placed in the same position it used to occupy; I'll look up Skoko and re-engage him. We'll resume life again just where we broke it off.'

"On hearing that, her face lighted up and she smiled a wondrous little smile—a smile, though, which proved to me that she was fearfully homesick. Upon seeing the smile I added:

"'There—how good it seems to see you smile again. Everything, dear, will come out all right.'

"And to my intense surprise, she burst into tears and replied:

"'Oh, I hope so, how I hope so, how I hope so—and yet—I'm afraid. I'm afraid of—of—of—just everything.' And she commenced weeping so passionately that I almost thought her heart was breaking.

"Well, Payne, the months slipped by, one by one—until finally the great time arrived. Long before, though, I had installed two nurses in our villa, both English speaking. I had secured the services

of an extra servant as well. A most able physician and his assistant were in almost constant attendance. But, Payne, God must have intended her to give her life for her child, for she never breathed again after it was born. And I swear to you that later, when she lay in her coffin, I observed on her face the same strange elusive expression—a half smile—that had hovered there during the last months of her life. But the child was a boy, Payne, a healthy, vigorous boy, just as I had hoped. But—but—but—how can I go on—" His voice broke.

Payne leaned forward and placed his hand affectionately on the older man's shoulder.

"Dear old fellow," he said tenderly, "I feel that I know what you want to tell me. The boy—was there—was there a—a—birthmark on his left temple?"

The older man gave a short, bitter laugh.

"By no means," he replied. "Nothing like that. From head to foot the boy was a dark copper color, with flat nose and unusually thick lips.

THE WOMAN WHO WON'T

The woman who won't, let her virtue be praised;
Let tablets of memory be lovingly raised
To her who shall conquer the wrong.
No matter though princes her treasure would seek
She keeps her virginity still,
And yet, in my crude humble way,
I'd speak a word for the woman who will.
The woman who wont, the blue blood in her veins
But coldly and sluggishly flows;
Her beautiful breasts that no lover profanes
Are as pure and as chill as the snows.
She is chaste as the virginal lily, and yet
There are voids she never can fill;
And we turn from her worshipful presence and get
Life's blessings from the woman who will.
The woman who won't, do we press her red lips
And drink of their passionate wine?
Do we feel that weird thrill to our far finger tips
And quaff of that nectar divine?
Does she open the gates of an Eden so fair
That it sets our whole being athrill?
Ah no! those joys happy mortals may share
Alone with the woman who will.
The woman who won't, let her name be enthroned
With the names of the martyrs of old;
Her passionate clay is more highly refined,
And cast in a loftier mold.
And yet I give thanks in my prayer and my song
That God in His infiinite will,
Since the days when fair Eve in the garden went wrong,
Has given us the woman who will.—*K. F. Richard*

THE BLUE DRAGON FLY

By I Tillard Middleton

I

THE lights of the Travelling Fair were disappearing one by one, and made no longer a series of little moons in the blue twilight. The dark booths were only dimly discernable—giant shadows in a mimic world.

MacIlroy saw her standing by the entrance gate, and by the light of the flare which still blazed gaudily overhead he saw that she was very pale and drooped like a lily. Her hair was so dark that in the twilight it was nothing more than an inky shadow. He approached her and told her that the Fair was over, the entrance gate was going to be locked, the flare overhead to be quenched. He spoke to her as to a child. She moved a little from the gate in an uncertain way, and seemed unwilling to leave the enclosure. MacIlroy asked her if he could do anything for her. Then she spoke.

"I want to join the Fair," she said simply, as if it was the most natural request in the world.

"Well, but not now, anyway," he replied to humor her.

"Yes, now," she said.

"But its very late—we are putting out all the lights."

"I don't care," she said.

MacIlroy was nonplussed.

"Look here," he said, "Come and see me to-morrow morning and we will talk it over. I'm going home now."

She made no sign of going. She had kept her head hanging, like a lily, but now she raised it, and looked at him. Her eyes mystified him.

"It will be too late to-morrow. I want to join the Fair to-night," she said stubbornly.

"Well you know," he said, annoyed at her persistence but not inclined to show it, "we're not going to turn up the lights and announce an extra turn in order that you may make your debut."

"No," she said, "I shouldn't expect you to do that."

MacIlroy decided that she had no humor, and consequently was at a loss how to deal with her.

"If you really refuse to go away now like a sensible girl, I see nothing for it but for you to come back with me and have some supper, and then we can talk about it afterwards."

"Very well," she said wearily, and stood expectantly.

"Wait here for me then," he said curtly, and went to finish his rounds.

When he returned she seemed to be in exactly the same position as that in which he had left her. The lily-head still drooped heavily on its stalk.

They hardly spoke as they passed along

the quiet streets. MacIlroy was preoccupied, and inclined to be annoyed.

At his lodgings they found a pale woman sitting listlessly before a half-dead fire, and supper laid on the table.

MacIlroy briefly explained that he had business with the girl, and that she would join them at their meal. But the woman —called Liane by MacIlroy—made no comment, and showed no interest in the stranger, who supposed that she was MacIlroy's sister.

After supper the woman slipped away, and MacIlroy settled down to the business of disposing of his importunate guest.

She had taken off her long dark cloak and showed that she was wearing a blue frock of some soft woolen material. The blue was a curious metallic shade, and it seemed to match her eyes. Her hair, he saw, was quite black, and lustreless. It grew in heavy soft waves round her small head, and was swathed round several times as if she had too much to be able to dress it properly. Her skin was smooth and creamy, and now there was a subtle glow in her cheeks; her lips were a pale coral. Long black lashes, very thick and fringy, shaded her blue eyes—that matched the color of her dress.

