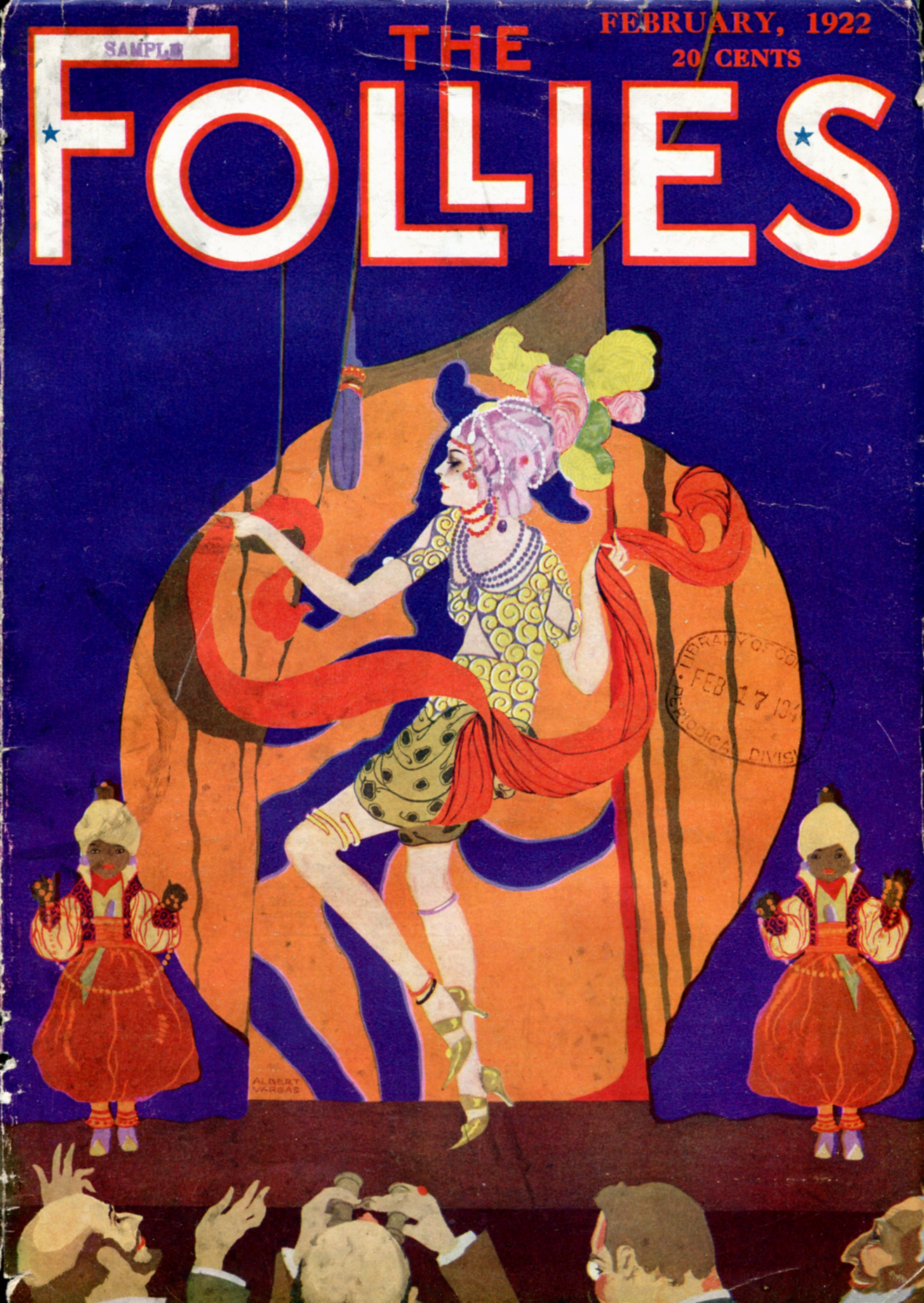
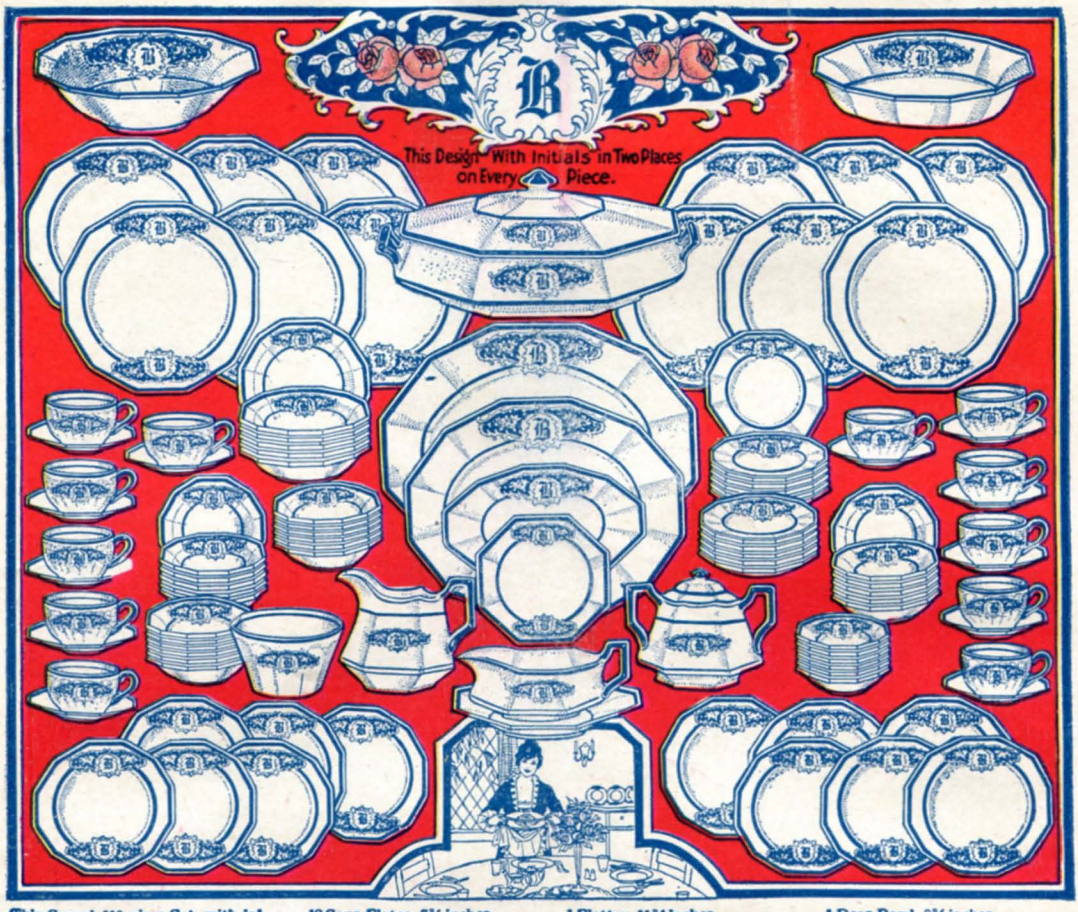
FEBRUARY, 1922
20 CENTS

THE FOLLIES





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FEBRUARY, 1922 No. 2 Volume 2

THE FOLLIES

Formerly THE PARISIENNE MONTHLY MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

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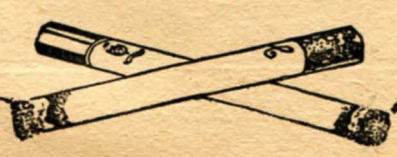

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Ankle Worms

Sequins and Sin

By G. B. Stern

CHAPTER I

ACHILLE'S cabaret was full to overflowing. It was the night of Mi-Carême, and all Paris was merry. The long room was hazy with the acrid smoke of Caporal tobacco. Crowding every table, blocking the gangways, sitting, standing, leaning wherever there was an inch of space, was a laughing throng of Montmartrois.

Midinettes, with tired little faces, eyes alight with happiness, and incredibly neat ankles, laughed up at students whose fancy dress ranged from a large red false-nose to the elaborate costume of a Louis Quinze courtier.

Gaston the poet, who had just received five francs for a poem which had taken him six months to write, sat in the middle of the floor, his arms round two lovely and languid models from the ateliers. There were respectable citizens trying to look like Apaches; Apaches trying to look like respectable citizens; a few curious Englishmen and Americans with their wives; several soldiers in horizon blue; a dark-eyed Spanish girl, whose wonderful figure was shown to perfection in her tight-fitting black dress—all the astonishing mixture of respectability and riff-raff, *joie-de-vivre* and sordid vice, that makes up Paris.

Achille, twinkling and urbane in his black-velvet suit with the scarlet sash, moved about with difficulty, cracking jokes, patting adorable cheeks, flirting violently with delighted elderly ladies.

And still Henri flung open the door with his jovial *"Entrez, mes enfants!"* And still the rollicking chorus of welcome greeted yet more arrivals.

As for Renée and Madame, they had scarcely time to breathe, so busy were they scurrying about with trays of *petits bocks*.

To Renée, the world was the cabaret Achille, the frowsy attics above it where she lived with her father, and the streets around the Boulevard Clichy and the Place Pigalle. For her services every night in

the cabaret, Achille allowed them the two attics, and the magnificent sum of ten francs a week.

Patrick O'Neill had once been an artist. At the age of twenty-two he was claimed by the studios of Paris; a year later, by Desirée, a laughing, brown-skinned model; a year after that, by a green-eyed demon called Absinthe.

Of the three, Absinthe alone still claimed him. Desirée was dead. The gay studio in the Quartier left behind. Accompanied by Renée, aged eight, and by the reproachful ghosts of his unpainted masterpieces, the artist took up a permanent residence in Achille's attic.

That was nine years ago.

There had been some money remaining then, so at first there had been a little food. Now the money was gone, and the food had dwindled almost to nothing.

Remained the Absinthe.

To the clients of the cabaret, Renée O'Neill was a mischievous, soulless little elf—picturesque to look at, with her slim boy's body, tangle of red-gold curls that would fall over her eyes, and a way of flaunting her tattered, faded garments that had earned her the nickname in Montmartre of "P'tit Paon"—Little Peacock.

How could they know that Renée lived in a world of her own fancies; that when she walked, she was not swaggering along the steep, cobbled streets of the Mountain; that when she talked to Achille or Henri, she was hardly aware of them?

For Renée's world was to be found between the torn covers of a few old books that were still in her father's possession; books that told of the soft green English countryside; of stately homes and great ladies; of horse and hound and gallant gentlemen. Renée knew most of them by heart.

Time after time she had visualized the perfect dream-castle, till it had become, to her, solid and real. Somewhere in England she knew was a great house, its gray-stone walls mellowed by time. A rolling moor swept away behind it, and in front you could see the sea sparkling between the branches of tall elm trees. A velvet lawn stretched from the terrace, and beyond the lawn was a sunken rose-garden, enclosed by a yew hedge, quaintly clipped to the forms of birds and beasts. And then another lawn, and a wide border of old English flowers—larkspurs and hollyhocks, snapdragons and Canterbury bells. And a walled fruit-garden, with golden apricots ripening against the sun-warmed bricks—it was always Spring, Summer and Autumn rolled into one, in Renée's garden—till at last you came to the emerald turf of the park, with dappled deer moving gracefully among the trees. . . .

"One day," she would say to herself, "I will no longer be a Parisian gutter-rat, me. I will go to England, and marry a milord, and I will become the chatelaine of his château—my château—"

"Eh bien, P'tit Paon, *encore de bière!"*

"Dans un moment, m'sieur." Renée was once again the little cabaret girl; still a child, for all her seventeen years, with the temper of a thousand devils, and the white face and demure amber eyes of a saint. Try to kiss her, and *ma foi!* She is like a cat, claws out, back arched, snarling; whisper to her one of the subtly indecent jests of the Boulevards, and she will not understand.

For Renée, in spite of her upbringing, had remained as innocent as a flower. So charged with coarseness and *double entendre* was the atmosphere of the cabaret, that it had flowed over her like water over a sheet of glass, without ever penetrating below the surface.

Hence she was very much to be desired by Achille's clients; and Achille, rubbing his hands with contentment at the pleasant sight of the cabaret filled every night, thought that even the vast sum of ten

francs a week was not altogether wasted on Le P'tit Paon.

Achille mounted the tiny stage, and began to sing a very pathetic ballad—so pathetic that the lights had to be lowered to obtain the full effect. Renée, sitting quietly in a corner, was once again walking her shaven lawns; Boris, her wolfhound, following with stately grace.

"One day. . . ."

And at that moment, Henri flung open the door, and Joey Carter walked into the room. . . .

CHAPTER II

CAPRICE, youngest daughter of the gods, is a spoiled darling. It chanced that, having nothing better to do, she demanded of the gods who work the great puppet-show: "Let *me* hold the strings for a little while!" And because she was very beautiful, the gods granted her desire. . . .

So thanks to Caprice, it came about that Joey Carter, ringmaster of Ma Gullick's Circus, on a day trip to Boulogne from Folkestone, plunged recklessly on the *petite chevaux,* and found himself the unexpected winner of seven hundred francs. So Joey went to Paris, because he had heard it was so gay. He was a dog, was Joey!

His career in Paris does not concern us. Suffice it to say that at the end of a week he had not yet met with an adventure that could horrify a curate. It was not till the last night of his stay that he stumbled into the cabaret Achille.

Renée found in Joey Carter an entirely new sensation. Never had she seen a man with so red and jolly a face; with such splendid clothes. Joey wore a gray bowler, pepper-and-salt coat, red waistcoat, rather dirty white-cord breeches, brown gaiters and boots.

Quickly she made her way to him with a *petit bock* on a tray, took his soiled paper note, wriggled delightedly at his hearty "Thank-ee m'dear!"

Achille finished his song, the lights went up, and to the accompaniment of a storm of cheers, cat-calls and clapping, Renée leaped lightly onto the stage. She wore a short black skirt, a gaudy green-and-blue jumper, badly in need of mending, faded green shoes, and green cotton stockings that did not quite match them.

She sang a song called *Fifi en cachette,* that was being whistled everywhere along the outer Boulevards, in an attractive husky voice without much fullness of tone. But she emphasized every point with gestures that had a touch of genius.

After she had repeated the last chorus five times, she began to dance, her head tilted back provocatively, the room stamping in unison. At a sign from her, the rhythm suddenly quickened into the Can-Can. More and more savage grew the music—the ferocious-looking gentleman at the piano was pounding away as if possessed—but he could barely keep time with Renée's fast-flying feet. . . .

Joey was enjoying himself. Here, he thought, was what he had been looking for—Gay Paree, and Montmartre, and all the rest of it. If only that fascinating girl would come and speak to him again. . . .

She did, a few minutes later. Achille began to sing a song even more sorrowful than before; the lights were almost extinguished, and most of the audience wept in delightfully dolorous sympathy.

Renée appeared out of the half light, perched herself on Joey's table, and while he made short work of the tray of *petits bocks* she had brought, plied him with questions.

"I'm in a circus," Joey explained.

"What is a circus?" Renée demanded.

"Horses!"—impressively. "Marvelous horses, m'dear, with gold trappin's, and tails sweepin' the ground. And beautiful ladies to ride on 'em, round and round,

like flyin' through the air. And dresses glitterin' with spangles, and dogs and ponies and elephants, cleverer than humans, often as not. Ma Gullick owns the show, but I'm boss in the ring, o'course; I'm the ringmaster. Top hat I wears, an' evenin' dress, an' medals an' a big buttonhole, and I help the Virgin Huntress to dismount, and then they bring in the Seven Wild Broncos. When I crack my whip, they all stands on their hind legs. And the band plays, and the children cheer, an' the horses begin to gallop—"

Renée drew a long breath. "Tell me again about the horses," said she. . . .

And just because this man was so ordinary, because his voice was so loud, and his language common, so he fascinated his hearer. She liked his coarse red fists and stumpy fingers; his jolly face and hoarse laugh. How different from her father, mirthless, twitching, reaching out with trembling fingers for the absinthe bottles. Or from Achille, whose god was money. Or the pale, vicious young men who frequented the cabaret.

Joey Carter was tanned by wind and sun; he had lived in the open, with the sky for roof; rubbed shoulders with men and women red-faced as he, red-blooded; driven all night in a creaking caravan; camped at dawn in green fields. And then—the circus! Perhaps the children from some great house would be there, perhaps even a young milord. . . .

Joey was the most wonderful of all things—a Real Man. With her amber eyes fixed on his blue twinkling ones, Renée sat listening, listening. . . .

That night she lay in bed, wide-awake, her eyes blazing, her brain in a whirl, her imagination aflame with pictures conjured up by the man's crude word-painting. She felt as if she could never sleep again. Oh, the things that were to be done; the sights that were to be seen! How much longer was she doomed to remain in Paris, living in this frowsy attic, dancing and dish-washing in the tobacco-reeking atmosphere of the cabaret?

Tomorrow, Joey had told her, he was returning to England and the Circus. He would be going by the boat train from the Gare du Nord, back to the white horses that galloped round and round like the wind.

Out there—in the open—in the real world—

CHAPTER III

Joey Carter lingered outside the cabaret next morning as long as he dared, hoping to catch another glimpse of the fascinating nymph who had perched on a table beside him the evening before, and swung her legs, and talked to him. But there was not a sign of her. So he departed for the station, feeling rather disgusted with things in general.

Light flying feet on the platform behind him.

He turned.

"I'm coming with you," said Renée calmly.

"Comin' with me?"

"Yes. To the Circus."

Her eyes were like stars, her lips two poppy-petals. A brown cloak hung from her shoulders, the hood drawn up over her bright hair. There she stood, ready to face the world, superb in her youthful, joyous arrogance. Not a regret to cast a sobering cloud. Her father had long since ceased to count.

She slipped her hand confidingly into Joey's arm.

"I'm so happy to be coming with you."

His first impulse was to send her straight back home.

He looked at her.

No, he would not send her home, he would take her with him.

He would take her with him and marry her.

For (let it be whispered) Joey Carter was what is called "A Good Man," and it was due to his being a Good Man that was born the miracle that transformed Renée into Mrs. J. Carter.

"As soon as we land on Folkestone Pier," declared Joey, "I'll see about getting a special license," and he jingled the remaining sovereigns that were his by favor of Caprice.

"I thought we were joining a Circus."

"Not till tomorrow mid-day—tomorrow mid-day, dress rehearsal outside Canterbury, an' we start our spring tour the day after."

"But why do I have to marry you first?"

"Best for you, my dear. Ma Gullick is a stickler for morals, she is. Orkard questions she'd be asking you."

"Who's Ma Gullick?"

"Owns the Circus."

A pause. "Oh, I see."

"Then it's fixed and settled, is it, little woman? Think poor old Joey Carter won't make you such a bad husband, eh?" —waggishly.

After all, he was a Real Man, and he belonged to a circus . . .

"All right," said Renée carelessly; "I'll marry you. O-o-o-oh! is that England?"

Yes, that was England.

And in England he married her.

CHAPTER IV

THE Circus! Renée soon learned to love the great flapping tent and the peculiar pungent odor of horses and sawdust. The glitter of tinsel—flaring naphtha lights—Diana the Virgin Huntress, in crimson tights and a plumed hat—Irene the performing elephant, and Clare, the horse that could count up to ten.

And then, after the show, all the paraphernalia would be packed up into the gaily-painted red-and-yellow wagons, and it would be hey! for the open road!

At the next town there would be a procession through the streets. A tiny gray mule led the way, on his back Benny, the clown, bearing a banner—yellow letters on a blue ground: *Señora Filippa's World Renowned Circus!* The children crowded into the streets, elbowing to get to the front. Doors opened. Windows opened. Women with rolled-up sleeves and red faces emerged from their kitchens.

Came the elephant, slow, majestic. Ponies now, and dogs. Diana the Virgin Huntress, on her white charger. More horses.

"I'll learn to ride those horses," mused Renée.

And learn she did, under Joey's enthusiastic tutelage; so that by the end of a fortnight, the latter declared her ready to take part in the show. So Renée became "Little Peacock," and a favorite alike with audiences and the other members of the troup.

The Virgin Huntress was certainly inclined to be jealous, but finding that Renée made no attempt to interfere with her stray flirtations, she deigned to pronounce the newcomer: "A nice little thing; not pretty, though; too scraggy, *I* think."

The Circus tent was thick with tobacco smoke. The Kicking Bronco galloped madly round the ring. "'Ooray, we're off!" cried Benny the clown, as he scrambled onto its back.

The bronco stood upright, prancing, and Benny fell off with a bump; the beast had not expected Benny's little bit of improvisation. Startled, it tore around the ring again, and made open-mouthed for the still prostrate Benny.

Joey rushed forward, cracking his whip furiously. The bronco swerved away from Benny, flung round, and caught Joey on the jaw with a savage hind hoof. . . .

Joey's head snapped back. His knees sagged, and he fell. They carried him away, all covered with sawdust. . . .

His neck was broken.

"My advice is London, and get some work there," said Ma Gullick to Renée, sitting white-faced on the caravan steps next morning. " 'Ere's four quid for yer, kiddy; that'll keep you going for a bit. An' look 'ere—go to Jack Levy, theater and cinema agent, number 'undred an' two, Wessex Street, Adelphi; he's a sorter cousin of mine, an' 'ull do you a good turn if 'e can.