"Well, now, what can you do?" MacIlroy asked her in a business-like tone of voice, but he was not insensible to her beauty.

"Do?" she queried vaguely.

"You say you want to join the Travelling Fair. Well, you must be able to do something if you wish to become a member of the troupe." He spoke irritably for incompetent beauty had never appealed to him.

She hesitated, and then said,

"I can dance."

"Dance!" MacIlroy spoke the word scornfully. "I'm not very particularly keen on toe-hopping, but you can show me what you can do in that line if you like. Is there nothing else you can do?"

"No," she said briefly.

"Well, let's see how you can dance," MacIlroy said, feeling obliged to give her a chance.

Without a word she slipped off her little shoes, and stood for a moment in the center of the room.

MacIlroy was scarcely aware at first that she was moving, so slight and so fragile were the movements that she made. Daintily she seemed to hover about, like a sun-kissed butterfly dancing over flowers. He moved the lamp to what he considered a more favorable position, and sat down in a chair to watch her. He suddenly startled her by jumping up, and beating his hands.

"Stop," he cried, "Stop!"

She ceased instantly, and looked frightened.

MacIlroy plunged about the room, flinging out his arms as if giving instructions to innumerable scene-shifters.

"A glass floor" he cried. "Reeds—rushes—perhaps some water-lilies—yes, I can see it all—a blue dragon-fly dancing over a lake—reflections—a moon, and some good lime-light effects! It will be quite a novelty, and very popular. Well, well, where can we put you for the night? Can't you go home?"

She shook her head.

"Are you of age?" he demanded briefly.

"I am twenty-two," she answered.

He went out of the room and presently the pale woman appeared and told her in a few colorless words that a small attic was being prepared for her, and without asking any questions she led her to it.

2

The Blue Dragon-Fly was a great success. Somehow she always found herself lodged with MacIlroy and the pale silent woman. He looked after her in an un-

ostentatious way, and he never questioned her about herself. She had volunteered no information except that her name was Vivienne. The only thing which disturbed her, if so negative a force could be disturbing, was the attitude of the pale woman who accompanied them. She had no part in the Show, but she kept the books and looked after the domestic arrangements. She ignored the girl utterly. A few words were exchanged between them daily, but that was all. The elder woman infused into those rare sentences an aloofness, and an emptiness of all emotions, which would have been in itself an art had it not been natural. Only a few words passed between her and MacIlroy by day, but Vivienne often heard long low conversations between them at night, downstairs in the small, stuffy, lodging-house sitting-rooms, after she had gone to bed. She would lie awake listening to the dreary monotonous undertones which ascended through the thin partitions, and sometimes after some clock had chimed an hour after midnight she would hear their slow footsteps mounting the stairs, and her heart for some reason would flutter painfully in her breast, like a wounded bird beating broken wings against some bars—and above its beating she would hear their two doors shut softly and deliberately.

Late summer-time found them in the far Southern Counties. At one of the stopping places the booths were set up in some fields. It was pleasant after the heat of the day to walk back in the cool evening along a quiet lane, fragrant with honeysuckle and the scent of sweet briar, to the little town.

MacIlroy walked by Vivienne's side. At a sudden break in the hedge on one side of their path they came upon a gate, and all the country-side was spread out before them—bathed in palid moonlight. Against the dim sky were the faint outlines of undulating hills, seeming to rise from the folds of some mysterious forest, dark and full of secrets, which billowed its way from the East to the West. The veil of moonlight made it seem like some shadow scene upon a stage, and Vivienne stood gazing, enraptured, with a half-thought that presently the drop-curtain would descend and shut it from sight.

"How beautiful!" she breathed, turning to MacIlroy.

Then a cloud passed over the moon, and the next instant he had gathered her into his arms. She lay there unresisting, her cheek against his, her heart filled with peace.

"My Honey-Flower," he whispered, kissing her hair——

Later, they went on towards the little town, now a small pyramid of tiny lights. Their lodgings were at a cottage, and in the old-fashioned garden they stopped once more, divinely content in each other's near presence. Her soft bare arms were around his neck; he held her very gently, and kissed her lips.

MacIlroy was out early the next morning, and when Vivienne came down after a night filled with fragrant sleepless dreams, she found only Liane in the sunny room. The curious silent woman seemed paler than usual, but Vivienne had grown accustomed to her, and she sat down at the breakfast table without taking any notice of the other. It was after she had finished her meal, and was preparing to go out at the long window into the little garden where, last night, MacIlroy had kissed her in the moonlight, that Liane spoke.

"So you love him——or are you only playing with him?"

Vivienne looked startled. Suddenly she was afraid of this quiet woman. She seemed to have become as inexorable as Fate.

"You must tell me," Liane went on in her low monotonous voice. "You must tell me whether you really love him. Love has many substitutes."

Vivienne choked a little—flushed—and grew pale.

"Yes, I love him," she replied then quite simply.

"And he loves you, I suppose?" asked the other.

"Yes, he loves me—he loves me——" Vivienne's voice grew rapturous, as the voice of a bird in spring. "He told me that he loved me——"

"Last night." Liane finished the sentence for her.

Then Vivienne understood. Liane had seen them in the garden, when they came back.

"You are right; he told me that he loved me last night."

The woman seemed satisfied, and for a time she was lost in thought. Then she rose.

"I will go," she said quite simply.

Vivienne stared at her. "Go——?" she repeated vaguely. "Why—where?"

Liane hesitated, as if in choice of words. Then she said again, "I will go. I will leave you alone together. It will be best——"

Vivienne thought she understood, and rose impulsively, but something in the other's face kept her from going any nearer.

"You must not think of going," she said kindly. "At least not yet—after we are married——"

"Married——" repeated Liane in a colorless voice, her eyes wide, and fixed on the girl's face.