"Good-by, my dear; be a good girl; it's better to be good than beautiful."

So Renée went to London.

She was not unhappy; only bewildered. Joey the Ringmaster she had never loved. He had been a way of escape for her from the sordid life at the cabaret. And he had been a Real Man. Now he was dead; she was Renée, the Ragamuffin, once more—loose-footed, alone. . . .

The train jolted through the pale spring landscape, till rows of tiny houses, their back gardens gay with washing, indicated that the Metropolis was at hand.

It began to rain as Renée emerged from Charing Cross Station; she bounded onto the first motor-bus that whizzed by, without waiting for it to stop, and was carried swiftly along into the heart of she knew not what.

"Where does this bus go to?" she inquired of the conductor.

"Putney. Fourpence all the way." He punched a ticket for her. The bus went on, lurching through streets that grew meaner and dingier.

"Ranger Street!" chanted the conductor.

Ranger Street. Ranger had been the name of a wise old hound in one of her father's books. . . .

"I will live here," quoth Renée.

The next day she went to see Jack Levy. He was a Jew, of course, the lean, melancholy kind. With him was one Max Easton, producer of the Orion Film Company, fur-coated, top-hatted, bland.

Ma Gullick's name proved an excellent passport. Renée was admitted to the Holy of Holies. Jack Levy surveyed her from head to foot, and then told her to run away and become a typist.

"Don't be absurd," said Renée; "do I look like a typist?"

Jack Levy was forced to admit that she did not. "But you would soon learn how," he added brightly; "Easton here, for instance, he was a gentleman once, and see how easily he has learned to look like a Film producer."

"Is he?" cried Renée eagerly. "Oh, well, then it's all right; he can give me a job."

"Can you act?" said Max Easton.

"Yes."

"Dance? Ride? Swim? Drive a car?"

Renée unblushingly replied with confident affirmatives.

"Got a good wardrobe?"

Renée smiled to herself, thinking of her one other tattered dress, as she again answered: "Yes."

"Sorry, my dear," said Max Easton. "You're a nice kid, and I'd like to oblige a friend of Levy's, but—nothing doing. You've had no experience in the movies, you see."

"Oh, but I'd soon learn," said Renée. "And there are lots of other things I can do. Ride bareback, and jump through hoops from one horse's back to another's, and let an elephant pick me up in his trunk."

"Wouldn't she do for a small part in that Circus Serial you're just going to do?" asked Jack Levy, turning to Easton.

"She might, if she could really do the stunts."

"She was with Ma Gullick's crowd, you know—my second cousin."

"Was she, by Jove? Why didn't you tell me that before? Ma Gullick knows her business. This kid might do; she's got a film face."

"Of course I'll do!" said Renée. She smiled. There was no resisting Renée's smile. Easton capitulated.

"Draw up a contract, Levy. Ten pounds a week to start with. The studios are at Rickmansworth, my dear"—turning to Renée—come down on Thursday week. . . ."

CHAPTER V

If one had made a study of the flaring bills outside cinema palaces some two years later, the words "Featuring Renée O'Neill" would have frequently leaped to the eye.

For Renée, after making a hit with her first part, that of a circus rider, with Max Easton, had rapidly become a star. She specialized in exciting dramas that ran to a number of episodes, of *The Exploits of Elaine* sort, but recently she had begun to star in more artistic five-reel films.

Although she thoroughly enjoyed her life—the change and excitement, the money, and the notoriety—Renée still remained true to her dream. She longed one day to be mistress of some stately old country home, with mellow, creeper-clad walls, a lodge, a winding drive, dappled deer, strutting peacocks on the terrace, a sunken rose-garden with a sundial in the middle, ancient trees, and shady lawns. She would have given up all the restless fever of town life for this.

So it was with a thrill of excitement and anticipation that she heard that several of the scenes of her new film, *The Sea Waif*, were to be played at Penkevil—a picturesque Cornish fishing village. For at the head of the rock-strewn valley that led down to the thatched roofs of the village, stood Penkevil Manor, the ancient home of the St. Erth family.

"One of the oldest baronies in the kingdom," thought Renée, in mocking burlesque of her own aspirations; she knew her Burke and Debrett almost by heart—"As proud as Lucifer, and ten times as aristocratic as all these soap-and-margarine peers. There will probably be a young, handsome and susceptible scion of this cobalt-blue-blooded family. One day, he will catch sight of a slim, rather gallant little figure—pray heaven he won't see me for the first time when my face is daubed with yellow make-up—and he will invite me to the Manor to take tea with his lady mother on the terrace. Whole regiments of footmen and butlers will bring out the massive silver tea equipage, and afterward I shall be shown the dogs and the horses, and velvet-eyed deer will feed out of my hand without fear. And—and—oh, I'm going to have such a gorgeous time!" Renée hugged herself with delight.

It must have been another of Caprice's tricks to make the wind suddenly fail that August evening; so that Billy St. Erth, who had been sailing his boat single-handed about the bay, spinning for mackerel, had to reek his rust-brown sail, and pull the good three miles from Black Head to Starfish Cove—a deep cut in the rocks, where the water was like polished jade, except where it broke into white lacy foam round the base of the cliffs.

It was about seven o'clock, and the level rays of the setting sun, turning all the pools to molten gold, struck into his eyes as he rounded the point into the cove, so that it felt for a moment as if they were full of tiny, stabbing, golden arrows. He rubbed them. . . .

When he looked again, he thought he had been enchanted, for poised on a rock at least thirty feet from the water, was the slim, scarlet figure of a girl, perfectly outlined against the black basalt cliff.

Her bare arms were curved back, like

the wings of a swallow; her bare feet seemed to spurn the rock beneath them, as though she were eager to be free of it. She wore no cap except her own red-gold curls, lit by the sun to the same brilliance as the pools that flashed from every cranny. To Billy's fascinated gaze, the whole cove was one glamorous flame of red and gold.

Breathlessly he waited for her to dive . . . with a sudden leap into space, she curved radiantly through the air, to part the water with a clean "schloop." . . .

"Ah-h-h!" said Billy—as one does when a rocket bursts into stars.

A moment later, a satin-wet head came up, rather near the boat. Renée shook the water out of her eyes, streaked back to the shore, hoisted herself on to a ledge of rock, where the last of the sunlight caught her through a gap in the cliffs, and calmly waited for Billy to bring his boat in after her—she knew he would.

He did—and rested on his oars, waiting for her to speak.

" 'He was but a landscape painter,
'And a village maid she'!" quoted Renée flippantly.

"It's lucky you chose that poem," said Billy. "It's almost the only one I know. Six months later, you will discover, to your horror, that I am not a poor landscape painter after all, but 'Lord of Burleigh, fair and free.' "

"I don't think we'll wait for six months," laughed Renée. "You are William Gavin Bohun Coverack St. Erth, eighteenth baron; twenty-seven, unmarried. Only son of William Trelawney Coverack St. Erth, deceased, and Elizabeth Marion Stenhouse St. Erth. Educated Winchester and Magdalen College, Oxford; late Lieutenant 2nd Battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. Clubs: Junior Naval and Military, Junior Carlton, and Bath. Residences: 41A, Berkeley Square, W., Mowbray House, Leicestershire; and Penkevil Manor, Cornwall. Recreations: Hunting, shooting, fishing, yachting, and talking to beautiful mermaids."

William Gavin, etc., did not appear astonished at the fluent way in which she reeled off her information. "Thank you," he said gravely. "That was both entertaining and instructive, and will save me getting out my visiting-cards, which must have got rather buried under the mackerel. As for you, dear mermaid, you are doubtless one of the Diadem Film Company, who are expected to begin rehearsals in the village tomorrow. In fact, accept my assurance that you are the famous Renée O'Neill herself."

Renée sighed. "It's a bad beginning. We ought to have mistaken each other's identity for weeks, misled by the clothes we wore—or didn't wear, in my case. It's so difficult to behave like a hero and heroine of romantic fiction, if one is even moderately intelligent. And now, I suppose, there is no earthly chance that you will fall in love with me—and I do so want you to."

"Why?" asked Billy, bluntly, rather dumfounded at her cool audacity.

"Follow me and find out!" Renée sprang lithely upright, and dived again into the now shadowed water.

But if she expected Billy to accept her challenge, she was woefully mistaken. He calmly filled his pipe, lit it, and then casually turned to Renée, who was now lying on her back, hands behind her head, as though the gently lifting swell were the softest of cushions.

There was a faintly enigmatic smile on her lips. It was not likely that she would yield up her secret dream to this bronzed, black-haired young giant. He wouldn't understand. To him, she was only a common little film-actress.

Even if she did tell him how she longed for anchorage, as a battered ship longs

for harbor—to belong to the Old Things; to be part of them, good enough for them—instead of all this flickering shadow-life of "close-ups" and "fade-outs," and the restless glitter of her own fame. . . . Even if she did tell him, he would only think she was scheming to catch a peer.

She didn't want to marry a peer, or any sort of a man; she wanted to marry his age-old setting, and sink softly to rest in the mellow, gracious atmosphere of Penkevil Manor.

Billy, as he sucked contemplatively at his pipe, was thinking, not of Renée's changing amber eyes, the upward tilt of her chin, revealing the clean line of her milk-white throat. He thought: "She's a pretty kid, in the tomboy style—easy to read as the A-B-C, though. But what a glorious life she must have!"

For Billy was curiously young and unsophisticated for his twenty-four years. His knowledge of Town was limited to a few "seasons" as a boy. A large dull house in Mayfair; large dull dinners with ponderous relatives; an occasional box at the theater with his mother and large dull sister. Then had come the war, with a couple of hectic leaves—Turkish baths, revues, and girls who grabbed at a good time with any young officer.

But since the war, his people had wanted him at home, talking of a landowner's responsibilities—which was another word for dullness, dullness, dullness. Deep down in Billy's rebellious heart, a stubborn little demon began to whisper of freedom, and the strange kingdom of Bohemia. . . .

For Billy still believed in the existence of a glamorous half-world, where there were no social barriers; where money—what there was of it—was common property; and wives, lovers, and *belles amies* were exchanged with bewildering frequency. Gloriously romantic garrets and studios . . . grotesque, capering figures, dancing till the red sun rose over London river . . . mouths that were scarlet slashes; kisses that bruised and stung . . . royal adventurings, careless alike of poverty and the sudden blaze of success . . . laughter with a sob in it; white nights that cared not for black tomorrows. Bohemia! whose natives had the elfin gifts of weaving music in rhythm, color and song, tragedy and comedy. . . .

Billy was no artist, but an artist might give him the password and lead him in.

So thought the boy in the boat; while the girl in the water dreamed of the things he found dull, and longed to leave forever.

They ought to have been magically aware of each other, he girding his loins for the chase, desirous of the inevitable yet hard-won capture; she poised for flight, deliciously afraid, but tremulous in frightened longing to be caught at last, crushed close in the arms of a man—the man.

But Billy and Renée were each in love with a dream, instead of with each other; and all that golden evening was wasted.

"You'll be getting cold, if you don't come out soon."

"I'm hardening myself for *The Sea-Waif.*"

"Is that the film you're playing in? What's it all about?"

"I'll tell you when I'm dressed. You're right, I am getting rather cold." And Renée quickly swam ashore, and disappeared behind a rock.

Billy rowed up to the little beach at the end of the cove, dragged up his boat, and began to throw the glittering mackerel onto the sand. Presently Renée joined him, clad in a white sweater and a short tweed skirt, her curls clustering damply round her glowing face.

"You look like a seafaring saint, whose halo has fallen overboard," Billy politely greeted her reappearance.

"It *is* a pure, pale, sad little face, isn't

it? That's what they pay me for, of course. Vamps are easy to get."

"Vamps?"

"Vampires, glide-abouts, sequins and sin. We've got one in *The Sea Waif*. She's a great pal of mine, and too soft-hearted in real life even to hurt a mackerel—as you're doing now."

Billy seized a still-kicking fish, and knocked its head against the gunwale of the boat. "Doesn't hurt 'em; they like it," he grunted, as all fishermen have said since Noah caught sprats from the roof of the Ark. "Go on telling me about *The Sea Waif*."

"You'll see for yourself tomorrow, if you hang about the village. They'll probably let you walk on in a crowd scene, if you want to." Did she notice the sudden eagerness in Billy's face? It's a gloriously impossible story, but it'll fill the cinemas—Diadem productions always do—and the papers will say that charming Miss Renée O'Neill has made another big success in a tensely dramatic story that is richly human and full of heart-throbs.

"A baby—me as a child—is washed ashore from a wreck, and brought up by simple fisher-folk as their daughter. No one knows who she really is, though her little clothes—carefully put away by the fisheress in an old sea-chest—are of the finest lawn and lace. She becomes the sunbeam of the village, and is adored by everyone, but especially by Aphro Penruddock—he was washed up from a wreck, too, and was called Aphrodite after the ship. That's a nice touch, isn't it? These artistic producers are frightfully hot on accurate local color.

"The villain comes to the village by chance for a holiday, and sees the Sunbeam—now a lovely girl of eighteen. (Close-up while he furtively examines a faded miniature. 'It is she! I recognize the Cholmondeley chin: If I can trick her into marrying me, the Cholmondeley estates will be mine!') He lures me onto his yacht, on which a rascally priest is concealed in the cuddy, or whatever it is they call it—"

"I think you must mean the lee scuppers," put in Billy; "but never mind."

"Oh," innocently, "thanks so much. I must tell Mr. Gillespie about it. Well, of course I refuse to fall in with his dastardly plans—" Renée was warming to her work—"and breaking from his evil clutches, I leap overboard—"

"Only to be neatly swallowed by a shark. What a sad story!"

"My good youth, you seem to forget that I'm the heroine! After swimming some nine miles or so, I reach land again, and am greeted by a merry peal of bells. Without waiting for a drink or some dry clothes—for the Sunbeam is a mettlesome lass!—I hurry to the church, dash up the aisle dripping water over everyone, just in time to stop the wedding of Aphro and the Vamp. He believed me faithless, you see, and was ensnared by her coiling caresses."

"Like having a bath with a conger eel," murmured Billy. "Fortunate Aphro! "

"Of course Aphro is really Lord Reginald Berkeley, and I, as you may have dimly gathered, am the lovely Lady Letty Cholmondeley. So I just change places with the conger eel, and we all live happy ever after!"

Billy's peals of laughter echoed down the cove. "What an amusing kid you are!"

"I hate to boast, and of course I know that in this old kit I look more like a charming child than the film star who twinkles through two continents; but all the same, my good youth, you might remember that in my world, I am accustomed to large quantities of awe and respect!"

"In your world . . . " breathed Billy, enviously.

CHAPTER VI

BILLY saw quite a lot of her world during the following week. The company completely took possession of Penkevil, swarming round the thatched cottages, over the stone jetty, in and out of the sea. It was impossible to escape from the whirr of the camera, the blaspheming voice of the producer, as he called for endless repetitions of each incident.

Not that Penkevil wanted to escape. The inhabitants were spell-bound by the bizarre spectacle of strange beings with bright yellow faces falling in and out of the water, gesticulating in their cottage porches—gladly lent for the purpose—making love on the cobbles outside "The Three Pilchards" Inn.

Sailors and fisher-folk themselves, they were particularly mystified by the doings of a resplendent gentleman in Naval uniform, who incredibly changed his costume, as occasion demanded, to rough jersey, sea-boots and sou'wester, or immaculate evening dress.

Billy St. Erth, thanks to Renée, walked on in the crowd scenes, and was told by the producer that he had "a good film face."

"There's a thrill for you!" laughed Renée, little knowing how truly she spoke.

She saw a good deal of him, in the crevices of her time, and they became intimate in a careless, light-hearted way—with no hint of anything deeper. Billy eagerly drank in her casual stories of her early life—the cabaret in Montmartre, the pale-faced students who flocked there to watch her twinkling feet, to catch her golden smile, as she danced between the tables. Patrick O'Neill, the handsome wreck of a man, lost in dreams created by the green devil in the absinthe bottle . . . her flight to England with Joey Carter, the ringmaster . . . the flaring lights of the circus-tent . . . herself in spangles, leaping light-footed onto the back of the piebald horse . . . the films, and her struggle to fame, and all the motley, scarecrow people she had known—still knew.

Till it seemed to him as if indeed she stood for the life he craved—as though she were the very embodiment of it; the spirit of Bohemia made concrete.

One drowsy afternoon, the day before the company left for London, he took her up to tea at the manor.

"I'm afraid the mater's away till tomorrow. She's been at some foul German Spa, trying to reduce her 'weight' as she calls it, and talking to decayed generals. I hope you won't mind—"

But Rénee wasn't listening.

The gray stone walls of the house were mellowed by time. A rolling moor swept away behind it, and in front you could see the sea sparkling between the branches of tall elm trees. A velvet lawn stretched from the terrace, and beyond the lawn was a sunken rose-garden, enclosed by a yew hedge, quaintly clipped to the forms of birds and beasts. And then another lawn, with a wide border of old English flowers—a walled fruit garden, with golden apricots ripening against the sun-warmed bricks—till at last you came to the emerald turf of the park, with dappled deer moving gracefully among the trees . . .

One day—

One day had become today . . .

With an almost eerie sense of familiarity, she recognized it. Penkevil Manor was exactly as she had pictured her dream-castle.

"And I am leaving it all tomorrow," she said, almost to herself. "Going back—"

Going back—back to the careless vagabond life—Billy didn't sense the wistfulness in her voice. He only knew that she was taking to the road again, the road that led to the fantastic kingdom of Bohemia to which she belonged; and that he would be

left—buried here with the Old Things that he hated.

They were in the dim, cool gallery now, hung with the pictures of a long line of dead St. Erths. All of them had been fighters; most of them delightful scoundrels.

Was it fancy, or did the eleventh baron, who, after following the ancient profession of wrecking very profitably for nine years, had run away with Sally Gapp, the celebrated comedienne, only to die gallantly at the head of his men in the Low Countries, after a short year of wedded bliss—did the eleventh baron, whose handsome head was strikingly like Billy's, solemnly wink his left eye?

At any rate, it was at that precise moment that Billy broke out:

"I can't bear it! . . . Will you marry me, Renée?"

It really had happened, then. But she must be very cool, not make the capture too easy. But the impetus of his youth and eagerness swept her off her feet.

"We'd have such a glorious time." He stammered a little in his excitement, his dark-blue eyes aglow. "You're so rippingly alive and young, Renée; and we laugh at the same things. Oh, you don't know what it's been like here, sometimes. Everybody old, and everybody jawing about my responsibilities, and not a laugh for a hundred miles round. I—I'm not a bit of good at p-putting things into words, and when I say it would be a frightful—I mean splendid—rag to be married to you, it doesn't sound very romantic; but—I do want you, Renée; do you want me?"

She wanted . . .

He wanted . . .

"All right," said Renée carelessly, "I'll marry you."

Her brow puckered for an instant. Then she remembered. She had said exactly the same thing to Joey Carter, on the Boulogne-Folkestone boat. She hadn't loved Joey; she didn't love—

Billy's arms went round her . . .

"We'll have the night express stopped at Polkerne," said Billy an hour later. "Then I can get a Special License in Town tomorrow morning. You go to the village and pack your things, and I'll be down with the car at seven."

Billy drove up to "The Three Pilchards" to the minute. The Penkevil folk had had a lot of excitement in the last week, but it had been nothing to the shock of surprise with which they gazed open-mouthed at Renée, adorable in a big gray velour coat with soft chinchilla collar, and grey suède tammy, stepping into the long, lean Rolls-Royce and sitting down beside young Lord St. Erth. Luggage was strapped on—children crowded round the car, their mothers whispering behind.

"Comfortable, darling?" said Billy defiantly; and then to himself: *"let* 'em talk!" He slid in the clutch, and the car purred up the hill.

Up on the moor, Billy opened the throttle. The car leaped forward, white dust a cloud behind it, eating up the miles with effortless speed. The wind sang past them, fragrant with the scent of heather, salt with the tang of the sea. Through a pine-wood, scaring a cock-pheasant that flew up in front of them, glossy and indignant. Over the last rise, to the little wayside station of Polkerne, the gates of the level crossing swinging to behind them as they swept up the approach.

The station-master bustled up. "The express is due in three minutes, my lord."

CHAPTER VII

Renée St. Erth stood at the window of her bedroom at the Belvoir Hotel, looking down at the lights of Piccadilly, and thinking of her last bridal chamber—a creaking, swaying caravan, jolting over country

roads under the stars. She had been Renée, the Ragamuffin, then. Now—

A quick vision sprang to her mind of the dreaming chimney-stacks of Penkevil Manor, with its far-flung background of silent, purple moor. Hers, now; she belonged there. Impatiently she wished that her wedding-night could have been spent *at home* instead of here. Well, they had had to come up to Town to be married in a hurry; and Billy's mother was returning that evening, and it would have been rather a shock for her to have come home to find that her son had installed a new mistress of the Manor.

Renée was devoutly thankful that she had no tiresome relatives to question her doings. She had been back once to the Cabaret Achille since her flight with Joey, to find that her father was dead.

She wondered impatiently as she slipped out of the bronze crêpe-de-chine evening frock in which she had dined, whether Billy would take her straight back tomorrow. She was eager to begin the new life.