"He has not said anything about that yet, but of course we shall be married—but perhaps not just at present. You need not talk of going yet. I know you must be fond of your brother, but——"

"Brother——" said Liane, but the word was little more than a breath.

"I have sometimes been afraid that you did not like me," Vivienne went on. "You are always so quiet and silent—you never talk to me. Please tell me that you do not dislike me?"

"I do not dislike you," repeated Liane, but her voice sounded as if she had spoken in a dream.

"Oh, I am so glad! I hope you will learn to love me. I do not want you to go away; I am sure that we three could be happy together."

"You do not know what you are saying. I must go," and Liane moved towards the door as she spoke.

Oh, but you mustn't," exclaimed Vivienne. "Wait until Mac returns, and he will convince you that there is no necessity. What will he say if he comes back and finds you gone?"

Liane paused on the threshold.

"He will understand," she said. "Tell him for me that I have gone away because I want him to be happy. Tell him there is no obstacle in his path. Be sure to tell him that—no obstacle——" and she was gone, shutting the door quietly behind her.

Vivienne felt rather disturbed, but she was so little acquainted with the woman, in spite of their close association, that she did not feel it was possible to follow her and renew the argument. Somehow it was Liane who seemed to dominate the situation, and looking back upon the previous months it seemed to Vivienne with increasing insistence that Liane had always exerted an extraordinary amount of power—quite unrealized at the time. There was a curious compelling influence emanating from the silent woman, as if in her hands were the threads of Fate, and she had but to hold or loose them to make or mar the destiny of those

around her. And now she was going away.

Vivienne went out into the garden, but had returned by the time that MacIlroy came back. His face lighted when he saw her, and his eyes repeated the story he had told her the evening before, but he made no attempt to approach her. Vivienne felt rather chilled, and to hide this feeling she spoke to him at once about Liane, and told him how she had watched them the night before, and had that morning desired to know whether they loved each other.

MacIlroy's face was sober.

"It is a great misfortune," he said. "I did not mean to hurt her—nor I am sure did you. Poor thing What she must have suffered! We must think very carefully before we decide what to do. I will go and speak to her; perhaps I shall be able to make it all right about last night."

"But she has gone," said Vivienne. "She would not stay, though I begged her to do so. I told her that we might not be married yet, but she would insist upon going at once. I suppose she feels a little jealous of me now, but that will wear off. Sisters are often jealous when their brothers become engaged you know."

"Sisters," repeated MacIlroy. He stared at Vivienne, but he did not seem to see her. His consciousness seemed to be elsewhere. She laid her hand on his arm to recall him from his dream.

"You say she has gone" he exclaimed incredulously. And he repeated the word "Gone," as if it sounded strangely in his ears.

"She left a message for you. She said that I was to tell you that she wanted you to be happy. She said that I was particularly to tell you that there was no obstacle in your path. I suppose she feels that you will be freer without her."

MacIlroy sat down heavily, like a man who has received a great shock.

"Yes; I suppose she feels that," he said.

"Believe me, I did my best to make her stay," said Vivienne, feeling somehow rather at a discount. "I did not drive her away. I do not think she likes me."

MacIlroy smiled—it seemed to Vivienne a rather ironical smile. He got up abruptly and left the room.

Vivienne, still standing in the little sitting-room, heard him go up stairs to Liane's room. She heard his footsteps overhead. She heard him opening and shutting drawers, and throwing open the wardrobe, as if to assure himself that she was really gone. Then she heard him go into his own room and shut the door.

3

After that day on which Liane had departed MacIlroy did not speak of her again. Vivienne awaited some further explanation or surmising from him, but neither came. As far as she knew he received no letter or word from her either She seemed to have passed out of their lives as quietly and silently as she had previously existed within them.

MacIlroy dismissed the members of the Travelling Fair, and engaged others in their place; he altered some of the characteristics of the Fair, but the dance of the Blue Dragon-Fly remained the same. Within a few weeks they were married at a Registrar's Office.

They had been married for two years when a child was born—a little girl who was eighteen months old when the Travelling Fair set up its booths in a certain old sea-girt town in the West.

The last day of their sojourn there was a Sunday. The earlier part of the day had been stormy and wild. The wind had lashed the waves to foam, and had driven great gusts of stinging sprays against the window panes. Later, the

storm gave way to a peaceful calm, and MacIlroy went out to stretch his legs over the Downs, while Vivienne stayed in to bathe the child, and put her to bed.

But she was still playing with the little one when a knock sounded at the front door, and as the landlady had gone to the village church, Vivienne went to open the door.

A woman was standing outside, clad almost in rags.

"Liane!" exclaimed Vivienne.

The woman started back, and would have moved away, but Vivienne seized her arm.

"No! No! You shall not go! Oh, Liane, what has happened to you?"

Liane spoke.

"Is he in?" she asked.

"Mac? No; I am all alone; you must come in, I cannot let you go."

She drew the ragged woman through the door, and into the sitting-room where, before the fire, the child was playing.

Liane gazed fascinated.

"You said you were alone . . ." she said, not taking her eyes from the child. "Alone! With her!"

Vivienne smiled.

"Well, no; not quite alone, of course," she said lightly.

The child, attracted from her play by the sight of the stranger collapsed, onto the hearthrug, and returned stare for stare.

But Vivienne could think of nothing but the woman in front of her—Liane, with cheekbones showing through her skin, with ragged clothes hanging loosely upon her frail body, her grey hair straggling in short wisps from under a battered hat; Liane . . . a begger! Then quickly she left the room, and returned with a tray of food, to find Liane—a different Liane to the one she had ever known, or dreamt of—playing with the child on the floor; Liane laughing (she had never heard Liane laugh before), and full of little tricks to please the child. She jumped up quickly when Vivienne came in, and a flush spread over her face as she caught sight of the food. She ate it silently, the child crooning at her feet.