"Am I good enough?" . . . Thousands of girls have stood solitary before a tall mirror on just such a moment, and, like Renée, have gazed back with serious eyes at the pale beauty reflected there, questioning, as she did, "Am I good enough?"

Thousands of girls have meant: "Am I good enough for my man?" It is strange that this urchin of the Montmartre gutters had so forgotten the man who was even then coming down the corridor to her room; strange that she should have thought so much of Penkevil, so little of St. Erth . . .

Billy's knock on the door.

"Wait a minute!" Quickly Renée flung on a soft lavender-silk kimono; snuggled down into a deep arm-chair.

"You can come in now!"

Billy crossed the room, grinned cheerily at Renée, flung himself down on the Chesterfield in the luxuriously furnished bedroom.

The insistent clang of a fire-bell shattered the monotonous rumble of the traffic that rolled endlessly beneath their windows. Billy lifted his head and listened, with the ecstatic expression of a teetotaller who has taken to drink again.

Renée was somewhat piqued. True, she had not been thinking of her husband, but that was no reason why he should not have been thinking of her, nor why he should have failed to comment upon the perfection of her tender blue-gray draperies as a foil to her mop of ruddy hair. After all, he was wildly in love with her . . . Was he feeling shy?

"Better than Penkevil, isn't it?" said Billy, as the last faint clamor of the fire-bell died away.

"Oh, Town's always the same. I shan't miss it when we go back."

Billy stared. "Go back where?"

"To Penkevil, of course."

"But we're never going back there—are we? You don't *want* to, do you?"

Renée was for an instant dumb with astonishment. Not want to go back to a glorious place like that? "But—Billy! It's yours—ours!"

"I've had twenty-four dreary dog's years to realize that in, thank you." There was an obstinate set to Billy's mouth. "Now, I'm going to *live!*"

"So am I—at Penkevil." Renée's mouth was equally obstinate.

"But, darling—" bewilderment succeeded obstinacy. He came and sat on the arm of her chair, ran his fingers through the short curls at the nape of her neck. "But, darling, you'd never be able to. You didn't imagine, did you, that I was going to stand between you and your work?"

"Oh, my *work!*" She shrugged her shoulders, as though she were shrugging

away her triumphant conquest of the film world.

"Renée, you're an artist; you *can't* give it up! You can't *possibly!* I want to be in it, too. I'm just crazy to know all your crowd. I may not be able to act, but I'll learn; you'll teach me, won't you? Besides, it sounds infernally conceited, but I believe I've got it in me."

He began to coax her silence. "Girl, think of the wonderful time we'll have; and our pals—people with swift brains, different from the stagnant, mouldy lot down in the country. And every moment crammed to bursting, and ideas bubbling all over the place, and nobody afraid to laugh, or be themselves. That producer chap, down at Penkevil, told me you were a sort of queen in the film world. Renée —you can't be wanting to abdicate?"

"And you saw yourself as Prince Consort, did you?" Renée's tone was light, and very dangerous.

Billy laughed, charming in his sudden embarrassment. "Would I be such a frightfully rotten Prince?"

If Renée's eyes had not been under a spell of blindness, she might have looked at him, then, instead of through and beyond him. She might have noticed that he was indeed quite a gallant enough Prince, this husband of hers.

Seen for the first time by her in the sharply contrasting black and white of conventional evening clothes, there was nothing insignificant about the eighteenth baron St. Erth. Billy was tall and straight, with the hot blue eyes of all the St. Erths, and a mouth that would be strong one day, when his boy's quicksilver spirit had settled down into its man's frame. Now he was flushed under his tan; his black brows anxiously knit. Was it possible that Renée was going to do him out of it?

"Give me a chance, Renée," he pleaded, his arms round her unresponsive shoulders. "If you're a queen in Bohemia, I'm battering at the doors. Let me in!"

"Perhaps that's why you married me—to be let in?" Renée's face was still turned away from him.

A long pause.

"Yes."

Billy was ashamed, but he was honest. He couldn't pretend that he loved her; it wouldn't be fair. In his sudden sick reaction from Penkevil, he had begged her to marry him, because she was such a pal; because she understood. Love? He hadn't thought of it till now—only of escape. But now, with Renée's eyes blazing scorn on him, he realized that he had cheated her, and that she had a right to despise him.

"Sacré Dieu!" Renée, enraged, was the gutter-urchin again—"So that is why—and I, *moi même,* I did not count to you? Bah! If I had known that all you cared about was a job at the studios, I could have got you that with a word, and without this bribe! I have 'patronized' quite a lot of worthy young men; you need not have bribed me with Penkevil. Oh, I thought you were different. You, who were born there, to want *cheap* things; things that don't last. Noise, and noisy people, and paragraphs in the papers. I could have told you how sick I was of it; how I longed to get out of it, when I first saw that lovely, heavenly place where you belonged. I wanted to belong too! Ah, Billy—" her voice broke on a sob—"you're not going to do me out of Penkevil?"

"Is that what you married me for?" he demanded quietly.

Renée was silent.

They were both standing up now, facing each other. Their eyes met . . . and Billy burst out laughing. But his laugh had a hint of mockery in it.

"The pot and the kettle," he said; "I needn't have bothered about being ashamed of myself."

But Renée was too angry to laugh. *"Ma*

foi, but at least I did not pretend to be in love with you, as you did with me!"

"No, now that I come to think it over, it was pretty obvious that you were marrying me for purely—social reasons, shall we call them?" said Billy, with the brutality of youth.

"You don't understand—" and how could she ever make him understand the subtle difference between "marrying for social reasons," and the formless dreams and longings of a little ragamuffin, that had seemed suddenly fulfilled at sight of the gray towers of Billy's home . . .

"Whatever happens"—Renée defiantly threw back her head—"whatever happens, *I'm* going to live at Penkevil."

"Whatever happens," Billy mocked, "I'm going to take the road."

"It looks as though we were each going our own way."

"On the contrary, we are each going the other's way."

Their politeness was but a surface gloss over the furious anger at learning they had each been buffoon to the other's ambition.

Billy's hands, thrust deep into his trousers pockets, were tightly clenched . . . but he was smiling at his wife; his eyes sparkled a more vivid blue than ever.

Renée was deadly white, but she, too, smiled, and her voice held the old flippant don't-care note as she announced that she was taking the Cornish Riviera Express the next morning. "Any message for the Dowager Lady St. Erth?" audaciously.

"It's very good of you. I mean to write to my mother after I have had the pleasure of seeing you off tomorrow. You'll allow me to come to the station, I hope? Just to wish you good luck among the Philistines?"

She laughed; held out her hand to him. "And good luck to you among the Bohemians, O my husband!"

Another pause. Then: "Under the circumstances," said Billy, "I think I'll say good night."

CHAPTER VIII

A COOL, self-possessed Renée stepped out of the Cornish Riviera Express at Polkerne the following afternoon. Billy had wired for the big Rolls-Royce to meet the train—nothing more.

"Please see to my luggage, Exelby, and then drive home."

The smiling chauffeur touched his hat. Renée had become a well-known figure during her week with the film company at Penkevil.

"Home, miss? To 'The Three Pilchards'?"

"No, to the Manor. Your master, I'm sure you will be delighted to hear, married me yesterday."

"Y-yes, miss, er-er certainly, Your Ladyship. Is His Lordship on the train?"

"I am completely ignorant of His Lordship's whereabouts," said Renée wickedly. "Please start up the car, and drive off."

The astonished chauffeur opened the door for Renée, switched on the self-starter, and swung away from the station without another word.

During the drive back to the Manor, Renée had time to review the situation and to marshal her forces for the coming encounter with the unsuspecting dowager.

Billy had seen to her comfort and made all arrangements with admirable courtesy that morning. He had told his mother nothing—merely wired to Exelby to meet the train with the car; and he was instructing his solicitors to see to the transference of all his available money to Renée's account as quickly as possible.

"I'm going to make my own way," he had said with a backward jerk of his head, just before the express started. "And just as plain Billy St. Erth. No money, and no handle to my name."

"Good-by, Mr. St. Erth, then," she had said mockingly. "And although we part much more in anger than in sorrow, I give you full permission to use my name with any agents or producers — my maiden name, that is; before I began to get married."

"Good-by, Your Ladyship . . ."

As they turned into the park gates, Renée rather longed to ask the chauffeur what her mother-in-law was like. She curbed the impulse, knowing that it wasn't done; anyway, she would know soon enough.

"Is Lady St. Erth at home? Will you tell her that Lady St. Erth is here?" Renée asked the butler.

He took it very well . . . and as the only witness of the suddenly dowagered Lady St. Erth's demeanor on receiving the message, he was able subsequently to inform the servants' hall that she had taken it very well, also.

Renée had not long to wait in the big double drawing-room before Billy's mother came in. The old lady's attitude expressed humorous resignation combined with courteous hostility.

Renée, whose mental picture of her had been based on "film dowagers," who never had either manners or humor to relieve their high-bred haughtiness, was considerably surprised.

"How do you do, my dear. Have you been Billy's wife for long? I suppose you *are* his wife. I don't know of any other St. Erths."

Renée was feeling a little bit shy. Although the imp inside her was urging that this was her cue to produce her marriage lines with a flourish, she merely said simply:

"Yes, Billy and I were married yesterday."

"And Billy, being a D.S.O., sent you ahead to break the news. But he needn't have been afraid. You're not as bad as all that."

"Thank you"—Renée's eyes were demurely cast down—"nor are you. Perhaps I ought to tell you, though, that Billy isn't coming at all."

Billy's mother went a little pale . . . she had only had two sons, and one of them had been killed on the Somme. But she kept any agitation she may have felt out of her voice.

"You mean that you and he have planned to live away from here." But to herself she added: "Even then, I think Billy might have come and told me himself."

"Oh, *I'm* not going to live away from here; I've come to Penkevil for good." And a little thrill went through Renée as she said it.

"Charming of you!" murmured Lady St. Erth. "But, if I may be permitted to say so, it appears rather an eccentric arrangement. Where *is* Billy? Has he run away to sea? You're pretty enough that I should have imagined he could have stood more than twenty-four hours of you."

"If you knew anything about your son's Inner Life," explained Renée, curling up cosily on the Chesterfield, one leg tucked under her, and quite enjoying the scene, "you would know that he hankered for what he imagined to be Bohemia—revels! Tatters! Comradeship! Gaiety! Song! Art and garrets! He says he's going on the films."

"I'd no idea he was stage-struck!"

"Nor had I, or I wouldn't have married him."

"It would be interesting to know," mused the quondam Lady St. Erth, "exactly who you are."

"Oh, I? I'm—just—Renée . . ." in a mischievous attempt to win the stern old aristocrat's heart with winsome pathos.

"Yes, yes, my dear, but that isn't your style at all. If it were, it would bore me to death, and the least you can do is not to bore me. You're an actress, of course; it's written all over you."

"I *was* an actress," Renée corrected her. "That is to say, I was a film-actress; Renée O'Neill. And if you wish me to abandon the meek rôle, I may as well tell you that I was the only actress in the English film world. Courted and beset by managers, the idol of the public, naming my own terms—and really, in my own line, a genius," she finished.

"Dear me, Billy is a very fortunate young man! And you gave up all this splendor to be his wife?"

"No, to come to Penkevil." For a swift moment, Renée was her real self. "It's such a glorious place, and Billy didn't seem to get the feeling of it a bit. I suppose it's because he's always belonged, and I never have, and always wanted to."

But in spite of Renée's sincerity, it was not likely that Lady St. Erth was going to discuss her son's alleged lack of proper sentiment toward his birthplace, with a strange girl.

Certainly Renée, as she had remarked, was not as bad as she might have been; but for all that, it was impossible for her to "belong" by just wanting to. She chattered too impudently; she was too impulsively intimate; her hair, and the way she curled up on the sofa—these were only little things, but they showed. Besides, a film star!

Lady St. Erth was not a snob, but she was hurt that Billy had not taken her into his confidence, nor married one of their own sort.

"Dinner will be at eight. I expect you would like to go to your room now."

And Renée understood that she was to be lonely at Penkevil. . . .

And at first she *was* very lonely. Conscientiously she tried to play the lady of the manor; to confine her wanderings to the grounds of Penkevil; to go for sedate drives with her mother-in-law; to talk to the servants in those polite, faraway tones, which she found so difficult.

The dowager did not help her very much. She was watching the girl, with a slightly ironic scrutiny. She was never rude, and always ready for amusing conversation, provided it remained impersonal. But—Renée must fight her own battles; and the shrewd old lady knew well enough that the worst battle for this little town sparrow would be against boredom—a battle that need not have been, if Billy had brought her home and made her happy in the good old way.

The dowager was by no means narrow-minded nor prudish. She had traveled widely, and come across many bizarre love-affairs. But this was her first experience of a boy and a girl who had married because they were each secretly in love with the other's life, and not with each other. The situation gained an added flavor because they had discovered the true state of affairs a few hours after their wedding.

As far as obstinacy went, there was little to choose between them. . . . From the window of her room, looking out over the wide lawn steeped in mellow autumn sunshine, she could see Renée, the ragamuffin, talking earnestly with the head gardener. A very pretty picture, only marred, in the dowager's eyes, by Renée's wealth of gesture and occasional fling-back of her short curly hair. She was not *quite* right; and Billy's mother wondered a little wistfully whether her son, too, was not quite right among the mummers.

Meanwhile, Billy showed no sign of coming back, nor Renée of going. And Lady St. Erth was no longer young, and wanted a grandson—an heir to the title that must lapse if Billy should have no child. . . .

Inevitably, Renée began to grow restive under her self-imposed decorum. She took to scrambling and climbing about the steep black Cornish cliffs, daring almost impossible ascents with her circus-trained agility.

October now. A crisper tang in the air; crackle of dead leaves underfoot. Pale amber sunshine, in which the last butterflies fluttered lazily before their long winter sleep. Too cold for bathing. The boats in the cove had all been pulled high up on the shingle, out of reach of dreaded easterly gales. And the village of Penkevil began to prepare for winter.

Renée made friends with the cottagers. Gutter-bred, she soon pierced their habitual reserve when confronted with gentry. She began to learn a little of the conditions under which they lived. Thatched roofs, that looked so picturesque to summer visitors, were leaky and rotten; walls that had not been repaired for years oozed moisture when the heavy rains came. Decent drainage was non-existent; the ruddiness of the faces of the children was too often due to the unnatural flush of consumption.

"But why don't you get your landlord to do something?" Renée said indignantly, one day. "Who owns all these cottages?"

Old Mrs. Bolitho looked curiously at her. "Well, missy—Your Ladyship, I should say—you own them yourself, in a manner of speaking. All Penkevil village has belonged to the Manor, these many years."

Without a word, Renée rushed raging from the cottage; sped up the hill to her home. As it happened, the steward of the estate was in the hall, talking to the dowager, when she burst in, hair blown by the wind, eyes alight with eager indignation.

"This is Mr. Fairfield, Renée," said the dowager, looking at her disapprovingly. "Mr. Fairfield—er—Lady St. Erth."

He bowed. "I had been wanting to speak to your ladyship about the gates at the East Lodge—"

"I say—do we own all those cottages down in the cove?" Renée was not interested in lodge gates for the moment.

"Why yes, but—"

"Do you ever go into them?"

"Not if I can help it. The interiors are not very pleasant." Fairfield shrugged deprecatingly.

"And whose fault is that? Oh, I know they're ignorant and dirty. But when they've nowhere for their refuse, when they have to walk half a mile to the well for every drop of water, when most of their—their homes are tumbling down with oldness and rottenness— It's got to stop, I tell you. Lord St. Erth is responsible, and as he's not here, I am. You've got to have all those cottages inspected by a good architect and made habitable. *Sacré Dieu!* the pigs here at the home farm are better housed!"

"Don't you think, my dear, that you had better leave this matter to Mr. Fairfield? I am sure he will see that everything necessary is done. You can't expect palaces, you know, when your rent is only five pounds a year."

"The rent has nothing to do with it. I am not satisfied, and Mr. Fairfield himself says that he never goes into the cottages if he can help it. Mr. Fairfield—" turning her back on the outraged dowager—"you will send for a good architect at once. And when he comes, I will go over all the cottages with him myself. You will come too."

"Certainly, certainly. I will see to it at once, Your Ladyship."

The astonished steward quickly took his leave, glad for once to get away from the manor, which he had come to look upon as a place where he dined very excellently now and again, and where one could spend a pleasant half-hour over a glass of sherry and a biscuit, discussing the carriage horses, or the trees that were being felled,

with old Lady St. Erth. But if this little spitfire were going to rule the roost, he would have to see about trying to earn his salary.

After his mild sheep's-face had gone, Renée turned to the dowager with quick reaction from her fury.

"Oughtn't I to have done that? Was I being interfering and rude?"

"It is not for me to question your doings, my dear. You are mistress here, and it is only by your favor that I am staying on in the house. If you would like me to go, my daughter Alicia is up at Mowbray House with her husband—we always lend them the place for the hunting season—and I could easily join her."

"Of course I don't want you to go." Impulsively, Renée stretched out both hands to her mother-in-law. But the latter remained aloof, impassive. She would never make friends; never even be really angry.

Renée would have liked a good row. Her idea of anger was two people screaming at each other over a fried-fish barrow. A fish-barrow scene with the dowager would not have been without entertainment; far better than this perpetual amused hostility.

"It is very good of you to let me stay. But perhaps you would like to hunt this winter? If so, we might both go up to Leicestershire. Let me see, do you ride?"

"I used to be a circus-rider," said Renée, with a touch of defiance.

"Dear me, how interesting! Then you will be *quite* at home with the Quorn!"

CHAPTER IX

It was at Mowbray House that Renée really came up against the iron-bound conventions of Society. At Penkevil she had merely been bored; at Mowbray House she was uncomfortable, almost miserable.

Billy's sister Alicia had married a very formal, correct young man, who appeared to love sport more for its rules than just for itself. From the very first, Renée detested Walter Ferrars, and he coldly ignored her.

Alicia was equally objectionable, but more active in her hostility. She was one of those lean, big, bony women, whom one can never imagine melting deliciously into a man's arms. Her mouth was as hard as her favorite hunter's, a raking chestnut with the temper of a fiend.

The whole set surrounding Alicia and Walter was so much like them that one could hardly believe that they were not all the offspring of the same parents; and the atmosphere of "'untin'" and "'ounds," "done" and "not done," brought out all the gutter-devil in Renée.

Renée's crimes in the eyes of Alicia reached their summit at the opening meet of the Quorn. She had insisted on hunting that day, and, to the surprise of everybody, had been the first woman up when hounds killed after a rattling fifty minutes' burst.

True, she had hacked to the meet wearing a wide-brimmed sombrero instead of the conventional hard hat, but the kindly old Master knew a good horsewoman when he saw one—and Renée could ride, albeit her style was rather too showy to be considered good form. So, to her huge delight, she was duly "blooded" and presented with the brush, much to the disgust of the Mowbray House party.

Renée forfeited her prestige as a horsewoman by holloaing excitedly at sight of a hare when the next cover was drawn—but she was forgotten when hounds found again, and a big dog fox streaked away across a fifty-acre stubble-field.

But the pack was not to taste blood again that day. Scent became tricky, and after a long, slow hunt, with hounds constantly at fault, they lost their quarry as darkness began to fall.

"Who taught you to ride, dear?" murmured a peroxide widow of the name of Carslake, as they gobbled their eggs and muffins ravenously round the big fire in the hall at Mowbray House.

"My late husband," said Renée demurely.

"Good God! I didn't know anything had happened to Billy," somebody else broke in, turning to Lady Alicia.

"No, I mean my first husband," Renée explained. "I was a widow when I married Billy. Or perhaps I ought to say when I entrapped Billy; all widows are supposed to be designing creatures, aren't they?"

The room was stricken into silence, and all eyes were conscientiously turned away from Mrs. Carslake.

Renée prattled on gaily: "My first husband was ringmaster in a circus, and I can do lots of things with horses. I will, next time there's a meeting of the dogs"—Alicia's husband shuddered—"jumping from one horse to another, standing up in the saddle at full gallop, and that sort of thing. I remember at one show we gave—" and Renée launched with gusto into an anecdote that reeked of sawdust and naphtha-flares, the crack of whips, and the staring white faces of the clowns. From that by easy transition she slipped into stories of the cabaret Achille, and then again she told of her early struggles in the film-world.

"Poor old Billy will be going through it now, I expect. Won't do him any harm; in fact, I expect he'll be a damned sight more amusing than he ever was, when we get him back again with some of his dewiness rubbed off."

Billy was not a favorite topic at Mowbray House, since his disappearance into the wilds of Bohemia; he was occasionally mentioned, rather as one mentions a lunatic temporarily detained in an asylum.

"So Ikey Cohen said," went on Renée, undaunted by the general atmosphere of frigid horror, "'The part's yours, little peacherino, on the usual terms, you know.'" She was taking her revenge for her very chilly welcome at Mowbray House. She knew she was behaving like a bad child, and didn't care.

Suddenly the butler announced: "Mr. Trelawney."

Gavin Trelawney was Billy's godfather, and a very old friend of the family. Most of his time he spent in the waste places of the earth; and by his detailed survey of unknown New Guinea, and his spectacular discovery of a highly civilized white race that lived cut off from the world by huge mountains in the wilds of Chinese Turkestan, had made himself perhaps the most famous of living explorers.