"Will you not tell me what has happened?" asked Vivienne when Liane had finished eating. "Why did you come to this house?"

"To ask for food," answered Liane quietly. "I did not know you were here. I saw no bills in the town."

"We are leaving tomorrow. But ve have wanted news of you so badly. Why did you leave us like that? It was unkind of you."

"I left because it was best—we need not discuss that again. I thought I could find work, but I had bad luck, and illness."

"We would have helped you."

Liane made no reply to this remark but asked.

"Are you happy?" But of course you are!" Her glance rested on the child.

"Yes, we are happy," replied Vivienne. "But I know Mac has worried about you."

"You gave him my message?"

"Yes, but he was very upset for a time."

"And then . . .?"

"Well, you see, we were married . . ."

"I see. Well, I must be going." She got up and stooped down to caress the child.

Vivienne jumped up.

"Oh, but you must wait and see Mac. He will be very angry if you do not stay."

"No; he will understand."

"But Liane, I cannot let you go like this," pleaded Vivienne. "Will you not remain with us—until you have found employment, if you prefer?"

"I must go now. He may return, and it is best that he should not see me. I

should never have come had I known that you were here ... but ..." gazing at the child, "I am not altogether sorry that I came."

"Liane, will you not let me be your friend?" urged Vivienne. "I want to be. If you will not stay, let me give you some money—enough to keep you until you find work. Accept it from a friend—and a sister."

Liane smiled wanly.

"Yes . . . from a sister . . ." she repeated, and then her eyes grew frightened, and she started to tremble.

MacIlroy stood in the doorway, and his face was set.

"Oh, Mac," exclaimed Vivienne, rather relieved by his appearance. "Liane is here, and . . ."

"Vivienne had just asked me to accept some moneys—from a sister," interrupted Liane, never taking her eyes from MacIlroy's face.

For an instant he hesitated. Then he came forward, as if in obedience to a silent command from the pale woman. Once more she seemed to have entered their lives, and taken in her hands the threads of their Fate.

"Yes," said MacIlroy, looking as earnestly at Liane as she at him. "You could certainly accept money from a sister."

"Or a brother," she said.

"Or a brother," he repeated.

She withdrew her gaze from his face.

"You two will have a great deal to talk about," said Vivienne then, thinking that affairs had taken a turn for the better. "I must put this youngster to bed." And she gathered the child up in her arms.

"Would you let me have her for a little?" asked Liane softly, and it seemed to Vivienne that her eyes were wet. She put the baby into the other woman's arms, and whispering, "I will come and fetch her presently," she slipped out of the room.

4

The night was clear and starry. As she leant from her bedroom window Vivienne heard the soughing of the waves on the shore. The tide was coming in, and where the silver moonlight washed a polished path from the water's edge to the far horizon, she could see the swiftly-running ripples flowing towards the beach. All was silent except for the murmur of voices below. They had been talking for nearly half an hour, and presently she would go down, expecting that MacIlroy would have persuaded Liane to remain with them.

She opened her door softly, and went down the stairs. The door below was ajar, and she heard their voices quite distinctly from the upper landing. Liane was speaking.

"If my little one had not died, it might never have happened."

The words arrested Vivienne's progress, and almost unconsciously she waited to hear more.

"As to that it is impossible to say," said MacIlroy. "I fought against this in the beginning—I did indeed. I had no wish to hurt you. It was she making the mistake which made it so easy . . ."

"Yes, I felt that too."

"I was carried away that night when I told her that I loved her. But I never meant you to know. I loved her in a way; I love her now—but, Liane, she is not you. I never intended that it should go any further—she seemed only a child."

"If my little one had not died . . ." said Liane again.

"You were never the same after that," said MacIlroy wistfully. "I thought you had ceased to love me . . . you changed from a happy laughing woman to a silent statue. I tried to arouse you from your death-in-life existence, but it was impossible. You seemed to have drawn your-

self away from everything human—you even shut me out."

"I was a very wicked woman," said Liane sadly. "But I have been punished. I thought you loved her."

"Not . . . not like you, Liane. We both made a big mistake. If you had not gone away . . ."

"I thought it best. I asked myself why should two suffer instead of one? I always liked her, but I had let myself get into such despondent ways after the baby died that I could not show love or affection to anyone, although it was there. And now she has got this child. She reminds me of . . . you know! He was like you, you remember, and so is this little one."

MacIlroy swallowed hard.

"She is a bonny child," said Liane. "How happy we could be if she were mine as well as yours! But I shall never see you again. Chance will not lead me a second time to your door."

"You will let me help you . . dearest?" said MacIlroy.

"Yes, I can accept your help now, I know that you still love me. I can accept the help of my husband!"

"Oh, Liane, if only we could start all over again!" exclaimed MacIlroy.

"It is too late . . . only death can unite us now," answered Liane, her white face strained and tense. She bent to kiss the child in her lap.

"Have you not one for me, my wife?" asked MacIlroy in a broken voice.

She raised her lips, and he kissed them very gently. Then they drew quickly apart as Vivienne entered the room. MacIlroy would have approached her, but she turned away from him and went straight to Liane's side.

"My dear, my dear!" she said, the tears running silently down her cheeks. "I have been blind . . . I never knew! I have wronged you, but unknowingly. And now I must make reparation. Your suffering I cannot wipe out, but you shall suffer no more. I shall go now, as you once went. I renounce my joy, as you once renounced yours. But I shall leave you something which may help to efface the years that have gone by, and fill the future years with gladness. I leave you my child. I know that you will love her, Liane—yours is the nature which loves all children; she will take the place of the little one you lost. I am content to leave her in your hands. And you," turning to MacIlroy, "will teach her to love Liane, her mother, and you will not speak to her of me any more. This is part of the price which I must pay for my happiness—the happiness which belonged to another woman." She spoke again to MacIlroy. "You made a mistake in not telling me the truth at the beginning—oh, I know you meant it for the best—but it was a mistake."

"It was mostly my fault," said Liane. "I let him think that I did not love him any longer."

"Yes, that was a mistake, too," answered Vivienne. "Truth and love are too valuable to be tampered with—they should be supreme. But I forgive you," she said, to MacIlroy, "though you have given me a wound from which I can never recover until I die—perhaps that will be soon. But I go gladly now—glad in your joy."

She stooped and kissed Liane on the cheek, and kissed the sleeping child. She only laid a hand on MacIlroy's arm as she passed him, and though Liane called her back, he let her go.

She went out into a night of stars, and the darkness which had once yielded her up, closed round her again.

A Study in Black and White

by Charles L. Hornbeck

IN the early days of her marriage with Dr. Winslow his young wife believed herself to be the happiest of God's chosen mortals. Their acquaintance had been very brief, in consequence of which she knew little of his habits of living. He had made her a goddess of dreams—what more could mere woman desire? The suggestive stories of a double life, faint rumors of which occasionally reached her unwilling ears, served, in her refusal to accept details, only to fortify her great love.

Perhaps a year, however, after their marriage, the curtain fell upon the abrupt ending to her romance. The fires of her passion could not penetrate that asbestos wall; from that time until her husband's death fifteen years later, she merely tolerated his presence. She was not even unhappy in the threadbare meaning of the word. For she came to adore the very thing which had killed her fiercer love.

It was an old black woman who had brought Nita to her, the child scarcely two months old. The negress was bent and wrinkled. She asked merely to have a word with the mistress of the doctor's home, a small request to make, then contentment would be hers.

Wonderingly but without suspicion the youthful matron allowed her an interview. She closed the door a young, lovely, healthy wife; an hour later she emerged no longer a girl, but a woman with a duty to perform.

She kept the child, rearing her in the choicest refinement, lavishing a care and love upon her which an own daughter could scarcely have elicited with her greater right. But the woman told her husband she knew the truth. For the sake of the tiny girl, she had always treated him with customary respect and deference, fearful constantly, however, that he would take advantage of this necessity. But he was utterly repentant.

All this was, of course, a closed book to Nita. In her own exquisite mind she was quite the same as all other girls.

It was not long after her legal adoption that old Mammy returned, begging to be allowed to remain near the child.

"Ah knowed huh mothah, missy," she mumbled, shaking her old head; "she was a lady, she wanted me to take keer o' her little gal. She's daid now, missy; dat's why Ah've come."

The doctor's wife was tempted. It had not before occurred to her to inquire the name of Nita's mother. The blow to her faith had driven all things else from her bewildered brain. But now—

No, no, the woman was dead; let her lie in peace, with her sin and identity buried with her. It could be to none of them of the slightest benefit to drag her name to the light. Let every detail of the tragedy be forgotten as she must herself forever dismiss the memory of her love.

"I'll refer the matter to Dr. Winslow," she informed the woman stoically.

The negress grinned and mumbled. The last sounded like, "Den Ah'll stay, missy."

She stayed. The sinning man had merely looked into those piercing yellow eyes, trembled at what he saw, and nodded his consent. Had his wife's interest in him not been moribund she would have detected in his own eyes what Nita had often seen in later years, when he encountered those of old Mammy.

Nita had loved her father, a fact the foster mother had supposed was no more than natural. But it had invariably brought pangs of jealousy to the abnormal mother heart. Close as she kept the child to her she could not seem to win the love the father had gained without raising a finger for it.

When the man passed away her hope had been fanned into fiercer flame. That was three years ago, while Nita seemed to cling to his memory as fully as she had unaccountably fancied his silent, undemonstrative presence. Of late, too, a new element had wedged its insidious way into the girl's heart, inevitably forcing into an ever narrowing chamber that part which held her mother.

Andrew Pickett came along.

He was a youngster the girl had casually acquainted herself with at an informal dance. A more admirable man it would be difficult to select from those eligible to such qualification. This Mrs. Winslow was forced, jealously at first, to admit upon the occasion of his primary call upon Nita. She not only accepted, eventually, his obvious intentions regarding the girl but as well was completely conquered by his ingenuous charm. She was glad it could be one like himself to hold Nita's first romantic interest, though, of course, the girl was entirely too young yet to be harboring serious expectations.

Nita's intolerance of old Mammy was to Mrs. Winslow as a claw in an open wound. The old woman seldom smiled, was continually mumbling; she worshipped Nita from afar, as it were. She would seldom address a personal remark to her, but would keep her glittering yellow eyes fixed for minutes at a time upon the astonished and rebellious pupils of the other.

Nita could not endure her.

"It is wrong of you to hate, Nita," chided her mother, "even if the woman is black and—repulsive. I have tried to teach you otherwise."

"It is useless to expect me to look upon her in any other way," declared Nita, "I might have tolerated her mere presence a little longer, but I can not—simply will not endure her spying!"

"Nita!"

"She does, mother, I caught her at it only this afternoon. I was in the arbor when I heard the leaves rustling and when I looked up there she was, her ugly black face peering between the vines, those wicked yellow eyes boring me as if she wanted to kill me. When I rebuked her she went away mumbling something about 'being careful.'"

"Were you alone, dear?"

"Andrew was with me."

"A man, you see, Nita," chided the older woman gently. "Mammy is merely concerning herself over your — moral safety," smiling.