He was a hard-bitten man of forty-five, with dry brown skin, scarred on the left cheek by the claws of a jaguar. His curiously light-green eyes were steeply overhung, so that the lids were never visible. The most human part of his face was his mouth—a kind, whimsical, almost benevolent mouth; and on the rare occasions when he could be persuaded to talk, he would tell of the most appalling adventures in a soft, slow drawl.

Naturally, he was immensely popular in the St. Erth set, so that his unexpected appearance at Mowbray House after nearly two years in South America, was not only a relief from Renée's reminiscences, but an event in itself.

Renée's presence was no surprise to him. He had heard from friends in Town a mass of conflicting rumors about his godson's queer marriage, desertion of his wife—or, by way of alternative, his wife's desertion of him—and of the harum-scarum life he was leading now.

In addition to this, later rumors were coupling his name with that of the notorious Sara Crespigny . . . but of all this, Gavin said not a word at Mowbray House. He was naturally reticent, and he

wanted to see for himself what Renée was like.

And he found her attractive—more attractive than he cared to acknowledge to himself. Her gaiety was part of her; constant snubbings could not quench it. She was almost arrogantly young, and quite adorably mischievous. Mistakes in etiquette that she had at first made through ignorance, she now made out of deviltry; and Gavin, softened to tolerance by far voyagings, could not altogether suppress an amused chuckle at the atmosphere of haughty disapproval that she created.

So they became very excellent friends, Renée and Gavin; and she, aware of his championship, swaggered like a boy . . . and bewitched him like a girl.

Very much like a girl.

But—but what was Billy about to treat her with such casual indifference? Why, he ought to have been at her feet, and about her, jealous of every moment spent away from her. Billy? Billy was a young fool. So Gavin raged against his absent godson.

There was a dance at Mowbray House on New Year's Eve. The great hall was cleared of furniture; the mellow old oak floor polished and shining in the leaping firelight.

Alicia and her friends had confidently expected that Renée, true to character, would appear in something outrageous, showy, even a trifle indecent. In fact, they had put up a certain amount of competition in the brilliant coloring of their own dance frocks.

But Renée, who was no fool, disappointed them all, and shed reproach upon their rainbow hues, by wearing a little soft clinging garment of purest white, no jewelry and nothing in her hair. She looked like a débutante in her first evening frock, and, to the chagrin of the women, was instantly surrounded by men.

She was young—young, and lovely as a wild rose. Gone was her careless swagger, her air of "cocking a tattered feather" with a reckless backward tilt of the head. A different Renée now. Soft and demure, long lashes sweeping perfect cheek, wide innocent eyes, the color of a moorland pool flecked with golden sunshine. A girl that made men eager to catch her up and crush her, bruise her lips with kisses. . . .

Gavin was the most eager of them all.

CHAPTER X

"I WANT you!" Gavin's arms were round her. They were strong arms, arms in which one could rest and feel secure. But they weren't the arms that Renée wanted. With a supple twist of her body, she eluded him. It was like trying to hold water, to hold Renée against her desire.

"Don't spoil it, Gavin, dear. You've been so decent to me, and everybody else hates me. I'd have run away, if it hadn't been for—" She stopped dead, and Gavin filled in the blank with:

"If it hadn't been for you."

But what Renée meant was that she would have gladly gone back to her old life, if it hadn't been for Billy—Billy would have been sure to hear about it, and laugh at her failure—the ragamuffin who had wanted to be a great lady.

"If it's Billy you're thinking of"—and Renée started at the accuracy of his guess—"he had his chance, and didn't take it. He'll be sorry enough one day."

"Perhaps he's sorry now." Somehow, it pleased Renée to imagine Billy forlorn, out of tune with his surroundings, an outcast, longing to be back at Penkevil—back with her at Penkevil. . . .

Lost in her dream, it was with a shock that she realized what Gavin was saying.

"—with Sara Crespigny. For the boy's sake, I'd rather it had been anyone else; she's notoriously heartless, and she'll break

him, as he deserves to be broken—as you're breaking me, Renée."

There was a rough note of anguish in his voice, but Renée did not hear. She was aware of nothing except that Billy, *her husband,* was caught, held by another woman—a woman she knew to be worthless, and—oh God, a woman whom she knew to be beautiful!

"And I love him."

She knew it, now.

"So Billy's entrapped by the lovely Sara, is he?" she asked, lightly. "How do you know?"

"Oh, it's all over the place. I wonder they haven't heard about it here. Billy's easily inflamed."

"Is he?" Renée cried in sudden passionate bitterness. For if Billy was such easy prey—"then why not me?" she mused resentfully, rather angrily remembering his cool nonchalance that strange night in the Hotel. He had behaved as though a great sheet of glass stood between them. " . . . Under the circumstances, I think I'll say good night!" Blue eyes that laughed without a hint of embarrassment.

"I *hate* him!" Renée broke out wildly; and if she had said: "I adore him," she could not have given herself away more clearly to Gavin Trelawney.

And because he was a very gallant gentleman, he did not let her know that she had betrayed herself. Nor, from that moment, did he ever speak of love again to Renée. *"Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait!*—I can't hope to compete with a youngster like Billy and I ought to be kicked for trying. . . . "

And with bitter self-reproach, came the desire to atone for what he now sternly regarded as a lapse into dishonor, by extricating Billy from his infatuation for Sara Crespigny, and bringing him triumphantly back to Renée, who wanted him more than she would ever own she wanted anyone.

"May as well run up to town, anyway, and see what the boy's up to—infernal young ass! I might be able to do some good there; I'm doing none here, that's certain!"

He did not tell Renée his reason for leaving Mowbray House so abruptly.

CHAPTER XI

SUDDENLY a hush fell upon the rioting company scattered and flung about Sara Crespigny's curious dining-hall, with its round windows and winding stairway, and diffused glow of blue light, of which the sources were uncannily hidden. Suddenly there was a lull in the clash and tinkle of glass, the hoarse medley of voices, the shouted snatches of song.

The two men prancing in absurd imitation of a fox-trot, ceased their antics as abruptly as though they were marionettes on a cut string. Neville Olivier, a haggard, gray-haired parasite attached to Sara, jerked himself up on one elbow, from where he had sprawled forward onto the wine-soaked tablecloth.

Valentine Scott and Radnor Fielding in a fiery wrangle over a beautiful little model whom Scott had successfully coaxed from the studio to the stage.

And the youngest of the clamorous crew, Billy St. Erth, dropped with a crash the champagne bottle from which he was wrenching the wire, so that the amber liquid flooded unheeded over the pale woven carpet of sea-blues and sea-greens. Springing upright, hands clutching at the table behind him, he stared white-lipped, fascinated, at the apparition standing halfway up the dark flight of stairs. . . .

A monk, robed in black, face heavily shadowed by the cowl, one arm outstretched in denunciation:

"Shame!"

It was this single syllable, hurled at them in a deep, throbbing voice, which had reduced bacchanalia to silence. . . .

"Shame on you! Have you no worthier occupation than drinking yourself sodden in the halls of a light woman, a harlot, a vain Jezebel? O my brothers, in your repletion, your beastliness, your foolish caperings, you are indeed a sight to cause the saints and all the angels to forget the blessings of Heaven, and weep—ay, weep divinely over the sins of the earth. Shame on you, worldlings! No matter whence I come, nor whom I am. Look upon me as a prophet, foretelling to each one of you your eternal damnation . . .!"

The hooded figure raised aloft its arm with a swift, compelling gesture, as though brandishing an invisible scourge . . . and the huddled group in the hall below winced and shivered.

Almost it seemed as though the blue light had grown fainter, as though the hall were colder. . . . They were not men to be easily impressed, but there lurked a sinister power about this unknown ascetic who had broken in upon their careless feasting. . . .

The low, thrilling tones began anew:

"Deny yourselves! Who amongst you has ever tasted the joys of renunciation? Quit the house of the harlot. Give all you have to the poor. Give! Give! And the reward of peace shall descend upon your days and nights. To whom do you look for protection, when age and sickness and the nausea of sin creep upon you—as they will surely creep upon you? To Lucifer? To your Master in Hell? Fools! Fools! Lucifer has crawled to us on his knees; has cringed to us on the very stones of the cloister. . . . Have you never heard the legend:

" 'The devil was ill, the devil a monk would be . . .'?"

Blaze of golden light flooding the hall, striking upon the slim Mephistopheles. swiftly and astoundingly revealed beneath the flung cowl and robes; scarlet Mephistopheles, arms tossed upward in a wild abandoned gesture, mouth laughing, laughing scornfully; the devil, the Prince of Darkness. . . .

But the face, in its flying halo of palest gold hair, was the face of Sara Crespigny!

" . . . 'The devil was well, the *devil* a monk was he!' " she chanted, in fiendish exultation at the success of the trick she had played her guests. Lightly she vaulted from the stairs, into their midst:

"Oh, you poor panic-stricken criminals! Oh, your faces! Val, if you could have seen your bulging eyes! Who would have dreamed such bold bad men had such tender consciences! One monk against the lot, and not a squeak among you! If I hadn't been tearing myself with laughing, I might have exhorted you over your sins for another half-hour, and you'd have listened meekly. . . . Look at poor Neville, quite prostrated. . . . Oh, feeble, quivering, cowardly little black sheep that you are, every one of you! Baa-Baa-Baa-aa!"

"Sara, you imp of mischief—wait till you see the splendid revengeful picture I shall paint of you as the Foul Fiend!" threatened Radnor Fielding, into the midst of the furious babel of admiration, wounded vanity, questions and laughter, by which Sara was immediately engulfed.

"Will you paint it? Radnor, will you really?" with fierce eagerness; for in Sara's soul dwelt an unquenched lust for notoriety; also, she loved to have men of talent inspired by her, weaving her immortality in with their own.

She was at the top of ambition at the present time; known in Town as the modern Cleopatra, a courtesan by temperament, a queen by acclamation, a jade by her heartlessness. Vitally alive she was; and for that men worshipped her. Beautiful, too, with a haunting beauty that tormented, but never satisfied: Small, pointed ivory face; mouth that tilted mockingly at the corners; green eyes, deep-set

beneath the tumble and froth of pale, glimmering hair. Oh, yes, she was beautiful.

Billy St. Erth ached with the beauty of her, and the daring, and the countless years of knowledge under her heavy eyelids, and straight black lashes . . . surely a thousand evil incarnations had gone to the making of Sara Crespigny! Small wonder that he was infatuated, plunged direct from the wide lawns and slow peace of Penkevil into the fret and blare of the metropolis. Now, as in a dream he watched her, while she urged her courtiers to separate feats of emulation; then he heard Val Scott remark, glaring angrily at his rival, the painter:

"By God, Sara! I'd put on a play for you, if I could get one written with that episode as you played it just now for the big scene. It was stupendously effective —and not to be got with mere paint and canvas, believe me."

. . . Something stirred and leaped in Billy's brain—and he cried: "Leave the play to me!"

Later, much later, when the others had protestingly departed, and Sara, in a fit of caprice, had let him stay, he murmured, lips pressed against the inside curve of her arm, where the blue veins branched dimly on the gleaming white:

"Beloved . . . you think I was boasting when I promised you that play. . . . but you shall have it. I've never written a line before, but I know I can write this. *The Devil a Monk Would Be!* . . . It's twitching already. . . . I'm longing to be at it. I suppose that's what you call inspiration. . . . You were the inspiration, Sara—you—you—*you*. . . . Standing there above us, with your head thrown back, and your red, bent mouth . . . slim, glazing devil sprung up from a huddle of black robes. . . . If I could have leaped forward then, and caught you in my arms . . . but I was afraid . . .

"You shall have your play, Sara—my tribute! I must serve you somehow, or I shall go mad . . . my beloved . . . my beloved. . . . "

CHAPTER XII

BILLY had been thoroughly enjoying life since his parting with Renée. He went straight to Bertram Gillespie, producer of the Diadem Film Company, reminded him how he had said in Cornwall that he, Billy, "had a film face"; and through him, and other producers, drifted into various odd jobs in the film world.

Frequently he filled in forms; stated that he could ride, swim, dance, drive a motor-car; that he had a good wardrobe, including evening clothes and morning coat; that—damning, very often, this last item—his experience was nil. He occasionally got crowd work, however, and sometimes a small part.

His success would probably have been greater if he had not suppressed his title, or if he had made use of Renée's name; but: "Not likely I'm going to, after she's given me the chuck like this," quoth Billy, with haughty inaccuracy.

But somehow the fact that he was really Lord St. Erth got about, till one day his photograph appeared in a popular daily paper, under flaring headlines: "Peer on the Pictures; Lord St. Erth plays butler in new Crompton-Ricketts production; Romantic Story." And his market value began to rise correspondingly.

Strangely enough, he was not disappointed in his new surroundings and companions. The memory of dull county people, and monotonous days at Penkevil grew fainter and fainter, though now and then he grinned at the thought of Renée "making them all sit up down there."

It was while playing a small part in a super-film produced by the famous Neptune Company, that he met Sara Crespigny,

who had been paid an enormous fee to leave the legitimate stage for this one picture.

Sara was then at the height of her fame, and Billy fell an easy victim to her. Very rarely does a real sorceress, charmer of men, visit this earth. We have pretty girls, clever girls, charming girls, brilliant women, evil women, mysterious women, but only about once every hundred years do the gods fashion a woman who is all these things.

Only about once every hundred years do the gods notice that men are strutting boastfully in their pride, and then they set about the creation of a woman who shall topple their insolence into the dust. Usually, they crown her with genius, and forget to give her a conscience.

And it was for such a woman as this that Billy St. Erth had vowed to write a play that would set all London talking. He had already discovered, with a certain amount of amused chagrin, that he had no great talent for film-acting; but when he began to write *The Devil a Monk Would Be,* he was joyously amazed at the inspired ease with which the words tumbled out, and the characters and situations shaped themselves into life.

And then Gavin Trelawney turned up.

Billy was unfeignedly glad to see his godfather. He admired him with a boy's hero-worship, and he was soon relieved to find that Gavin had not come to urge him to repent from his evil ways.

"So you've met Renée? What d'you think of her?"

Gavin bit tighter on his pipe-stem. "Jolly little kid," he said, after a pause.

"Plenty of go, hasn't she?" Billy agreed. "She's fed up with me, though, because I've chucked the country-gentleman stunt. Queer, isn't it? I don't quite understand Renée," Billy added in a burst of chubby confidence.

"You surprise me!" Ironically, from the older man.

Dismissing the unimportant subject of Renée, Billy went on to rave about Sara, and readily assented to Gavin's polite request for an introduction.

Gavin had come up to Town with a definite object—to restore to Renée her husband; and he was inwardly in a white blaze of anger at Sara Crespigny, who could not let a lad be, but must act the siren to every hapless sailor whose boat should drift within hearing of her song.

Trelawney had heard a great deal of Sara; had seen her photographs; knew the type well—it held no attraction for him. He was aware, too, of her passion for celebrities, and smiled grimly to think what a prize her vanity would consider him—the explorer whose daring on many perilous ventures had so endeared him to popular fancy.

Why not? Suddenly and forcibly it struck him that here was the means of rescuing Billy, of restoring to Renée what he knew she wanted far more than Penkevil, far more than anything in the world—her husband.

Gavin was not vain by nature, but he could not help knowing that he had but slightly to exert himself in order to draw Sara's desire from the boy to the man; from one who merely promised fame, to one who had already achieved it. And once shown this object lesson of her passion's rottenness, Billy could not fail to be disillusioned; and from disillusion—would turn again to Renée. He was bound to suffer first, of course, a little; not as much as would inevitably be his aftermath were he delivered altogether to the mercies of the modern Cleopatra.

Three months went by. Billy finished *The Devil a Monk Would Be,* and exultantly recognized that it was good. Sara read it, took a fancy to the part, and persuaded her manager to put it into rehear-

sal immediately. She had been doing very little but revivals for several years, and the press and public, tantalized by the weird title of her new venture, began to simmer with curiosity, and to prophesy a sensational triumph.

March the thirtieth was the date fixed for the opening night; and Billy would have been in Heaven—but for Gavin!

For Gavin, during the three months, had succeeded in his bold intention. Succeeded . . . and failed. Sitting in his smoking-room at 45, Jermyn Chambers, pipe between his teeth, feet sprawling on the fender, he came to the conclusion that he had messed things about as completely as any altruist who had ever acted from motives of pure philanthropy.

Trelawney was a man of the world; he had traveled in many lands; known many women. His masterful personality, in contrast with those low, almost weary tones in which he invariably spoke; the incongruity of the boyish smile which denied his iron-grey hair; all this, combined with his prestige as an explorer, rendered him so powerful a rival as practically to nullify the chances of a mere lad of twenty-four. Billy—to quote Radnor Fielding—was "blotted clean out of the canvas!"

This was what Gavin wanted. But, inconsistently, he chafed against the deep reproach in the boy's eyes. . . . Billy could hardly be expected to realize the somewhat complex motives of atonement to Renée which actuated his godfather.

"—But it's rough luck," reflected the latter, pulling savagely at his pipe, "to have it thrust upon me that I'm smitten to death with the woman. Sara Crespigny! Good Lord! If it weren't for Renée. . . . But Billy ought to have got over his moon-struck idiocy by now, and be ready to take a sensible view of the matter."

As for Sara—well, Gavin did not concern himself much with Sara's point of view. "Billy yesterday; me today; it will be somebody else tomorrow." Nevertheless, her almost barbaric abandonment to the emotion supreme at the moment, added its oppression to the tightening atmosphere.

. . . And tonight was the first performance of the play.

Gavin's instinct told him that the strain was about to be violently snapped—that the taut elastic would stretch no more.

He wondered if the play would be a success. He had seen none of the rehearsals, but had heard the producer, Valentine Scott, say that it was "not so bad"—which was his superlative effort at praise. The tribute surprised Trelawney, for he had not before credited young St. Erth with sufficient temperament for achievement in that line.

"And there's this, Trelawney—that even if the piece had been a flabby one, she'd have carried it through. Queer thing, she's always preferred boys' parts, like her divine namesake, and she's great in this one." Scott was artist enough to put aside in his stage management any petty question of rivalry. "Anyway," he reflected philosophically, "St. Erth is out of the running. Crazy over Trelawney, and I don't blame her, either."

CHAPTER XIII

GAVIN had booked a small box for the memorable evening. He did not suppose that Billy would come anywhere near him. Sara, he knew, made her first entrance on the stage as she had appeared in the fantastic episode that had originally given birth to the play: in monkish robes and cowl, at the head of a dim staircase; and Gavin anticipated apprehensively that she would act *at* him—all the time *at* him and for him; and Billy's attention would be hovering between intense anxiety for the success of his creation, and intense hatred of the man who had so obviously infatuated the woman on the stage.

And Renée? What would Renée be thinking and doing, away down at Penkevil? She was bound to have read about the first night, in the paper. Yes, they were in a strange net of entanglement, the four of them. . . .

His reverie was broken by a sharp ring at the bell. An instant later, Billy strode in, and without speech flung himself down in a chair. At once Gavin knew that the situation between them had at last reached a climax. Hitherto, Billy had merely ignored him, or else been frozenly polite.

"Is she here?"

"Who?"

"As if you didn't know!"

"Why should she be here?"

"Oh, if not now . . . sooner or later. I went to her last night and she wouldn't see me. I went back this morning—and again: 'Resting' they said. Curse you, couldn't you have kept out of her way, when you felt yourself beginning to be mad for her?"

"I'm not mad for her."

"You must be. Of course you are! You're not the sort just to play with women."

Trelawney was silent. He could not tell Billy his secret motive, without betraying Renée's altered heart toward him. But he was alarmed at the boy's disheveled appearance, bloodshot eyes, and hoarse, incoherent phrases. He had been apparently wandering about the streets all night . . . passing through his furnace of disillusion.

Gavin sighed, knocked out his pipe, and crossing to the bookcase, pulled out a volume, sought a certain page, and silently handed it to Billy.

A fool there was, and he made his prayer,
Even as you and I,
To a rag and a bone and a hank of hair;
Folks called her the woman who didn't care,
But the fool he called her his lady fair—
Even as you and I!

Savagely Billy flung the book across the room. "Words!" he growled. "You took her deliberately—I watched you. Because she was beautiful. And what's left to me?"

Gavin longed to say: "Renée!" Instead, he said: "Tonight, Billy; the play."

The boy's eyes lightened for a moment, then again grew somber.

"I wrote the part for her—and she's acting it for you—everything for you—"

Another peal at the door. Gavin and Billy gazed at the door as though hypnotized. Both guessed what was to come. They listened to the man-servant's step along the corridor—the click, as the front door opened—murmur of voices—then the smoking-room door flung wide. . . .

Sara stood on the threshold.

She wore a dull-gold silk coat, and a daring peacock-blue hat, two-pointed, beneath which her pale hair stood out in a feathery halo. Her mouth was poppy-red, and generous in her small, dead-white face. A triumphantly beautiful apparition in the smoke-dim chamber.

"Gavin. . . ." And in the rich fullness of her voice, in its voluptuous, royal happiness, both men understood the promise contained. They were rigid, waiting for her to become aware of Billy. When she saw him, she laughed. . . . Trelawney went chill at the sound.

"Run away, little one," she commanded lightly; "we've no use for you just now, Gavin and I."

Billy hurled off Trelawney's retaining hand on his shoulder. "And I've no use for you or Gavin or anyone else—ever!" he cried, turning fiercely with his fingers on the door-handle. "Thank God, I'm sick

enough at last of my life to chuck it to Hell!"

He was gone. . . .

Gavin sprang after him—too late. The front door had already slammed violently. The rush of footsteps on the outside stone died away . . . and Sara's arms were about him, restraining his impulse to follow, at all costs.

"He—he'll kill himself!"

She laughed again. "What! His play to be performed this evening, and he kill himself this afternoon? Oh, no, I think not. Besides, at his age, it's a supreme luxury to love a beautiful woman and lose her. Just as at your age, Gavin, it's a supreme luxury to love a beautiful woman —and win her!"

But goaded by memory of Billy's drawn, white face, the man suddenly let drop the mask of devotion that he had worn so deliberately all these weeks, and replied brutally:

"I don't love you, Sara; I thought it as well to disillusion Billy—that's all. He's too good to be broken for your pleasure."

He was prepared for a scene; but it was a relief to vent some of his self-contempt on a victim; for he was panic-stricken when he reflected what might be the result of his bungling experiment on Billy. A pity only, that the Sara Crespignys of this world were incapable of real suffering. One could merely hurt their vanity.

Incapable of real suffering. His words seemed to have had very little effect, save that the green of her eyes had dilated to black. Her skin was always that thick, dusty white. She leaned against the wall, and said with strange simplicity:

"Billy? But what wrong have *I* done to *you?*"

A tiny pulse in her throat beat madly—he could see it.

Trelawney was silent. Indeed, what wrong had she done to him, that he could have dared to make her love him, and love him to no purpose? *Could* this woman love?

"*All* our moments together, Gavin? Gavin, all the times when you made me so happy? Not *one* of them real?"

It might almost have been Renée speaking—in that dazed childish voice.

"You're waisting your time, Sara—and mine. I pretended to be in love with you just to prove to Billy that you didn't care a snap of the fingers for him. It was easy to guess that you'd go for bigger game directly it came your way."

"And are you so fond of—Billy?"

To Gavin's furious annoyance, he felt her questing eyes drawing a dull red flush to his face.

"You don't love me," said Sara at last. And to Gavin she seemed like a witch, who was dragging up secrets from the very heart of a magic crystal. "And you don't love Billy—much. You were thinking all the time of some girl. I don't know who she is, but you were thinking of her when you held me in your arms. . . ."

Very quietly, she went.

CHAPTER XIV

GAVIN thought no more about Sara Crespigny, except for a slight relief that she had brought less melodrama into the scene than he had expected. But he remained in a state of irritable anxiety over Billy. He was fond of the boy, and also he had set his heart on the somewhat painful pleasure of reconciling him with Renée.

Supposing Billy had meant more than a mere threat by his parting words? Supposing he had really killed himself? Supposing that even now, at this very minute. . . .

Gavin fought a losing fight with his obsession. Then he went round to Billy's rooms.

"Lord St. Erth hasn't been in since yesterday."

"He's at the theater," Gavin assured himself, doggedly; "of course he's at the theater." But he dared not call at the theater and inquire, in case he should meet with another sickening disappointment.

So the hours dragged on until the evening, when he was seated in his box watching the house gradually fill; hearing the orchestra tune up. The atmosphere was vibrant with that elusive excitement that always dominates a first night.

Presently, the drop curtain rose, revealing the heavy purple draperies, and the lights twinkled radiantly from ceiling and tier and box, and the orchestra crashed into a spirited overture.

And still there was no sign of the author of the piece.

Gavin reassured himself—uncomfortably. "Perfectly natural," he thought; "he's probably pacing about on the embankment—at least that's what I'm told the author of a play always does on the first night. I expect he'll phone after the first act, and if the show is going well, look in later."

And then, quite suddenly, the ice-cold conviction fell upon him that Billy had just quitted life—that very second. The agonizing doubt was over. It was as though a chill little message had just been whispered in his ear.

Was it merely his fancy, or was there more delay, more turmoil, whisperings, rushing to and fro behind the scenes, than even an opening night warranted? Had the news come through that the author of the piece had committed suicide? Dully he wondered how it would affect Sara, Sara's acting. . . .

Yes, something certainly had gone amiss behind those mute draperies of heavy purple. The director of the orchestra received a message—and struck up yet another waltz. The audience were stirred by the infection of uneasiness—the pit and gallery began to clap.

Suppose Valentine Scott were now to appear between the velvet folds and make an announcement: "We deeply regret, etc. . . . "

And still Gavin would not, could not go round to the back and make certain.

Then suddenly the music crashed to silence. The auditorium was plunged into darkness. Slowly the curtain rose. . . .

Half way through the act, the Monk appeared on the dim winding staircase. Sara was wholly unrecognizable in the drawn hood, her slender body muffled in the conventional sable garb of religious brotherhood . . . the head was bent, one arm outstretched in denunciation of the feasting crew in the hall below . . . a blue light flickered over the stage . . . the deep hollow tones were weirdly impressive . . . an awed shudder ran through the spectators. . . .

Blaze of golden light flooding from the wings, striking upon the slim Mephistopheles, swiftly and astoundingly revealed beneath the flung cowl and robes. Scarlet Mephistopheles, arms uptossed in a wild, abandoned gesture, mouth laughing—laughing scornfully. . . . The devil . . . the Prince of Darkness. . . .

But the face—was the face of Renée.

Gavin sat through the play in a state of whirling bewilderment. How came Renée, whom he had imagined at Mowbray House or at Penkevil, to be playing Sara's part in Billy's play? And playing it, too, with such fire and brilliance? Where was Sara? And, oh, God, where was Billy?

It was like one of those mad dreams in which the most absurd and fantastic things happen, incoherently, and without reason.

Renée was swiftly recognized by the audience, with whom she was a favorite, though she had only appeared once or twice before on the legitimate stage; but it was obviously mystified by the sudden sub-

stitution of a film idol for the famous actress whom they had come to see.

Renée, however, with the magic of her youth, piloted the play to a triumphant conclusion; and a clamorous shout went up for her after the final curtain.

She stood alone on the wide stage, a slim scarlet figure, not unlike the nymph who had stood poised for a dive on the rocks at Penkevil. . . .

Gavin heard the door of the box click behind him. He turned sharply and saw Billy standing there, his eyes fixed on Renée taking her call. As the curtains swept together again, he vanished as abruptly as he had entered.

Billy—he was alive, then. Gavin could have sobbed with the utter relief.

"Author!" came a voice from the upper part of the house. "Author!" was echoed in the stalls. Soon there was a universal chorus of "Author!" Instead of Billy, Valentine Scott stepped forward from the wings. He looked pale and serious.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I regret that the author, Lord St. Erth, is not in the house. The news of your very kind reception of this piece will, however, be appreciated by him. I cannot express how deeply we are indebted to Miss Renée O'Neill for having so courageously, at the eleventh hour tonight, saved the play from catastrophe. The sudden death of Miss Sara Crespigny. . . .

And Gavin realized that it was the woman, and not, as he had thought, the boy, whom he had driven to suicide. . . .

CHAPTER XV

"But how did you know the part, Renée?" Gavin had gone round to the theater the next morning, found a rehearsal going on and, as soon as he could, had taken her out to lunch.

"I read it through once, just as the curtain was going up!" Renée said dramatically, "and *voilà!* I knew it."

Gavin smiled and shook his head. "Try again."

"Unbeliever! Well, as a matter of fact, Val Scott is an old pal of mine; I was always running up against him in my pre-Penkevil days. I saw in the paper weeks ago that he was going to put on this new play of Billy's and, naturally somewhat curious, I wrote and asked him to send me down a copy."

"And how often did you read it before you were word-perfect?"

Renée flushed crimson. "Where *is* Billy?" she asked, with apparent inconsequence.

"He's not at his rooms. I called yesterday and this morning. Surely he went round to the back last night? He blew into my box like an apparition for a few seconds, just as you were taking your call at the end—stared at you, and then was swallowed into nothingness."

"But how tiresome of Billy to become a mystery, as though his play didn't start off with enough sensation as it is! Did you see the papers this morning, Gavin? They were simply rolling out the headlines. 'Was It Suicide?' 'How Sara Crespigny Died.' Etc."

"Oh, yes, I read it all, but I could have told them a truer tale. Renée, I was responsible for that tragedy." And he told her of the scene at his rooms the day before. Renée listened, wise-eyed.

"You did your best for me, Gavin; but 'it's a dangerous matter to play with souls'—though I never dreamed till now that Sara Crespigny had one. But she could act like hell—and that's a fine enough epitaph."

"You wouldn't have said that down at Mowbray House, Renée," Gavin teased her; "but I suppose you've shed county behavior for good, now you've come into your own again."

"Today week," she said firmly, "I return to Penkevil for good. I only came up

to see Billy's play. Because I happened to look up Val Scott last night, just after the Crespigny had taken an overdose of veronal, and her understudy was in hysterics, it doesn't follow that I'm going to accept the part till the end of the run. Monica Loring has been offered it, and she'll be ready to play it in a week—they're rehearsing her now. The play'll run, I think—even without Sara. Billy's a rotten film actor, so they tell me, but he can write; give him my—congratulations when you see him, will you?"

CHAPTER XVI

PADDINGTON STATION, a week later. The night express to Cornwall, due to start at the stroke of midnight. Porters climbing into carriages, with rugs and pillows; the restaurant-car man booking orders for breakfast the next morning; huge bags of mail being heaved into the vans, to be sorted while the great train was rushing through the night at sixty miles an hour.

Renée, in Harris tweed, with a suède tammy crushed jauntily over her curls, stepped into her sleeping compartment. Her porter handed in her suitcase, to be rewarded with a dazzling smile and a very lavish tip.

The first stroke of twelve boomed out—the guard blew his whistle, flashed the green light—the engine-driver pulled down the lever, and the train began to move. . . .

Flying feet along the platform—a dark figure sprang on the footboard—officials shouted a warning—in vain. The door of Renée's carriage was wrenched open, and banged to again. The express gathered speed, shot out of the station into the starlight. . . .

"I told the man to drive like blazes," gasped Billy. . . .

Renée managed to control her joyous amazement:

"A very dramatic entrance! Worthy of the author of the most discussed play of the year. Are you going away for a holiday?"

"No!" said Billy, with a sudden plunge. They were neither of them at ease, and their eyes had not yet met. "I'm going home."

Renée's heart wheeled like a tumbler pigeon; but she was not going to betray herself yet. "The true mountebank has no home."

"I'm not a mountebank; I'm a landed proprietor. Yesterday—I think it must have been yesterday, Renée—I went up to London to be married. Tonight I'm taking my wife down to Penkevil. . . . It's rather romantic, isn't it? Like a fairy-tale!"

They plunged into a tunnel with a roar—flashed out into wide darkness again. It was queer for the two of them to be imprisoned in this little lighted, swaying space, each intensely conscious of the other . . . now.

"You begin at the wrong end of the fairy-tale," Renée spoke with her eyes fixed on the dim blur of window. "Once upon a time, a prince asked a vagabond girl to marry him. He wanted to be a vagabond, too. And because she wanted to be a princess, she accepted. And then they found each other out."

"It was," said Billy gravely, "the queerest case of incompatibility I've ever heard of."

"And so they crossed over," Renée went on dreamily; "and she led his life, and he led hers."

"And they both made a howling mess of it—"

"I didn't!" Renée flashed out.

"Nor did I," Billy retorted; "look at my play!"

"To my great regret, I was unable to do so," very sweetly. "You see, I happened to have been playing in it."

"And, by Jove, you were splendid!"

"Did you see it?" Eagerly.

"You bet I did. Every night. Incognito. Buried in the wilds of the upper circle."

"And where were you buried every day? Gavin was quite anxious about you."

"I've just come from Gavin; he told me you were leaving by this train. I had to be alone for a bit, after what happened. Fighting my own private and particular devils. I've been a fool, Renée . . . you heard all about it, I suppose? No, don't answer . . . she's dead now, and I—I'm whole again."

"Are you sure?" Renée murmured audaciously. She leaned back in her corner of the carriage, arms clasped behind her head, lips promising, denying, tantalizing him, all at once—and laughing at him! He looked and looked and looked . . . and saw her. For the third time he saw her. Once she had stood on a rock splashed with the sunset gold; and once on the stage in rays of golden limelight; and now. . . .

"Whole—and broken to bits again! You heavenly, tormenting little ruffian—why haven't I been mad about you all along?"

"Oh . . . why indeed?" mocked Renée.

The rest of their journey was honeymoon.

"—Poor old Gavin is off exploring again in Central Somewhere-or-Other, as soon as he can get an expedition together. You know," added Billy, with the solemn wisdom of complete idiocy, "I don't believe he'll ever get over Sara. She was his One Woman."

And Renée, being above all things a clever ragamuffin, let him believe that Gavin Trelawney would never get over Sara, who was . . . *not* his One Woman!

The Marble Columbine

By Dorothy Dow

IT is a favorite indoor sport around Chicago, when Carol Greeves' name is mentioned, to say: "I knew her when . . ."

You see, she was the sort of girl that everyone knew. Even when she was only writing little poems for her own amusement she had as large a circle of adorers as many a more famous writer. The folks at the Arts Club knew her through her affair with Jim Rickby. (They say he never got over that.) At the Hamilton Club they will remember when a now famous United States Senator used to have her to dine every night. And at all the hotels, the cafés, her lovely glowing face was a familiar sight.

After she got to be famous, after that daring novel of hers came out, every night was a triumphal pageant for her. And through it all she remained just the same, laughing, artless, joyous . . . the eternal Columbine. Even the men she loved and cast aside for a newer adorer never seemed to hold any grudge against her.

It always seemed like a fancy, a pose, that she could create, anyway. In the first place, she was so ridiculously young, and so lovely; and in the second place, when did she get time, between love-affairs, to do any work at all? Even her closest friends wondered at that.

And yet she did write . . . little lyrics, first . . . wistful, charming things . . . and then the novel that all the critics acclaimed as the greatest addition of many years to American literature.

And, only a year after her second book came out, which was as eagerly acclaimed as the first, did she change.

The change in Carol Greeves is the thing that all who knew her still talk about. From a gay, laughing, mad, whimsical girl, whose lovely face mirrored her every mood, she seemed to change, overnight as it were, to a still lovely but aloof woman, whose face was as beautiful and as unchanging as a marble statue.

The remark was repeated once, of a man who met her in the second period: "I have known her twenty months . . . and have never yet seen an expression on her face."

Nobody knew why . . . everybody wondered . . . and that was all. But I, who had known and loved Carol all my life, can tell the story of what really occurred.

II

IF anyone in the world was ever too much blessed by the gods, Carol Greeves was that person. She had beauty, and genius, and an indefinable charm. Is it any wonder that, along with her loveliness, there was the blur of a flaw? And that flaw was . . . a besetting love of her own beauty.

It was ironic, in a way. If her face had been like a mud-pie, still she would have been great—been admired, been famous, for her creative gifts. But those . . . all her literary triumphs . . . she seemed to regard as only a delightful something that had happened to happen to her.

Her beauty, on the other hand, was her life. And the only persons she did not like were those who did not seem to admire it enough. She never had to complain of

that in Francis Terrill, though. He openly praised her hair, her eyes, her skin. And loved her, and wanted her, just as openly.

Carol's affairs with men always stopped short of marriage. She used to say, more or less seriously, that she was afraid that it would interfere with her writing. I, who knew the spirit of half ridicule with which she regarded that same writing, felt that what she really feared was any interference with her absolute freedom.

Until Francis came along, all had been well. She had loved and tired and forgotten, times without number. But he was the inevitable; and he insisted on marriage.

To her a lighter relation would have sufficed. She was a Pagan in every sense of the word. But he wanted her as his wife. And finally she promised to marry him . . . on her own terms: an engagement of two years' standing, and that he should not, within that time, try to persuade her to shorten it.

She was twenty-seven years old then—just at the anxious period for most women—the time when the gray hairs and little lines begin to appear; the autumn of youthful beauty, in fact.

I have said that her beauty was, to Carol, her life. She would sit long hours before her great mirror (mirrors were a hobby of hers) posing, admiring, loving. A sort of hyacinthine passion enveloped her whole personality.

Even when she adored Francis, he had one rival—herself. And it was a battle to the end between the two.

Francis, who knew her vanity, used to laugh at it.

"But it's my only power over you—" she would say, naïve as a child.

"Not at all. Carol, darling, don't you realize that mere prettiness is such a passing thing? It's your power, your sweetness, your aliveness, your spirit, that I love in you. And will love, when your beauty is all gone."

She shuddered as if she had been stabbed.

"Oh, Francis, Francis . . . don't say such unkind things. I can't bear to think of changing. I'd rather die . . . to get fat, and gray . . . and bags under my throat . . . and deep lines . . . I can't think of it! I can't!"

And then, one night, she looked in her mirror, and found the first wrinkle, and cried herself to sleep. She wrote a poem the next day—that lovely little lyric called "Love-mote," that began:

Love me, time goes. I go, too.
Here's this little heart of mine
Moulded in a rose, for you—
Rose of blood . . . and Columbine.

And which had one verse in it that has always seemed to me to picture Carol herself:

Hurry . . . in this mirror . . . see
Wrinkles on this cheek of mine!
There's a chilliness in me—
Fold me closer . . . Columbine.

III

All women hate to get old. All women make countless sacrifices at the altar of Vanishing Beauty. But Carol Greeves went farther than any woman I have ever known.

She put herself in the hands of the most famous beauty doctor of the day. He prescribed and advised. And then she proceeded to change her whole life to save her loveliness.

"You show too much emotion," the great man told her. "You are too animated—that goes to make the lines."

After that she hesitated either to laugh or cry, for fear of a wrinkle.

He put her on a diet, on long hours of rest.

The first spoiled all her dinners with Francis. What man enjoys eating with a girl who insists on broth, milk and lettuce?

Oil rubs kept her from their usual morning rides. Massage interfered with afternoon teas.

At first Francis tried to laugh it off good-naturedly; then he scolded. But when the régime of living to be lovely went on for nearly a year, he became sullen, cross, grouchy. I didn't blame him myself.

The old Carol Greeves had gone—in her place was a still woman who could not do this, and never ate that.

IV

Of course, she lost Francis. By the very means with which she was trying to hold him. That is a little way Fate has of managing things.

There was a scene—or, rather, he raged, while she listened. He talked of her damned vanity; her idiotic concern.

He ended by saying he had sought to marry "a real woman, not a confounded marble statue!" and rushed out of her life forever.

And she—she wept in my arms, utterly heartbroken. She was not so clever, after all, in spite of her books.

"I wanted to stay lovely for him," she moaned over and over.

Well—she has. I believe she still thinks he may come back some day. And, in the meantime, she writes a novel a year, and the critics cry her praises, and her friends wonder if it was her fame that made her so cold . . . and different.

At any rate, she is still beautiful—a marble Columbine!

If Life Were All Behind Me

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

IF Life were all behind me,
Forgotten, good and bad,
With nothing to remind me
Of what I never had;

If all my dreams were over,
The rebel heart no more
A pirate and a rover,
And home the nearest shore—

Ah, then I might be filling
My days, as many must,
With easy conquest, willing
To take the world on trust!

With only love to bind me,
I'd kiss and be content;
If Life were all behind me—
If *you* were all it meant!

The Poppa-Guy and the Flapper

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

MR. POTTER was a gay dog. Though his hair had vanished, and his abdomen was unusually protuberant, he was a squire of dames. Though he was no longer young in years, though he possessed a gray-haired wife and a daughter who was old enough to vote, Mr. Potter thought himself a devil. In fact, he thought he was "getting away with it."

In a restaurant noted for its cabaret, dance-floor, and prices, Mr. Potter sat at a "table-for-two." He wore a sporty gray business suit, his fingernails were freshly manicured, and his face was smooth from the soothing touch of a barber's razor.

You have seen Mr. Potter, or a gentleman who fits his description. He is technically and colloquially known as a "poppa-guy." He inhabits restaurants from nine o'clock until closing time.

The "poppa-guy" orders lavishly, and waiters buy automobiles with his tips. For him the hat-check girl always has a smile, and the orchestra is jubilant when he appears.

Almost always, the "poppa-guy" is accompanied by a "flapper." Mr. Potter's flapper is called Felice, and she can listen by the hour without having a single expression on her face.

"Flappers" usually look about seventeen; height five-seven. They wear ornate dinner-rings, perfume, permanently-waved bobbed hair, lip-rouge, powder, chiffon stockings, and the minimum amount of clothes permitted by the police. They eat with "poppa-guys."

"You're a nice poppa," said Felice admiringly across the table to Mr. Potter. "I like you," she declared.

Mr. Potter beamed. He liked to be told that he was nice; it made him feel noble and popular.

"Is there anything else you want, my dear?" he asked. "It it's on the menu, I'll order it for you. If it's not on the menu, we'll go to another restaurant."

"You're a nice, generous poppa," announced Felice.

Mr. Potter winced slightly. The word "generous" was familiar—Felice had used it exactly one week ago. Mr. Potter remembered the conversation that followed. He wondered whether the same things would be repeated tonight. He listened.