"But Andrew—"

"Yes, of course, he is the very core of honor and decency, granted without reserve. But try to see Mammy's viewpoint; she has seen you grow from a tiny baby to the flower you are today; she nursed you when you were sick, cared for you when I was too ill, comforted you when your father died. You know your father looked upon her as indespensable—"

"I never could understand father's attitude," interrupted Nita, petulently; "he

may have thought a great deal of her, but it always seemed to me he was—afraid of her!"

"Nita, your imagination—"

"Oh, all right, mother, I'm wrong if you like, but all the same I—hate her!"

"Old Mammy has taken root in this place to such an extent that it would mean death to pull her out as you would a weed."

"Nevertheless, when I marry I shan't have to see her poking around into *my* house all the time."

"Well, that is likely to be some time yet," smiled Mrs. Winslow.

"Andrew has already asked me to marry him;" Nita spoke tenderly.

"But surely you would be content to wait a bit; there can be no necessity for rushing into something you are scarcely prepared for. It would be so lonely without you, honey."

There was an appeal in her voice, though tempered as usual with too confident expectation of its inadequate answering.

"Well, how much longer am I going to have to stand having that old—"

"Nita! You would not marry simply because—"

The girl laughed, almost derisively.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing could stand in the way of my marrying the man I love!"

It was trite and stagey. But Mrs. Winslow recognized its depth and was relieved. She, too, had loved once. There could be no doubt of Nita's sincerity.

"What does Andrew say about it?" she asked after a pause.

"He's coming to see you this evening, he said."

"Then let us say nothing more until he is with us, dear. Three heads are better than two."

But Mrs. Winslow was troubled. Should she tell the girl of her vague origin? Ought Andrew, too, be informed of the risk to their happiness in such a precarious parentage? It would be a well nigh insupportable blow to both. It might ruin them completely or it might be the means of a deeper, truer understanding than could at present in their gay youthfulness be possible.

Andrew had dinner with them. Mrs. Winslow was delighted that this arrangement had been decided upon, for it made possible a concentrated study of them an hour or two before it would be necessary to speak in a more serious vein.

The boy was as spouting as a geyser in his insuppressible good spirits. It sickened the woman to recall the possibility of so tragic a change in his attitude were she to make the dreaded announcement. She merely closed her eyes in pain to the black picture of its effect upon the girl.

But she advised them to bide their time.

"It is silly to wait," was Nita's comment, "when there is nothing to wait for."

"I think she's right, mother," agreed Andrew warmly. "I have a steady income, plenty of money saved, a nice home to offer—everything in fact in our favor. Why delay?"

Mrs. Winslow was silent a long time, while the young people by degrees drifted to another part of the room to allow her to dream undisturbed. They harbored no fear in hearts too brimming with love for the admission of a single drop in antithesis.

Mrs. Winslow did not disappoint them.

"Oh, my dears," she cried with a little catch in her voice, "I do so want you to be happy. Marry now if you must but stay with me I implore you. I can't bear to lose you—either of you."

"Good old mother," crowed Andrew, "I knew you couldn't come to any other conclusion. Of course we'll stay."

"After the honeymoon," qualified Nita.

Her mother strove to conquer the hurt in the pointed remark. She laughed and

jested with them the rest of the evening, claiming as much of Andrew's attention as the girl herself.

The engagement was shortly announced and parties and showers followed in rapid succession.

The day drew near.

Then a startling thing occurred.

The girl and her mother were seated on the shady east veranda one warm afternoon. Nita was at work on some trifle of embroidery. Mrs. Winslow was unemployed, her hands nervously fumbling about in her lap, her eyes fixed upon distances, unseeing. The ache in her heart was becoming chronic.

She was conscious suddenly of old Mammy shuffling toward them. But she did not look up until the aged woman had spoken.

"She cain't ma'y Marse Andrew!"

Nita was on her feet in an instant.

"What do you mean?"

"Yo' all cain't ma'y dat man, missy."

Nita was livid with rage.

"You spying old woman," she shrieked, "how dare you talk to me that way? By what right do you interfere with the plans of *white* people, you—you black—"

"Nita!" Mrs. Winslow stood pale, expectant.

"Oh, send her away, mother, I can't bear her! Her impudence is—sacrilege!"

Old Mammy was unmoved, apparently. But beneath the black mask of her inscrutability the other white woman believed she saw many things. The yellow eyes still peered and pierced, but there were limpid depths therein which only one who knew her story could fathom. Even Mrs. Winslow could not guess how deep Nita's shafts had fallen.

"Ole Mammy knows, missy. Yo' all cain't neber be happy; yo' all cain't ma'y nobody."

"Mammy," protested her mistress, "that is very wrong of you. I have considered everything, mind you everything, Mammy. And *I* have decided there are *no* barriers whatever."

The old servant mumbled.

"She cain't ma'y—"

Nita flung herself toward the door. "Oh, I can not stand this!" She fled.

"Mammy," said Mrs. Winslow, "what can you mean—"

"Ole Mammy knows, missy."

"But so do I."

The negress shook her head.

"There is something else?"

"Yes, missy."

"Why have you never told me before?"

"It's 'case Missy Nita gwine to ma'y Marse Andrew—"

"Then what is it?" demanded the trembling woman.

So old Mammy told her the other half.

Again Mrs. Winslow emerged from the interview aged many years.

She said nothing that night. Let Nita enjoy her fool's Paradise for one last span of moontide. Then the end. It must be quick and sure.

She called the girl to her almost at break of day. Nita was aghast at her mother's haggard appearance.

"I have something to tell you, child."

"About what Mammy said?" Danger lurked in the snapping eyes.

"Yes."

"Nothing can keep me from marrying Andrew!"

"Yes, this will."

"Then tell me," commanded Nita, stoically.

"First, you are not my daughter."

"Is that all? Why, that is no reason at all! I decided long ago that Andrew should never know! Such a trivial thing to stand in the way!"

"Nita, what are you saying? How—?"

"I knew you were not my mother—I have known it for three years!"

"Three years!" echoed the other, "then it was—?"

"Yes, father told me just before he died!"

Mrs. Winslow bent further to the ground. Not even the bond of a supposed natural tie had existed. The girl had known.

Nita stood, straight and strong, her face marred by the mocking tolerance of her smile.

"You see," she continued, "it was quite useless to bring the subject up. I have made up my mind."

"Andrew should be told," moaned her mother, sparring for time, "it is not fair to him."

"I shall not tell him."

"Then I shall!"

"Mother!"

"Be merciful, Nita, you know but half the story. At least—" A dreadful doubt assailed her. "You don't know who your mother was?"

"No, and I don't wish to. What difference can it make to me? It is all nonsense to ruin one's life on account of something which is past and—buried."

"Suppose Andrew should find out?"

"You are the only one who knows—"

"No, child, Mammy knows, too; she brought you to me."

"That fiendish black demon! I should kill her if she whispered a word!"

"Nita, what has come over you, you were so gentle as a child?"

"I love Andrew, mother, that is why: I'll not take anything or anybody take him from me."

"Then I implore you to tell him. If he refuses to break the engagement, then I must tell you both the rest. But for God's sake, give him the chance to choose between this blow and one worse. If he won't take you now, then *he* at least may be spared what must follow."

Nita was forced to admit the influence of the desperate appeal, though she did not understand its intent.

She went to Andrew that same afternoon. In his office she cornered him and demanded an hour of his time. Poor Nita! It was an ordeal of which she had scarcely realized the difficulty. Having been coerced into its accomplishment she found she could not tell the tale in the most convincing manner. She bungled painfully, but she had her reward in being taken to her lover's arms tenderly. Sobered though he was by her astounding story, he found his love was strong enough to triumph.

Nita could scarcely contain her exultation. She burst in upon her mother with a torrent of protestation of Andrew's faithfulness and the adamant quality of their love. She had forgotten the sinister warning in Mrs. Winslow's last words.

"You can not marry him," the latter reiterated painfully.

"Oh, mother, have you gone quite crazy?"

"Sit down, Nita, I am going to tell you who your mother was. Mammy told me yesterday."

"Oh, very well, if you must."

"When your father and I were married he had set up a little office in town. He had as an attendant a young girl who was very lovely. I remember her now, though I had forgotten. She had wonderful eyes and a cream-white complexion which would have attracted any man. She was your mother."

"I am glad she was beautiful at least," commented Nita, dispassionately.

"I went to the office one day. The girl met me with tears upon her cheeks and sorrow in her wonderful eyes which she tried to hide. I asked her the matter. She told me she was worried about her mother who was very ill. I could not

know she lied. But no matter. I pitied her. I took her into my arms to comfort her. Then I saw something which has haunted me unexplained so often since." The woman paused.

"What could it have been?" asked the girl uneasily.

"I looked deep into her eyes: they were yellow and piercing; beneath the cream of her smooth skin was the faint suggestion of duskiness; her lips were slightly heavy."

The listener stirred. "Well?"

"She was old Mammy's daughter!"

MRS. RYAN'S ICEMAN

Mrs. Mary Ryan was standing at the washtub, scrubbing the family clothes. According to the calendar on the wall, it was the first Tuesday in March, but to Mrs. Ryan it was only one of six Mondays which made up every week in her life since her marriage to Michael Ryan, driver for the Federal Express Company, at three dollars and a half a day.

In the gardens of the well-to-do the first buds were just beginning to show their heads and there were signs everywhere that, after all, winter is only one of four seasons. In Mrs. Ryan's tenement spring was introduced by the impartial distribution of sulphur and molasses to the offspring.

When Mrs. Ryan was Mary Clarke she was considered the belle of the block, and she still showed traces of it. Her hair still tried to fall back to its natural, curly condition, in spite of the fact that she did her best to keep it smooth and combed back straight. Her blue eyes looked tired, but one could still tell that not so long ago there was a merry twinkle in them. Her figure had not all disappeared, and her skin still had the rosy color which had been one of her greatest assets.

She had gone to grammar school and read *The Lady of the Lake, Evangeline* and *Ivanhoe*. She had patiently waited for Lord Lochinvar to come, but finally she had married Michael Ryan, who was not at all like one of the story knights, but promised to be a good provider. Nevertheless she named the first four children Ivanhoe, Evangeline, Lancelot and Malcolm. The youngest, however, was merely Dan, for when he came Michael said he was sick of the crazy names and Mary sacrificed Sir Walter Scott to Ryan's grandfather.

Just as Mrs. Ryan was busily rubbing her husband's night shirt, the bell rang. Drying her hands in her apron, she went to the door. There stood a man who, with armor and helmet, with spurs and broadsword, could well have been a gallant cavalier. But he wore a blue shirt, rolled up at the sleeves and turned down at the collar.

"Any ice this morning?" asked the stranger in a pleasant voice.

Now, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Ryan did not want any ice. She had never used such a luxury. But when the man said "Any ice this morning?" something told her that she needed ice badly.

"How much is it today?" she replied, as if ice were a daily occurrence in her life.

"Sixty cents a hundred, to you," the iceman answered with a smile.

"Bring me ten cents worth," said Mrs. Ryan, smoothing her skirt and damp hair.

He went down and she went into the next room and took the ten cents with which she had intended to buy candy for the kids in the afternoon.

"Will I bring some tomorrow?" the man asked when she had given him the money.