"I need some new clothes," said Felice, woefully. "This dress is a fright! And I haven't anything at all to wear tomorrow night, and—"

Mr. Potter coughed behind his hand. "The financial situation of the country is, at present, in such a state that—" He talked upon the subject for several moments.

Innocent-eyed and wondering, Felice waited until he had finished. "I can't understand," she said sadly. "What does 'the financial situation' mean?"

"Er—ah—it means, my dear, that everyone must do with as little as possible. You should not spend—"

"Oh, but I don't!" interrupted Felice. "Men are awfully nice; they take me to lunch, and to dinner, and I never eat any breakfast. But I must have clothes. I

can't go around in any old thing! You know that—"

"You are looking very charming tonight," said Mr. Potter gallantly. "I fail to see a single flaw in your appearance!"

Felice consumed the last crumb on her plate; nothing now remained from an enormous French pastry. She was slender, almost thin, and the vast quantities of food she devoured failed to increase her weight one pound.

"You said that you loved me," she said. "You wrote that you loved me, and would love me for a thousand years—"

A frown drew Mr. Potter's face into a knot. A short time before, when he had first met this guileless lassie, he had written to her—merely friendly notes that might be considered both affectionate and sentimental. Reading them, anyone would think Mr. Potter an ass, an imbecile, and a fool. The letters were signed "Your own Poppa-guy." At the recollection, Mr. Potter frowned at Felice.

"Last week," he said grimly to the unsmiling flapper, "I told you that I would never give you another—"

"But if you love me, you want me to look nice, don't you?"

With artless, feminine logic, Felice continued: "If you told the truth, you are in love with me now, because a thousand years haven't gone by; and if you're in love with me now, you want me to look pretty, and I want to get new clothes in order to keep up-to-date, and—"

"I will never give you another—" Mr. Potter valiantly began.

"Are you as stingy with your wife as you are with me?" Felice asked.

The gentleman's face turned a delicate light purple, and he seemed to swell up to the size of a dirigible. Before he could speak, another emotion rushed into his mind, and his eyes raced swiftly from side to side.

"Do you know my wife?" he asked, frightened. For the moment, he was not a gay dog. He was not even a squire of dames. He was a married man.

"No! Of course not!" Felice was bland and airy. "I don't know her, and I don't want to meet her, but—" she shrugged her shoulders, and took out her lip-stick. With careful precision, she outlined a perfect cupid's-bow mouth, and smoother her lips with one little finger. "I might go and see her sometime, though."

Mr. Potter leaned across the table toward this slender, dainty, perfumed damsel. "Tell me what you want," he said, breathing deeply, while a single drop of perspiration trickled from his bald head. "Tell me—and I'll do what I can."

"Let's take a ride in a taxi," Felice spoke swiftly; "and—don't be angry."

As he followed his flapper from the restaurant, Mr. Potter was aware that many of the gentlemen present allowed their eyes to follow her svelte figure. This knowledge was pleasing to Mr. Potter. He was, he thought, a gay dog. Most assuredly, he was a squire of dames. And he was "getting away with it."

They entered a taxi, and Felice mentioned the amount she needed. When he had given her the sum, she ordered that the machine be stopped.

"I'll get out here," she said briefly. "I've got a date. Good-by, you nice old poppa."

Mr. Potter tried to smile, and the result was passable. When Felice kissed her hand to him, he waved back. The taxi careened onward, leaving the slender figure standing on the sidewalk.

When the machine snorted to a stop in front of his house, Mr. Potter wore an air of gloom. He entered, and stepped into the living-room of his home. His wife and daughter were there, immersed in magazines.

"Margaret," said Mr. Potter, addressing his wife, "I find that the financial situation is acute." He paused, and his wife gave

him her attention. "In fact, we are facing a crisis in the country today. Business is dull, and there is reason to believe that this condition will continue—"

He went on for several moments, while his wife, a plump, gray-haired lady, with bright eyes and perfect skin, exchanged understanding glances with her daughter.

"Consequently," finished Mr. Potter, "we must cut down on expenses."

His wife remained silent. Evelyn, their daughter, made one comment.

"You mean," she corrected his last statement, "*we* must cut down on expenses, while yours continue just as usual."

Mr. Potter snorted. "I mean just exactly what I say. Every possible economy should be—"

Again Evelyn spoke:

"We both need new clothes," she announced.

A shudder shook Mr. Potter's bulky figure. He had heard this remark earlier in the evening.

"You will have to do with what you have!" he said firmly. We must economize!"

II

It should be mentioned that "poppa-guys" are observing when noticing the charms of youthful and encardined ladies, if said ladies are not members of their own families. But, not until a week after he had tightened his purse-strings, did Potter notice that his wife and daughter were newly and gorgeously arrayed.

Mrs. Potter appeared in a tailored suit trimmed with astrakhan, and a hat of breath-taking attractiveness. Evelyn entered one evening wearing a filmy scarlet evening gown, with panels of red feathers, a bodice of gold under chiffon, gold shoes, and stockings to match.

Silently Mr. Potter pondered upon these new and expensive habiliments, and grimly he awaited the first of the month. It came, and so did a few bills. To his surprise, none of the new clothes he had noticed was charged to any of his accounts.

With lifted eyebrows, Mr. Potter contemplated this fact. From his own experience, he knew that articles of feminine adornment were expensive. He was aware that those who sell attire for ladies are swift and insist in their demands for payment.

Whence had come these new costumes? Perhaps . . . perhaps his lecture on economy had resulted in these fruits. By dint of supervision, perhaps his wife had managed to save enough, from her household allowance, to buy such raiment for her daughter and herself. Perhaps—

A week later, Felice again allowed Mr. Potter the privilege of escorting her to an expensive café. Naturally, he was overjoyed. Poppa-guys gain happiness and delight by being seen with young and daringly dressed sub-ladies, provided said sub-ladies are strange and unknown to all other gentlemen.

Felice wore a hat that covered one eyebrow, and a skirt that barely covered her knees. She displayed much pink skin, and a purely verbal fondness for Mr. Potter.

"I don't like boys," she announced. "Children are awfully tiresome; don't you think?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Potter. "I think young men of the present day are deficient in many admirable qualities. Now, this afternoon—" he proceeded to relate an anecdote which displayed a youth of unpleasant characteristics to whom he, Mr. Potter, had been both polite and forgiving.

"But he couldn't understand," said Mr. Potter, speaking of the youth; "he was too young to understand."

"*You* understand *me*." Felice whitened her nose with powder. "You want to do things for me; don't you, poppa?"

"My interest in you is friendly," Mr.

Potter declared, thinking of the notes he had written. (The trouble with his letters was that they were far too friendly.) "Ours is a pleasant companionship that—" he intercepted an admiring glance from a young man to Felice and glared at the offender "—that makes me very happy."

"I would be happy if I could go down to Atlantic City for a couple of weeks," said Felice demurely, devouring her chicken *à la King*.

Mr. Potter opposed this idea. While the orchestra rambled through a fox-trot, and Felice ate her way through the menu, he spoke of the "outlook in the industrial world" and the "labor situation," and the "economic condition" and other allied matters. At the end of a five-minute oration, he considered the matter settled.

"I want to stop at the Traymore," Felice said, nodding to the young man at the next table. "Won't you help me to go there, poppa?"

"No!" Mr. Potter almost bellowed the word. "If you think you can—"

Felice rose, and her "poppa-guy" came to an abrupt stop. "I'm going to dance this with Bobby Lawrence," said Felice. "If you don't change your mind, I'm going to a telephone-booth, and—"

During the rest of the dance, Mr. Potter betrayed keen interest in the revolving, sliding, tightly-gripped couples on the floor. Each time he caught Felice's eye, Mr. Potter nodded violently. He had many moments of dread before she returned and he could put his capitulation into words.

III

During the week following, Mr. Potter's wife and daughter announced their intention to spend a month at Narragansett Pier. Mr. Potter imitated a volcano.

Slamming his newspaper upon the table, he stamped about the floor of the living-room. Words, portions of phrases, fragments of imprecations, rolled and reverberated from his lips. He declared he was on the verge of bankruptcy; that the world was on the edge of an international revolution; that chaos and the end of things was imminent.

"Don't you believe there is a Santa Claus?" asked Evelyn, his daughter.

"Don't I believe—" Mr. Potter tore with trembling fingers at his collar; his breath failed him. "No!" I won't countenance this extravagance! It has gone far enough! It has gone too far, and—"

He sought the quiet of his own room. For an hour afterward he grunted and groaned and growled.

When his wife and daughter had gone to Narragansett Pier, Mr. Potter had many lonely moments. Felice was at Atlantic City; she decided she would stay a month longer.

Mr. Potter wrote dutifully to his family, but he did not write to Felice. He had learned—a little.

When, at last, Felice again adorned the city with her presence, Mr. Potter spent the day in a dreamy glow. Soon he would be the cynosure of all eyes; soon he would follow Felice into a crowded restaurant, while the unlucky men in the room would look enviously upon him.

There was no joy so great, so thrilling, so truly satisfying to him as the knowledge that he was the escort of a girl who was attractively gowned, startlingly calcimined, and obviously young. Though his own youth was far distant, he was a gay dog! Besides, he was "getting away with it." No one knew, particularly his own family. So Mr. Potter thought.

He was in his most gay-doggish mood when he met Felice that evening. Henri, the head-waiter, led the little procession to a "table-for-two." A snap of the fingers, and an obsequious waiter hastened to Mr. Potter's side. Envious glances were directed from all sides; many youths, and

unaccompanied "poppa-guys" sought to attract Felice's attention.

"I had a lovely trip!" said Felice. "I met the nicest man!"

"You didn't meet anyone you like better than your poppa, did you?" asked Mr. Potter, sure of the reply.

Felice was doubtful. She did not instantly reply. Instead, she looked over the menu and ordered the things with the largest numerals beside them. They ought to be the best things to eat, she thought; they cost the most.

"Harry looked grand in a bathing-suit," Felice began. "He is a nice fellow."

Mr. Potter was a trifle nettled. Before he had left the house that evening, he had had an unpleasant scene with his wife and daughter. They were utterly unfeeling; they had declared that they were going to take a trip to Europe.

In vain he had pointed out that they had just returned from Narragansett Pier; in vain he had mentioned economic laws, and the fact that foreign exchange was wavering; in vain he had announced that there was famine in India and China, and that—

He snorted when he remembered the conversation. Then he looked across the table to Felice.

"I hope," said Mr. Potter, "I hope you are not thinking of getting married, or anything—"

"Oh, but we are!" She seemed to think he would be delighted. "You and I will still be friends. I'll have you up to the house," she said, with the air of one offering a bribe. "I'll have you up to dinner, some night."

Mr. Potter mumbled his delight. As a matter of fact, he felt the opposite. How can one be gay-doggish when one's flapper plans to wed? How can one contemplate the loveliness sitting across the table when one knows that said loveliness plans to bury herself in a Harlem flat?

And his wife and daughter would be in Europe—Mr. Potter knew that they would go, though he didn't know where the money was coming from, nor where it had come from for the Narragansett trip—and he would be alone! Absolutely alone!

"Er—this young man—you say he is wealthy?" Mr. Potter knew she had not made this remark. But, he was hopeful—

"No-o," she shook her bobbed head slowly. "He's very poor."

Then, while the orchestra crashed through a dance, and a waiter piled numerous dishes before them, she told the simple story of their wooing:

"I saw him on the Boardwalk, and he followed me, and bought me a chocolate malted milk. And then we danced together every night, and went in bathing every day—oh, it was swell!"

For the nonce, Mr. Potter took the rôle of listener. He waited for more. But, there wasn't any more!

"When are you going to get married?" he asked. After all, her wedding would simplify things in one way. Those damnable, too-friendly letters would lose part of their power! This young "Harry" could support her.

"We're going to get married," she said, watching him closely, "just as soon as you help us to."

Mr. Potter opened his mouth, and it remained open. His eyes bulged, and his chubby hands relaxed their hold upon his eating utensils. Fortunately, his knife and fork fell on the table.

"You'll help us fix up the apartment," continued Felice; "and we've got to have nice furniture, because we want it to last for a long time; and then there's linen, and silverware—"

"But—"

"And I really think I should have a regular trousseau, because I don't believe a girl should get married unless she has *some* nice things, and—"

"Don't you know that—"

"And you said you would love me for a thousand years, and—"

Mr. Potter rose from the table; his napkin slid to the floor. Blindly, he drew a roll of bills from his pocket, and put three or four on the table to pay the check. He managed to find his way to the hat-checking stand, and then he passed into the night.

A soft feminine voice spoke to him. "Do you want to come in my taxi, poppa?"

Felice was speaking from the depths of a machine. "I'm going your way," she said; "I'm going to your house."

Mr. Potter staggered and stumbled. His knees were weak, and he made futile movements with his hands. The freshly powdered face of Felice wavered in the air.

"No—I don't want—" Mr. Potter managed to find the step of the taxi. "Felice I can't let you—"

"I want to get married," her clear, merciless voice chilled his ear-drums; "and I must have nice things; and you said you would love me for a thousand years; and—"

"All right, all right!" Mr. Potter stemmed the flow of words. "Anything you say—how—how *much?*"

When Felice had mentioned the sum, Mr. Potter gasped, choked, and sputtered. He thrust his head out into the cool night for fear he would suffocate. For one mad second he thought of throwing himself through the window of the taxi and spattering upon the street. Unfortunately, or fortunately, he was too wide and thick to get through the window.

"I was reading your letters today—" she began.

Mr. Potter surrendered. Capitulation left his pocketbook flat and empty, and he did not smile when Felice stepped from the machine.

After all, Mr. Potter ruminated as the taxi loped gaily toward his home, after all, he was a gay dog. Being a gay dog was expensive, but—he was "getting away with it." Only wild and wicked youngsters were blackmailed by lovely damsels.

Even though Felice had been uniformly distant, and the nearest approach to affection she had displayed was a kiss thrown from her fingertips, Mr. Potter undoubtedly had, at one time, occupied a large part of her heart. Otherwise, why had she kept his letters?

IV

When, on the following afternoon, he came home early from the office, Mr. Potter was determined upon one thing. The trip to Europe proposed by his wife and daughter must be definitely abandoned. He couldn't afford it! His gay-doggish adventures were costly! The outgo was appalling! Therefore, any trips to Europe were utterly impossible. He would put his foot down; declare that the project was unthinkable!

He let himself into the house with a latchkey, and picked up the mail the postman had thrust under the door. There were several letters, and a circular from a steamship company. Mr. Potter stared at the circular.

"Special Rates to Europe! The Battlefields of the Great War! Switzerland! Monte Carlo!" he read, and he crushed the circular in his hand.

Still wearing his hat, and puffing upon a huge cigar, he strode toward the living-room. He would permanently crush this proposed trip to Europe!

Flinging open the door, with the crumpled circular in his hand, he declared, "I want to say, once and for all, that—!" A chill smote him in the middle, and permeated his entire figure. His heart, lungs, and vocal cords ceased functioning.

The steamship circular fluttered to the floor.

Mrs. Potter, his wife, was seated, her hands placidly folded in her lap. Evelyn, his daughter, had her hand resting confidently upon Felice's shoulder. Felice, the flapper, in all the glory of her scarlet lip-rouge and dead-white nose, in all the exquisiteness of her youth and beauty and knee-length skirt, fragrant with perfume, with her bobbed, waved hair fluffed and fancy—Felice was here in Mr. Potter's home!

"Hello, my poppa-guy!" said Felice brightly.

Mr. Potter choked, paled, and fought for breath. He looked at his wife, and saw a strange gleam in her eyes. He looked at his daughter, and shriveled. Here was the time for a quick and snappy lie. If he was to "get away with it," he must talk fast. A quick, snappy lie, instantly!

"Henry!" This was his wife's voice. Mr. Potter had never heard this tone before. It was hard, and cutting, and red-hot.

The world whirled in dizzying, weird circles. He sagged at every limb, like a man who has been drinking raw grain alcohol.

"Henry!" said Mrs. Potter again.

Her husband took off his hat, so that his head could cool. Jagged lightning, thunder, and strange and mystifying colors dashed through his brain. His scalp was composed of tissue-paper; his feet were frozen.

"It appears," began Mrs. Potter, in that odd, unusual voice, "it appears that you have written to this innocent young girl." She indicated Felice.

"Nice poppa," said the flapper, smiling with her scarlet mouth. "You like me?"

Mr. Potter tried to warn Felice to be silent. He distorted his features in a silent signal. Felice kept on smiling.

"It appears," continued Mrs. Potter, her voice trembling with emotion, "that you have trifled with this child's delicate young dreams; that you have escorted her to public places—"

Mr. Potter interrupted. He must say something. "She was perfectly willing to go—"

"You are a husband," broke in Mrs. Potter. "You have a daughter who is older than this child. Yet, you have been so foolish, so idiotic as to take her to restaurants. You have written to her, and—"

"'With all my love'," Evelyn quoted from one of Mr. Potter's letters; "'a love that will last a thousand years. Your own poppa-guy'."

Mr. Potter crumpled, and leaned against the wall for support.

"Furthermore," continued Mrs. Potter, still in that terrifying voice, "you have made gifts to Felice! You have given her presents! You — old — fat—bald—married—!" Mrs. Potter could not continue. Her voice quavered.

"Don Juan?" suggested Evelyn. "Lothario? Apollo?"

Mrs. Potter ignored these suggestions. She found her appalling voice again:

"This is outrageous! Scandalous! And I demand and shall insist that Felice be treated with every consideration! *Don't* treat her like one of the family. You have tarnished her beautiful ideals, and you must be made to *pay!*"

"But—but—but—" said Mr. Potter, "I haven't harmed her. There has been nothing—nothing wrong in—our—"

"Henry Potter!"

Mr. Potter had an overpowering desire for cool, fresh air and far-distant places. He didn't like his present environment. He wanted peace and quietness. His collar stifled him. He strode blindly from the room.

V

In the hall, Mr. Potter paused, undecided. Then, through the half open door, he saw Felice. She was taking a roll of bills from her vanity-case! As he stared, remembering and recognizing this roll of bills, he saw his wife accept them, remove several, and hand them back to Felice!

Mr. Potter moaned. From the living-room came his wife's voice.

"And when we return from Europe," said Mrs. Potter, "perhaps Felice will want a divorce. Marriages are not always successful."

Mr. Potter crawled away, crushed and beaten. He was no longer a gay dog, he was a bruised and palpitating worm. Instead of being a squire of dames, he was a boob. Instead of being a fascinating devil, he was being scientifically exploited. Instead of "getting away with it," he was being tricked by three ladies for their own purposes.

He saw the simple scheme, and recognized its effectiveness. Felice would continue to demand; his wife would insist upon the demand being granted, and even his daughter profited by the strategy.

Now, he would be compelled to pay and pay and pay, forever and forever. If he rebelled, Felice would probably have her husband hound him; Mrs. Potter could sue for a divorce and alimony, and very likely get them; Evelyn—Evelyn would live with her father and make his life a hell!

Mr. Potter groaned, and started back to the office. Production must be speeded up; profits must increase; his income must grow. When his family returned from Europe, huge sums must be forthcoming.

Mr. Potter groaned again.

Mr. Aroun's Jewel

By William Caine

MR. AROUN was a horrible little old gentleman with large and lustrous eyes, a parrot nose, several chins and a complexion like that of a lemon. He had several eyebrows and one or two lashes, but was otherwise apparently hairless. For an Armenian or a Kurd or a Levantine Jew or a Czecho-Polak or whatever he was, he spoke English quite creditably.

Nobody knew whence he came or what he did, but he lived in Grosvenor Square and had pots of money and spent it like a Government Department and so nobody cared.

His house was full of wonderful Oriental things—rugs and silk pictures and curtains and porcelain and jades and crystals and ivories and ambers and sanjaks and penangs and jehads.

He had innumerable dark servants who, rumor reported, were slaves. When he wanted one of them, Mr. Aroun clapped his hands together. It was like the Arabian Nights or the Turkish Baths.

He was said to own the finest collection of precious stones in the world. Certainly Mrs. Aroun was always marvelously be-baubled. Except for one gem, she never seemed to wear the same jewelry twice. To this gem I shall come in a moment; but first I must tell you about Mrs. Aroun.

She was a young Frenchwoman (originally from Tonkin or New Caledonia, I forget which), say about twenty-four, plain enough, not in the least clever, not in the slightest degree well-bred and not to the remotest extent charming. She possessed, however, vitality—a very uncommon amount of it.

She was very well made and could ride, skate or dance with anybody and for as long as was required. She had a loud, harsh voice, and the things she said in it could be repeated only in whispers. She always laughed at these things to point their frightfulness and her laugh was like a clap of thunder.

She was obviously impossible for any society save that of London or Port Said. In London, however, she went down quite comfortably, even as did the dinners she gave.

And now about the jewel.

It was a prodigy. Two-and-a-half inches square and set all alone as a pendant in four silver claws, it flashed and burned and glowed with every splendid color that you can imagine: The purple of old Bristol glass, the red of wine, the blue of the summer midday sky, the gold of flame, the green of the wave breaking under the prow of a boat, all shifted and mingled and contrasted and glanced in and out of one another as the thing rose and fell upon the bosom of its wearer. It was more like a West Highland sunset than a stone.

Old Aroun called it a black opal and perhaps it was one; but to the ordinary black opal this was as an arc lamp to a tallow candle.

Mrs. Aroun wore it always. She made no secret of the fact that she slept with it. It was her god. Half the time she was talking to you she had her eyes lowered to watch the colors come and go. At times she would forget to make any answer, so wholly engrossed had she become in the business of breathing and thus producing novel combinations.

I have said that she was a robust and athletic young person, but this is true only of her first year in Grosvenor Square. In her second year a change began.

First, she gave up riding before breakfast, which had been her laudable custom. She was too tired now of a morning, she said, for that. Then she gave up riding altogether. It fatigued her. She began to go home from her dances earlier and earlier, and at last she went to dances no more.

It was the same with skating. She was seen no longer at Prince's. Her high natural color fell off; her cheeks fell in. She took to painting her face, but that helped her not at all. Steadily she grew haggard.

Now, when she came out of doors, it was but to drive in her vast car two or three times round the park. Then home, weeping with weariness. Now, when she welcomed her guests at the head of her stairs, she crouched (always with the great blazing jewel on her hollow bosom) in a high-backed chair, propped with many cushions.

Soon it was impossible for her so much as to sit through a dinner-party. Her voice became thin and low; her noisy laugh was a cackle. Before the eyes of her world she aged thirty years in as many weeks.

Old Aroun had every specialist in London to her. He had a man up from Birmingham, and another from Edinburgh. They all diagnosed her case differently and all prescribed different remedies. You would have thought that one or other of them might have done something for the poor soul, if only by accident. The more of them she saw, the worse she got.

Old Aroun, shaking his ugly head in reply to kind inquiries, spoke of anæmia, of neurasthenia, hinted at consumption, mentioned chronic dyspepsia, spinal trouble, heart trouble, trouble with the lymphatic glands, trouble with the piriform ducts, trouble with the rotarian follicles. It all depended on who had last examined poor Mrs. Aroun.

At length she took definitely to her bed and was no more seen,—for she had no friends at all—and was presently forgotten.

II

Toward the end of his second year in Grosvenor Square Mr. Aroun went to dine with the Earl of Parracombe. He took down Lady Lilith Woody, the only unmarried daughter of the house. Her mother being dead, this maiden was Mr. Aroun's hostess. The circumstance shows how much the Earl thought of Mr. Aroun or—but perhaps it is the same thing—how useful he found him.

Halfway through dinner Mr. Aroun said to Lady Lilith: "My ouaife will be dade in a oveek. I sal want a new one. Ouill you be her? Yace?"

Lady Lilith didn't pretend to think that he was joking; nor did she slosh him a back-hander across the mouth. She said:

"You waste no time, do you?"

Mr. Aroun explained that he had no time to waste because he was not so young as he had been. He asked Lady Lilith what good she supposed his money was to him unless he had a wife on whom to spend it, a wife who should entertain for him, do him credit with her gowns and show off his jewelry.

"My great, beeg, black opal. You would lak to ovayre him on your beeoudyval nake, Lady Lilith?" he asked her. "Yace?"

That was a thing which, for nearly twenty-four months, Lady Lilith (like every woman who had ever set eyes on that famous gem) had lusted to do. Her eyes gleamed and she held out one finger to Mr. Aroun.

"Put it there," she said.

And she thought: "How pleased the dear old governor will be, bless him!"

She was a good daughter.

This seems to be the place to tell you that she was also a young woman of remarkable vitality. She was only just good-looking enough for a peer's daughter but her figure was divine, though its contours were rather those of Artemis than Aphrodite. (If you are a classical scholar, like me, you will gather that her lines were less voluptuous than athletic. If you are not, please understand that that is what I mean.)

She was indeed easily the most active young person in society. She fenced, boxed, wrestled, rowed, rode, played lawn-tennis, golf and polo, skated, skied, shot, fished, climbed, danced and turned somersaults better than any other girl in Burke.

Poor Mrs. Aroun, at her best, had never been a quarter so vital as was Lady Lilith.

Which reminds me that Mrs. Aroun passed away within the week, just as her husband had predicted.

Three Knighted specialists—I believe one of them was even a baronet—were with her at the end: A Heart Man, a Lung Man, and a Blood Man.

Not one of them knew what was the matter with her, but as they signed a joint certificate to the effect that the cause of her death had been heart failure brought about by pernicious anæmia of the lungs, it was not considered necessary to hold an inquest.

She died with the great black opal between her fingers, and the last thing she saw was a little spear of green fire.

Mr. Aroun unclasped the jewel from her neck and put it away in his strong-room while the three doctors went into the library to quarrel about the cause of death, and finally, like good Englishmen, achieve a compromise satisfactory to no one.

III

Mr. Aroun wanted to be married next day but Lady Lilith said no. She was not one, she told him, to be swayed by any considerations of false sentiment; but she was an Earl's daughter, damn it all! and a decent interval must be allowed to elapse. Besides she had her trousseau to prepare. What about this day three months?

Mr. Aroun couldn't get her to make it a day less. She was a girl who could be very firm where principle was involved.

They were married in St. Judas's, Berkeley Square, by the bride's uncle, the Bishop of Bognor.

As they drove away from the church Lady Lilith (*maintenant* Aroun) said:

"How about that opal, Gaga?" This was her pet name for her husband.

Mr. Aroun took it from inside his waistcoat and laid it her ready palm. She gave a scream.

"Hell!" she said, "It's dead."

The stone that had been so gorgeous was one uniform tint of smoky white. It was about as interesting as a tablet of Cascara Sagrada.

"This won't do," she said. "You must arrange for a divorce, naturally. Please tell the chauffeur to stop and then you must get out and I'll drive on to the house alone. I shall not see you again. So good-by to you and here's your blooming opal."

Mr. Aroun laughed like a corncrake. "Oh, no," he said; "it is all raight, my dear shile. He is not dade. Look again more closer. Don' you see, there in his middle, lak a somethings rade lak a 'ot coal in among w'ite ashes. Yace?"

Lady Lilith examined the jewel. "Yes," she said, "there's still a bit of red there. But what of it? This thing's no manner of use to me, so if *you* don't mean to get

out, *I* shall." She took up the speaking-tube.

"No, no," said Mr. Aroun. "I tell you the jewel is all raight. He is only a little seek. He must be wore, you see, if he is to sparkle. He 'ave live three month in my strong room and he is seek. But when you have wore him one day, two days, he sal come all 'andsome again and better as ever, yace. I swear it. See, he is more lively already, just because you 'ave 'ole him in your pretty liddle 'and."

Lady Lilith bent over the jewel and turned it between her fingers as she had so often seen her poor friend, the late Mrs. Aroun do.

"Why," she said, "dash my skin if you're not right, Gaga! There's a bit of orange that wasn't there just now. And I'll be blowed if I don't see a purple patch next to it. And here's a glint of green. I say, this is rather exciting. Well, perhaps we'd better drive on to the house; but there'll be no going down into Devonshire together, old dear, unless the improvement is much more marked before train-time."

When train-time came they went down into Devonshire together. Their destination was one of the Earl's many houses, lent by him for the honeymoon and re-roofed and redecorated throughout at the bridegroom's expense. And ideal nook it was—but this is not a sentimental story.

IV

ALL that winter and the next spring and summer Lady Lilith Aroun wore her famous black opal triumphantly. Everybody agreed that it was more marvelous than ever.

She was painted in it, just as the late Mrs. Aroun had been painted in it, and by the same man, because he still cost the most. He certainly made a much finer job of the opal this time. Practise, I suppose, or perhaps the thing had actually gained in splendor.

At any rate, it was quite splendid enough to satisfy Lady Lilith, and I can't say any more for it than that. It was written about in every number of all the magazines and Lady Lilith's publicity-agent would have been a happy man if he hadn't been Lady Lilith's publicity-agent.

Wearing it, Lady Lilith fenced, boxed, wrestled, rowed, rode, played lawn-tennis, golf and polo, skated, skied, shot, fished, climbed, danced and turned somersaults as usual. She also gave dinners, balls, at homes and bridge-parties, went to them, acted in all the Charity Theatricals, saw all the plays and heard all the concerts, visited all the picture-shows, ate and drank too much, smoked more than was good for her, gambled whenever she had the chance, talked on end, and otherwise justified her position as a leader of society.

She and her opal became household words in the remotest corners of Caithness, Galway and Cornwall. In the Scilly Islands they talked of hardly anything else.

But with autumn it was noticed that she was not being quite so brisk or looking so bonny as usual. She was heard to complain of lassitude.

One day she went home from shooting before the final beat. On another she quitted the river with only seven salmon in her creel. On a third she sat out quite two fox-trots after dinner.

A Lieutenant in the Guards beat her with the foils. A Captain in the Horse Gunners threw her at wrestling. A Commander in the Navy made her nose bleed.

Her color was less vivid, though she applied it thicker and thicker; her eyes less sparkling; her lines less Artemisque; her tread less elastic; her stockings less amply filled.

By the time she returned to London

everybody was talking about it. Caithness was in a pucker. The Scilly Islands streamed with tears. It was so sad. Such a splendid young lady! Think of *her* beginning to fail! And at *her* age! Terrible! Dear, dear! Alack!

With the first of the winter she developed a hacking cough. Six specialists were instantly called in. She was inoculated, x-rayed, hypnotized, psycho-analyzed, osteopathed, heliotheraped.

Nothing did her any good. The cough continued; got worse. She became thin, emaciated, a living skeleton. Her blood grew sluggish, low in temperature, watery. She could hardly crawl out of one gown and into another.

Her appetite fell off. Her hair fell out. She couldn't sleep. It was all she could do to receive her guests three nights a week as usual and go out to their houses the other four.

Always she wore the black opal. From it she was by no means to be parted. The only real pleasure she had now in life was making its colors dance and blaze. It, at any rate, showed no signs of failing.

She lingered nearly eighteen months and died, in the twenty-fifth year of her life, on Monday, the seventh of April.

V

Mr. Aroun removed the black opal from Lady Lilith's neck and put it away in his strong room, while the five doctors who had attended her at the end went into the library to make up some sort of a story for the Authorities.

Not one of them had the vaguest idea of what had killed Lady Lilith. Most of them suspected that heart-failure was the ultimate cause of her death, but beyond that they were wholly in the dark. However, they had to do rather better than that and so they settled on Cope's disease, a malady which they invented *ad hoc*.

Meanwhile, Mr. Aroun had got through to Miss Vesta Burns (whose *soubriquet* was "The Living Spark") in her dressing-room at the Brontosaurian Music Hall.

"Is that you, my dear shile?" he inquired paternally. "Yace? Well, this is just to tell you that Lady Lilith is dade and to aska you to nayum the appiday. The sooner what you give me the right to hang that opal all round your luvully nake, the bedder I shall be satisfieded. Wednesday? Raight! I shall arrange everythinks. Goodnaight, my love."

He rang off and went to speed up the doctors.

Prologue

By W. E. Sagmaster

ONCE upon a time there was no trouble in the world.

All day long the birds sang, proclaiming their joyous carol to a world serene. There was no war, no strife of any kind; all was peace and plenty. Man was on the very best of terms with his fellow-beings; all the universe was bound by an iron bond of brotherhood.

With the utmost confidence and trust—in harmony and good-will toward men did the happy old world roll on.

There were no scandals. There was no gossip. Regrets, remorse, pain, hate, lies were unknown. In all the world there was not a single policeman.

And man thanked God, for it was good.

. . . . . .

And one day God took a rib. . . .

The White Queen of the Maharajah

(A Three-Part Story—Part I)

By Harry Hervey

CHAPTER I

PERHAPS it was the artist in Etelka Erivan that urged her to leave the Dâk Bungalow and follow the road up the mountainside, to the heap of mellowed masonry that swam in the haze of higher altitudes. From a distance she perceived that it was a temple, or what had been a temple, for broken pillars were silhouetted in white against the vines that groped, python-like, about the walls. The very thought that it was a temple, secluded from earth, drew her.

In the outer-court, beneath a towering gopura, she paused and looked back. At the foot of the mountain lay Jehelumpore, floating in the sunset like a pigmy city in a giant's winecup. The gilded dome of the palace shone through the claret-light in argent irony. . . . She turned, shuddering.

The inner-court was buried in a hush that was as profound as inter-stellar silence. Its shadows were purple-black, like the woman's eyes, and the freckling light that the sun reflected through rents in the roof was as tawny as her hair. Huge pillars impended, deepening the dusk, and in the shrine sat an idol, kindling dully against the seamed enclosing walls. It was crumbling to decay, its brazen members had greened, and it gave forth the odor of verdigris.

Etelka Erivan, her breathing repressed, halted before the image; halted, and sighed; for the god, in its ruin and isolation, symbolized herself. . . .

Years before, in a house in Poland—a house where the smells were ever of food and men—she had experienced the same revulsion that she now felt; had fled from it to the city, to a gray little studio where a gray little dancing-master taught her the steps that carried her, eventually, to her Mecca. Warsaw, Petrograd, Vienna, Brussels, Paris, London; cities niched away in her memory. Each had yielded her a harvest of rich gifts; each was poignant with recollections.

It was in London that she met Ghindra Singh, the ruler of the native state of Jehelumpore, in India. . . . A bronze face, eyes that were dark with understanding and an indefinable, illusive quality. That was Ghindra Singh. . . . She would always remember the night he came to her with a new light in his eyes. (Diamonds upon his turban; slim and imperial in his uniform.) But she laughed, that night.

"No, Ghindra Singh," she told him; "not until I have tested the men of my own race, and found them filled with impurities, will I become Maharanee of Jehelumpore."

And Ghindra Singh bowed gravely and replied:

"I shall wait; there has been no woman in my Zenana; there will be none, until

you come—as Maharanee of Jehelumpore—and you *will* come."

There was something pathetic about his departure. For many days after he went she sought to solve the ancient mystery of why noble men are colored with different pigments. . . .

But the pinnacle-remembrance was Paris—Paris, where she danced in a great vault of a theater; where she heard Svetozar Kominev play for the first time. He, too, had struggled up from a house whose aura was earth-reek, to his Mecca.

After their meeting came days that unfolded like an exquisite, sheeny fabric . . . dinners at the gay-lamped Château de Madrid, and, afterward, the dimly illuminated apartment, with Svetozar at the piano—Svetozar, whose face was that of a boy, but whose eyes told of voyages to the isle of Circe and Calypso; who played and drank like the Devil. . . .

Then that rending period when he came no more. No letters. Nothing but specters. The city of dreams which she had builded seemed suddenly to disintegrate, and she found herself alone in a necropolis of perished hopes and desires. The breaking-point was the night she heard a derelict remark. (The theater was more vault-like than ever, the wings looming like pinions of disaster.)

"Oh, she'll last a year or so more—perhaps—then she'll drop out of sight—just like the rest. . . ."

And suddenly the horror of threatened oblivion smote her. From electric-signs to the obscurity of small theaters! . . . When she was alone in her room after the performance, she endured a millennium of agony, and from the suffering was evolved a resolution. She had tested the men of her race and found them filled with impurities. (For when a woman loves deeply she measures all men by hers.)

. . . Suez, the Indian Ocean, Calcutta, all lay behind; and now she stood in the temple, raised above the city which was the capitol of Ghindra Singh's dominions, waiting for him to come. . . .

There was something healing in the quiet that enclosed her—salve to the memory. She had come from a world of chaos into the deep, silent heart of India, and India promised a full cup of forgetfulness.

A step sounded in the outer-court. She turned.

The great doorway framed a tall, slender figure—a figure that paused, then came toward her swiftly. She caught the flash of a jewel upon his white turban, the glitter of military trappings and polished boots. Then a throat-gripping vertigo seized her. The man's dark eyes swam in a mist.

"Mademoiselle Erivan!"

In that voice was the thirst of one who has been long in the desert. It brought back London, the pathos of his going. . . . She smiled—a bit cynically.

"They told me at the Dâk Bungalow that you were here," Ghindra Singh was saying. "I found your message when I returned to the palace. Why did you not cable me? . . . You arrived this afternoon?"

The cynical smile lingered. "Yes, I arrived this afternoon, Your Highness—to—to become—Maharanee of Jehelumpore—if you want me."

The man bowed—a grave bow. His was the grace, the noble features, of the finest Rajput blood. His dark eyes seemed to deepen as he returned her smile.

"I have waited," he announced. "There has been no woman in my Zenana."

. . . As they left the temple the sun thrust a finger of light above the bastions of the Himalayas and wrote a flaming promise on the sky.

CHAPTER II

THE third day after Etelka Erivan met Ghindra Singh in the temple ruins, Jehe-

lumpore—that is, official Jehelumpore, which includes the families and friends of all Government officers—awoke with a severe shock to the fact that their smooth orbit had been invaded by a decidedly meteoric occurrence.

That the Maharajah was to be married was not startling (for, indeed, when a native prince is long without a wife—one or more—it signifies the approach of senility or an empty treasury), but that his bride was a white woman, had no less than a jarring, if not bewildering, effect. It was conceded that Ghindra Singh was a decent sort of chap, and prince and all that, but—a white woman! It was . . . well . . . wasn't it?

Ursula Dean, the young wife of the British Commissioner, was the one female representative of official Jehelumpore who witnessed the ceremony, and the following day the Medical Officer's wife gave a tea—in her honor.

. . . "These Russians!" ventured the wife of the Medical Officer, in the course of the afternoon. "Mongols really, you know."

"She's not Russian, dear," corrected one of the guests, "Polish. And Ronnie says there's the greatest difference in the world between the two. . . . But go on, Ursula; tell us what she looks like."

Ursula Dean, who carried an air of fragrant English gardens, and whose skin seemed transparent about the temples, smiled indulgently.

"That's impossible!" she replied. "I can't seem to remember details; I think she rather dazzled me. She's golden—gold hair, gold lashes and gold skin. Her eyes . . . well, eyes are never purple, but her's *seemed* that color! She—

"She must be a vulgar person," inserted the Medical Officer's wife.

"But she isn't!" defended Ursula. "She has a warmth of manner that fascinates one. . . . Her accent is very faint. . . . And the poor thing will have to ride through the streets next week, for Ghindra Singh thinks it wise to have a native ceremony, too—because of his subjects. Tukaji Rao, Ghindra Singh's cousin, will be here from Khathipur. They say even the Amir is sending a representative. . . . Oh, I pity her, for she *must* know we're all talking about her!"

"Of course we'll *have* to accept her," announced the Medical Officer's wife, with a sigh. "Because of Ghindra Singh, you know. . . . As for the representative of the Amir: *I* wouldn't be at *all* surprised if he proved a *spy*. I was reading a copy of the *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, and they say that Ghandi is really urging the Afghans to invade India. . . . Isn't it perfectly absurd? Nevertheless, sometimes I wake up, at night, and remember that Jehelumpore is just across the Afghan border, and I positively shudder. Ugh! The nasty things!" . . .

And Ursula Dean, looking past the Medical Officer's wife and out of the window, saw the palace, its dome floating like a golden bubble in the dusk.

CHAPTER III

SINCE the meeting in the temple, Etelka Erivan had lived as one in a dream. There were lifted moments when she emerged from the hazy sphere and was fully cognizant of people and surroundings. One of these moments came as she stood in the English chapel and a grayed clergyman performed the services. (Holy vessels glowed in the altar-gloom, and a ray of sunlight touched the flower-like face of the Commissioner's wife.) The face of the girl who smiled at her during the ceremony created itself in permanent imagery in her mind—a spot of warmth in polar coldness.

Another salient incident occurred a few hours after her marriage. Ghindra Singh was showing her the palace grounds. Dusk

had fallen, and stars glowed like silver tapers in the penetralia of heaven. She saw the marble pavilion, like an orient dream among sweet shrubs and trees, and knew it was linked with her future.

"It is yours," he said simply.

And with self-loathing in her heart she spoke. "Ghindra Singh, I—I will stay there, in the marble pavilion, instead of the Zenna—until—" Her voice rebelled.

But Ghindra Singh smiled kindly.

"It will be as you wish, my queen. I have waited long; I can wait longer. . . ."

Late that night, in her bedchamber in the marble pavilion, she stripped herself of all pretense.

"You are like a lizard," she told herself bitterly. "You creep from darkness into sunlight, from threatened poverty into wealth, and then you will not pay. . . . Oh, you are worse than a reptile!"

For several days visiting princes and their cortéges had been arriving—dark-skinned rulers of native and feudatory states.

Tukaji Rao, a cousin of Ghindra Singh, was among them. She sensed something of contempt in his manner as he bowed before her and offered felicitations in ultra-exquisite French. Contempt! It seemed to stare at her from all eyes.

There was a hideous note, to her, in the celebration—in the nightly carnival of rockets and fireworks that beaded the darkness above the native quarters and bazaars, seen from her window in the marble pavilion. But for Ghindra Singh—and the memory of the flower-like girl who smiled at her in the chapel—she could not have endured it. In the latter (Ursula Dean spoke less than twenty words to her) she perceived kindredship, and in her loneliness she magnified it, until it became a warming glow.