"All right," she answered, although she realized her extravagance. When he left Mrs. Ryan wished that her windows faced the street instead of the airshaft.

That night Michael had ice water with his dinner, for the first time in his life.

"Gee whiz," he said approvingly, "some class to us, ain't there?" and kissed her on the cheek after the meal, something he only did on special occasions.

Mary felt guilty. She looked at her husband and noticed that he was becoming stout and that his hair was beginning to fall out.

* * *

Ryan had ice every night now, and Mrs. Ryan found out soon that the iceman's name was Pat Hogan and that he was twenty-five years old.

The last week in March Ryan was transferred to night shift and did not come home until one o'clock in the mornings, after the Overland Limited had unloaded the express.

It happened that Hogan's shift also changed the last week in March, so he told Mary, and he delivered the ice at six in the evening instead of in the morning.

* * *

In December Mrs. Ryan had another boy and Michael was very happy.

"Ain't it a handsome kid?" he said proudly when he saw him for the first time. "That makes it an even half-dozen. I guess we got enough of a family now."

Mary did not smile, but he did not notice that. He loved his wife and was sure that she loved him. In the first place, that was only natural, and in the second place she had always been a good housekeeper and done everything she could for him. There was the ice, for instance.

"What'll we call him?" Michael asked his wife. "I suppose you want to give him one of them story book names again."

He patted her on the cheek and added, with a patronizing grin:

"Well, I don't care. As long as he's going to be the last one give him any name you want."

Mary turned her face toward the wall for a minute. Then she looked at the baby, which was lying beside her.

"No story book name this time, Mike," she answered, with a faraway expression in her eyes. "Let's give him a good Irish name. Let's call him Pat."

"Hurray!" shouted Michael. "That's a great name. Patrick Ryan!"

* * *

Mary never saw Pat Hogan again. The company had given him another route. Next March another iceman came around. He was bald and stout.

"Any ice this morning?" he asked after he had rung the bell.

"No," said Mary, and slammed the door in his face.

Then she went back to her tub and rubbed Michael's night shirt. And in the next room Pat was crying at the top of his voice for his milk.

Cooper's First Scoop

By John Blake

HE TOOK out his pencil. The restaurant had been robbed and he must get the facts.

"Explain it, Theodore."

And Theodore did. He told how the ten pies on the pie shelf had vanished, three boxes of cigars, and several cakes, but no money. He had had the money hid, and the burglar, or burglars did not find it.

Fines Cooper was writing.

"How did they get in?" he asked.

The little man, whose great-great forefathers were perhaps near relatives to some of the leaders of the Grecian host that took Troy, pointed his short chubby hand in the direction of a rear window. The window was no more, but what had been a window was now a shattered heap of glass on the floor.

"I guess dey come dis way," he explained. "I finda glass broke dis morning."

Fines Cooper gave his soft-lead pencil another push.

"And when do you think all this happened?"

"Some people tink they saw lights here about eleven last night, but they say they tink it me."

Another push of the pencil.

"Theodore, I should like very much to have a picture of you if you have one handy. I am sure this story will please the editor, and, rather than have him send me back for your photo, I might as well get it now."

Theodore disappeared into a smoke-colored kitchen, and returned a moment later with a picture trimmed in the same color, but with an added mixture of grease across the face of it.

"Dis, dis do for the paper?" he asked the new reporter smiling.

"Assuredly," answered the young Cooper as he walked toward the door.

Cooper was a lucky chap. He ate at this chili joint. But that morning when he had asked for pie he had learned that during the night someone, who was perhaps hungry also, had disappeared with the pies. He had to forego his hunger, but here was a story. He was a new reporter, but surely he had done something. A scoop, a scoop, that was the one thought in his mind. If he could get a piece of news ahead of some of the other reporters, of his own paper, as well as of the other newspapers, he would certainly make a hit with his editor. And now he had scooped!

He hurried to the office. He had a picture, and enough notes to write a column. Once he stopped, and was in the act of telephoning the message, and then, desiring to see the editor's face when he

should hand him the story written up, he hurried on.

At the office he did not stop to remove his coat or his hat, but falling into the first chair he found he began typewriting his story. Twenty minutes later he handed a story of the robbery to the city editor. He had done it up brown in a little less than a thousand words.

The editor was somewhat surprised to see a story of such length from what was to him an unknown source. He looked up to Cooper perplexed.

"Did you get a scoop on something?" he asked.

"I did this time." And Fines walked away contented. Then he thought of the picture.

"Here is the picture of the man," he said returning to the editor's desk, and dropping the grease-soaked card on the table.

The editor was busy reading the article and did not notice Cooper's return. But the young reporter was happy. His job was not only assured (which is something to consider these days) but he was bound for a raise also.

Cooper was not at the office when the office-boy brought in the paper containing his story, but he bought it a few minuates later on the street, giving the newsboy a five-cent piece for a two-cent newspaper. He began looking for his article running through the paper feverishly. At first he looked for the photo, but it was not there. Then thinking that perhaps the editor had missed the picture, he began looking for the story itself.

At last he found what he was looking for, but only to be greatly disappointed Under the caption: "Thieves must be Enjoying Themselves," was a half dozen lines in regard to the robbery. What had they done to his story? They had murdered it. Some reported had a pull with the desk, and the big scoop was not given half a chance. It should have been printed in large headlines across the top of the front page. Something was radically wrong.

Half an hour later Cooper was talking with the editor.

"And what was wrong with my scoop?" he asked.

"Nothing wrong, but it was a little bit too long. What is there about a wop losing some pies that 300,000 people should want his life's history?"

Cooper fell into a near-by chair almost overcome with grief.

"And to think I robbed that damned thing myself," he muttered, "just to get the story."

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