. . . Now it was the morning of the native ceremony and in a short while would come the ordeal that had impended since the very moment Ghindra Singh told her of it. A pregnant dread habited her as Djimlah, her Persian handmaiden, dressed her for the ceremony. Cloth of gold, spun on the looms at Benares, over raw, sheeny silks from Samarkand; jewels at her throat and in her hair. She surveyed herself in a long mirror, while Djimlah fluttered about her, and thought again of a scintillant lizard.

Suddenly she heard music pulsing in barbaric rhythm through the gardens. Outside the pavilion, accoutrements rattled. Came the patter of shod hoofs, and the ponderous pad-pad of some great beast.

"Oh, Djimlah, Djimlah!" she whispered clinging to the little Persian maid.

"Ah, heaven-born!" cooed the girl, misunderstanding. "It is a great day! Thou art queen of Jehelumpore!"

Dimly, through a gathering vertigo, Etelka saw a door of her apartment open; saw several Ayahs enter. Then came Ghindra Singh, resplendent in the panoply of his rank. A sword, hilt of Jeypore enamel, flashed at his side; jewels clasped an aigrette in his silk turban. There was warmth and tenderness in his dark eyes, in his smile.

She went to him falteringly. The touch of his hand sent a message of strength through her, and when they reached the broad stairs of the pavilion her step was steady.

Sunlight glittered upon the golden trappings of two state elephants. Native troops were formed in lines on either side of the pavilion, and as Etelka and Ghindra Singh appeared, sabers whipped fire from the air.

"Barrao! Salaam karo!" came the cries from two *mahouts.*

Each struck his elephant with an *ankus,* and giant, mottled trunks were tossed aloft as the two beasts crashed out trumpet-peals.

As the monstrous *salaamut,* or royal salute, dwindled, Ghindra Singh led Etelka to her *howdah.* . . . And now she was in the seat; now the elephant was moving. She felt giddy, ill. Ahead, swaying upon the other great beast, was Ghindra Singh.

Of that ride she remembered little. Cheers and salutes, all melted into a roar that repeated itself continuously in her ears. The procession wound through multi-hued swarms; narrow streets and past piles of whitewashed, balconied houses. At the British Residency serried ranks of uniformed men joined the native troops. . . . Then, ahead, the white façade of a great building, dazzlingly bright in the sunshine.

Before the steps the elephants were halted. Gilded doors swung apart and Etelka and Ghindra Singh passed between aisles of soldiers, into the durbar hall. The visiting princes were there; latticed partitions testified to the presence of native women of high caste. Crystal chandeliers floated on the perfumed gloom. At the far end of the dais—two gilded thrones.

The pulse in Etelka Erivan's throat throbbed hotly as the Maharajah led her to a seat. The hundreds of eyes that were focussed upon her seemed unfriendly, antagonistic. . . . She was aware that the ceremony had commenced. Voices rang to her from that hostile world. She almost swooned. . . .

Then, in the blur of faces, she perceived a pair of eyes that were smiling. Skin transparent about the temples; lips as fresh and red as moist rose-petals. That smile of Ursula Dean, as she stood there in the multitude bside a tall, bronzed man, was an electrode from which Etelka drew strength. She smiled back.

. . . Now Ghindra Singh was extending his hand. She accepted it and was escorted down from the dais, and along the aisle. Slim Rajput swords were lifted above them, and a shower of blossoms described meteoric flight from behind the latticed partitions. The scent of bruised roses rose warmly from the carpet of the durbar hall.

Again the elephants; again the crowded, narrow streets and the cheering throng.

Etelka's brain had become clear; her fingertips were no longer frigid. A sense of almost calm flooded her veins, like the warming fires of wine.

It was the excitement of the last few days, she told herself. They did not despise her, these people. She was Maharanee of Jehelumpore; never poverty, never the frightful earth-aura of a tenement district or gray "middle-class" neighborhoods. . . . Ghindra Singh was a noble prince; with time she would care. Was there blood more royal than Aryan? . . . And that sweet-faced girl, whose smiles ever contributed a support of strength: she would make a friend of her. . . . Yes, all was well. . . .

She smiled at the film of humanity that unreeled ceaselessly on either side; smiled, and rode on. And suddenly the smile became graven upon her lips. And those who were watching the new Maharanee saw her fingers close upon the sides of the *howdah;* saw her straighten up, then sink back limply upon the crimson cushions. . . . The Maharanee was ill; the smell of the elephant and the lurching motion—they always affected foreigners. . . .

Etelka's eyes remained closed for several minutes. When the lids drew back they revealed pupils that had dwindled to mere points of black. The color had not left her face; only her lips were pale. The smile seemed fixed immortally upon the golden features.

Fate was jesting with her. This she told herself over and over. Either that, or what she had seen was some sorcery

of the eyes. Surely it could not be. It was a dream—a grim dream.

. . . The palace grounds were reached. There was something cool and reviving in the sight of the marble pavilion. Ghindra Singh assisted her to the ground; accompanied her up the stairs. At the door of her apartment he bowed.

"There will be feasting at the palace tonight," he announced. "But you look fatigued, my queen. I shall present your regrets—yes?"

She smiled her gratitude. "You will?"

He bowed again; his lips lightly brushed her hand. Then he was gone, and she was in her room, and Djimlah was fluttering and cooing about her.

"I wish to be alone," she told the Persian girl, wearily. "When I need you I will call."

For several moments after Djimlah left, she stood motionless in the center of the room, hands at her throat, in a dim, throbbing void of pain. Her head was hot; her throat hot; fever seemed to run the length of her body. She was ill, she told herself; it was delirium. That was the explanation. It could not be that she had seen the face of Svetozar Kominev in the street; it could not be. . . .

CHAPTER IV

THROUGH the seemingly interminable afternoon Etelka Erivan remained alone in her bedchamber—a self-imposed isolation that sank deeper the burning pangs of her Golgotha.

With sundown a silken coolness pervaded the room. It brought a strange, inexplicable relief. The fever went from her brain and her thoughts were clothed in clarity. She had reached a definite decision.

A ring of a gong brought Djimlah, inquisitive-eyed.

"I wish you to take a message to the bungalow of the Commissioner Sahib," announced the woman.

"But, heaven-born, how can I? It is over a mile and—"

"Go in one of the carriages. Tell the head *sais* I command it."

"But, heaven-born, there is a more speedy way!" purred the lithe little Persian. "Abdul Kerim, one of thy lord's rissaldar-majors, knew my father in Teheran. I will ask him to deliver it. His horse will carry him swiftly; ah, like the wind!"

"No, let him go with a carriage, for the Commissioner's wife may wish to return with him. . . . Make a light."

By the wavering flame of a candelabrum Etelka penned a message to Ursula Dean; read it; sealed it; gave it to Djimlah. The handmaiden hurried away. And, left alone, the new Maharanee of Jehelumpore wondered if she had done wisely.

Djimlah returned shortly.

"Abdul Kerim will leave immediately, heaven-born," she announced. "It gives him a thousand delights to serve his queen!"

. . . Etelka scarcely touched her food at dinner, and after the pretense of eating, she sent Djimlah to watch at the front of the pavilion and dismissed her Ayahs. She wanted to be alone when Ursula Dean arrived. (That she of the flower-smile would come, she did not doubt.) One moment she sat in the window-casement, watching a quarter-moon lift its pallid wing over the Himalayas; the next, she was pacing the floor, candlelight shimmering dully upon her silken negligée.

A faint step in the corridor reached her attuned ears. She waited, motionless, expecting Djimlah to enter. But the door did not open. Nor was there a repetition of the sound.

She moved swiftly across the chamber, candelabrum in hand. When she pressed open the door, dimness met her gaze. At

the far end of the hallway, velvet curtains hiding the vestibule-way that connected with the bath-pavilion stirred slightly in a draught.

After a brief hesitation, she covered the length of the corridor and parted the portières, emerging into the vestibule-way. Moonlight reflected upon the glass arch overhead. One of the double doors of the bath-pavilion stood ajar.

She entered, the candelabrum held aloft. Shadows made secrets of the corners of the vast rectangular chamber, and marble columns conspired with gloom to baffle human vision. The pool, sunken in the midst of white tiles, was a vat of motionless liquid, its surface mirroring the flame-tipped candelabrum, the pillars, and dark, claret-hued hangings. A breath of wind entered stealthily, transforming the reflections on the pool into a weird, futuristic chaos.

An audible gasp came from the woman.

For she had seen the toes of a pair of shoes beneath one of the sheeny hangings.

As she took a step backward, the hangings moved—were thrust aside, and the owner of the shoes stepped out. Candlelight flickered upon corn-colored hair; upon a high, white brow; upon thin, boyish features and full, wistful lips.

Another gasp from the woman. The door clicked shut under the pressure of her weight; her fingers tightened about the candelabrum.

"Svetozar!"

He came toward her, a twisted smile upon his lips. . . . She felt his hands—long, slender hands—and saw the burn of his eyes.

"You mustn't!" she whispered. "No, you mustn't!"

He drew back; sank to his knees. With one hand she held the candelabrum; the other strayed in his yellow hair.

"Oh, why did you come?"

At that he lifted his head. He was the same Svetozar—the boy who had sojourned on the isle of Circe and Calypso, who could play and drink like the Devil. . . .

"I had to see you—"

"But the risk!" she inserted. "And why open old wounds? My husband. . . ."

Again that twisted smile.

"I had to explain."

"Explain?"

"Why I went away—as I did—and never wrote you. I couldn't let you believe me so bad. And after I saw you today—"

"It was wrong," she accused. "I—I am happy here. Now you have come to destroy it. You should have left. That was the man's way, Svetozar."

"Do you love your husband?"

"You must go," she persisted, struggling with herself. It all came back with a rush—Paris, the Château de Madrid . . . the piano. . . .

He rose. "Don't you want to hear why I never wrote?"

"Don't lie to me; I would rather believe you a trifler than a liar."

"It is true! Before the Virgin!" he declared passionately, his hands imprisoning hers. "I told you I was going to Nice. I did. . . . There I met an old acquaintance. It was the same story, Etelka. . . . When I came to myself, I was in Trieste. Ah, God, there was something in the city that seemed to crush me! I drank again—drank—drank! After that, a ship to Brindsi—Athens—Constantinople. It was the great drift; I was trying to find myself. I went across Turkey with three Armenians. At Trebizond I came to my senses. I traveled to Tabriz, to Teheran. There I met an Afghan officer. He was leaving for Kabul—by Khorassan. He told me of work I could do in Kabul. I went with him." He stopped, made a gesture. "You believe me?"

Her eyes were closed—but she opened

them at his question. Her lips were dry; she moistened them.

"Yes, Svetozar, I believe you—but you must go—now. They—they will be here in a moment, and you must not be caught—"

"I won't be dismissed like this!"—fiercely, seeking to draw her to him. "You have not forgotten, you—"

She straightened up, thrusting him away. "Listen! I hear someone in the corridor. I have a visitor. How can you leave without being seen?"

He motioned impatiently toward the rear of the bath-pavilion.

"If I go now, I shall come again tomorrow night—"

"No!"

The fierce light went from his eyes; they pleaded. "What wrong?" he begged. "Let me tell you my story—everything—then if you tell me to go—for always—I will go. But I must come tomorrow night—"

"You swear it will be the last?"

"If you command it."

A moment of irresolution, then: "Tomorrow night—here—at this hour. Now go!"

. . . When he was lost among the shadows, in the rear of the vast room, she opened the door and stepped out. Her tread was uncertain as she made her way back to her bedchamber. She met Djimlah in the doorway.

"She is here, heaven-born!" breathed the little maid. "Will you go to her?"

"No; bring her here. Tell the rissaldar-major to wait outside."

As Djimlah flitted away, Etelka peered into a mirror; then, after arranging her hair, took a position by the window, to wait.

Presently the door opened—and her guest entered.

For a moment the two women stood, the space of the room between them, looking into each other's eyes. Etelka was the first to move. She went forward swiftly, hands extended.

"It was good of you to come," she said.

"It was sweet of you to send for me, Your Highness." There was warmth and understanding in Ursula Dean's smile.

Etelka Erivan found herself laughing softly—a golden sound.

"Do not call me 'Highness'—I am a very plain, lonely person."

"And you sent for me because of *that?*" The smile of understanding lingered. "Why, of course you're lonely—here in this strange country—and in this cold, beautiful palace!"

Etelka's heart warmed at those words.

"And you really don't think me a queer, exotic person?" she queried, smiling—but with a fiercely pleading undernote in her voice. "One who has been on the stage, especially if she is a foreigner, has to climb a wall, like the wall of China, to reach Englishwomen!"

Ursula Dean laughed—notes as soft and clear as her eyes. Etelka drew her to a divan.

"You'll learn to love Jehelumpore—after a while," said the Englishwoman. "And if you're fond of riding, there are wonderful bridle-paths. I have a favorite haunt—an old temple on the mountainside. I visit it nearly every afternoon. . . . Sometime, when your husband can spare you"—she paused, then hurried on, sensing a change in the other—"we'll go there—together. . . . I love it just after sundown," she went on, her intuition at work. "There are beautiful little flowers in the court, that unfold at dusk. . . . The darkness seems to bring them out. . . ."

They talked on. Conversation was in the main part light, but they found in each other, unspoken, a depth that was new and exhilarating.

Strangely, Etelka felt that Ursula Dean sensed her story—the flight from the world

to Ghindra Singh—and what she saw in the wide-set gray eyes was neither condemnation nor pity. . . . She even forgot the pallid boy-face of Svetozar Kominev—forgot it, until the girl rose to leave. Then an engulfing loneliness closed upon her. She feared the silence of her room.

"I'll come again—soon," promised Ursula, with her sweet, flower-like smile. "And if I'm too long—why, you must come to see me!"

Djimlah appeared and Ursula Dean followed the little Persian handmaiden. . . .

Etelka recrossed the room, halting at the casement. After a moment, she saw a landeau detach itself from the front of the building and roll toward the gate. The white turban of a mounted figure—evidently Abdul Kerim, the rissaldar-major—bobbed along in the rear. The vehicle stopped for a space of seconds at the gate; rifles flashed in the glare of an incandescent. Then the gates swung shut behind carriage and horseman.

The woman sighed. Her eyes turned unconsciously toward the palace, whose lighted windows glowed through the foliage of the intervening gardens. The faint pulsing of violins traveled across the aromatic night. Feasting—in honor of her wedding! . . .

She struck the gong. Several minutes passed, but Djimlah did not appear. She frowned and tapped the gong again. At length, irritated, she rang twice in succession—the signal for an Ayah.

"Where is Djimlah?" she asked, when a brown-skinned attendant appeared.

"I will find her, O Royal One!"

"You will do, Ayah. I would go to my bath."

The native woman opened a nacre-inlaid closet and removed a long, gossamer, cloaklike affair. . . . She held wide the door into the corridor.

Moonlight on the glass roof of the vestibule-way brought a poignant sting to the white woman, and as she waited for the Ayah to open the doors, she wondered if the meeting in the bath-pavilion were not a dream. . . . As they entered, a draught rippled the flames of the three tapers in the candelabrum. Just beyond the threshold, Etelka halted, abruptly, stifling a desire to cry out. Her hands groped for something tangible. . . .

"Ayah!" she whispered. "Ayah—see—see who it is—"

The servant placed the candelabrum upon a pedestal close to silken hangings and moved quickly to the figure that lay stretched upon the tiles at the edge of the pool. The white woman was too weak to stir.

"A-a-a-ah!" came the long-drawn exclamation from the Ayah.

The power to move returned to Etelka, and she joined the servant. The reddish stain between the shoulder-blades of the inert form seemed to leap out and strike her eyes. As through a haze she saw the partly unwound turban; the uniform; the polished boots. . . . She caught her breath sharply.

"Ayah—is—is it—the Maharajah?"

(To be continued in the March number)

Cynicism

By Ruth Scarlet

YOU bind me every day,
By stronger vows, to you:
Why should I keep an oath
When men are never true?

It's "ever, always, still . . ."
By all the stars above
And all the hills below
I daily pledge my love.

But ever, at the end
This wisdom smiles at me:
When all the thing is done
We'll both go false and free.

NO woman can understand neutrality. She prefers the hate of a man rather than indifference.

The Ham

By Joel Townsley Rogers

THE squeaky fiddle shrilled and sawed. Programs rustled. The stupid stage folk trundled up and down, mouthing their mealy sentences. The Greatest Play of the Century, filled with Heart-Throbs, Pulsating with Emotion, Striking the Tender Chords of the Human Soul, went on. Like Eternity, like Death, like the monotony of summer heat, like an unimpassioned worm crawling with unimpassioned doublings of an unimpassioned tail over the long dust of a dreary road, the tired play went on.

This was Saturday afternoon. The younger blood of Fairburg was sprinkled over the red-plush seats of the old Academy of Music. In the orchestra high school girls moped or sprawled their arms outward, or bent their braided heads together with shrill, idiotic giggles. In the balcony little boys threw peanut-shells downward; two of them were running up and down the aisles; one sad-faced youth poked his head over the brass railing of the balcony and with the intermittent regularity of a bullfrog croaked a hideous, "Oh, mamma!"

The play did not hold them—not even adolescent girls, not even brats in knickered pants, not even the least sophisticated of the children of this little town. Yet in New York, with another cast, it had known its crowded houses for two years running. There is a difference, of course, between John Barrymore and August Dunn.

August Dunn did not entirely realize that his audience was sick and weary of him. For the first time in his life he was playing before his own townspeople, and consequently a certain haze lay upon his mind. He had dreamed of this for twenty years, dreamed of the shouting crowds, the massive applause, the simpering adulation. "August Dunn, the incomparable artist of the American stage, who was born and lived as a boy in Fairburg, has yielded to the eager importunities of his fellow citizens, and consented to give one performance in the Academy of Music—"

True, there had been no importunities. He had come to Fairburg in the course of a new small-town, two-day-stand itinerary. And Fairburg seemed to have forgotten him. Yea, he was no more to Fairburg than the grass between the cobbles of its streets.

Woodenly the actor followed out the play, making love, cursing, meditating, with wooden words. To him no consciousness of the stupendous mediocrity.

The action drew near to the end of the first scene. The sorrowful fiddle failed and died. August Dunn glanced obliquely upward to the only box occupied, and saw there Marian, who had loved him when he was young.

II

ALL of us, I am sure, have dreams of returning some day to the land where we were young. Not silently, not humbly, but heralded by shouting thousands, by full dress parade and tuck of drum.

Few do thus return, for a successful man grows weary of fame, and the ways of his youth become in retrospect petty and unpleasant. An unsuccessful man learns to hide defeat by burying himself

from those who knew him and his boasts.

August Dunn was one who did not know himself defeated. I do not say that to his honor. Though he made his business and his art the expression of vast spiritual emotions, he did not have feeling enough to experience even the poignant passion of defeat. Shakespeare died broken-hearted, overwhelmed with the frustration of all his foolish, shallow works. Doctor Johnson lived on and on—my God!—talked on and on.

Vanity of vanities, August Dunn was vanity. Assuredly he held himself not second to the archangels. That he had never received recognition on any first-class stage he laid to a conspiracy of producers. That the public gave him only stumbling applause he knew was due to their inappreciation of art. Ah, these mercenary producers! Ah, this damned public! When will it ever be—if it will ever be—that a man who can spout a sentence with turgid periods and frenetic gesticulations will be given the honor due him?

III

THE descending curtain was caught for an instant, and back-stage the inexperienced hands swore at each other and grunted. From beyond the noise of the squeaky fiddle a patter of applause arose for August Dunn. He bowed, smiling tragically. There are always some few to be found in any audience who will applaud anything; it is compassion which animates their elbows; their clapping is a sorrowful dole to failure.

August Dunn stood before the curtain and bowed. But now the faint acclaim had ceased. "Oh, mamma!" whined the exasperating boy from the balcony. "Look at his bald head!"

August Dunn looked straight upward, and bowed this time to the box alone, and to Marian. All the soft regret which lay in his power to express, all the amorous remembrance of dear nights gone, all the sympathetic understanding of her barren, unloved years—more, a little hope, a little love—he showered in his glances toward Marian.

Time had not withered her. Hers had never been an astounding beauty, not even in those long-past years when she had loved him. But a calm grace had lain about her always, a wistfulness of eye, a quivering of the lips, which seemed ennobled now with maturity.

A girl was with Marian. Curiously she gazed down at the actor, at the bald head which pencil and plastered locks could not entirely hide. Youthful, scornful laughter rose to her lips. Dunn could see her clutching her mother's arm—Marian must be her mother—and leaning over to whisper.

And now a man came in the box, with kindly, solemn face. He bent above Marian's shoulder speaking a word to her.

The woman did not seem to hear him. Strangely she looked at August Dunn, with glances frightened and unseeing. Her pleasant face was without color, as frozen as cold marble.

The actor bowed for a third time, though the curtain had now descended behind him, and from the audience he could hear shrill giggles and exclamations. Swiftly the woman put a handkerchief to her eyes, mopping hot tears.

It was unearthly as a tragedy itself, a scene of intense emotion which should be played in little on the stage. August Dunn felt himself at home in it, for his life was of the drama. He bowed and sighed, his hand to his heart, till a voice from the wings called him in.

IV

AUGUST DUNN wiped from his face with a vigorous towel the red grease on

his cheeks, the white grease on his nose, the black smudge on his eyelids, the thin lines of soot on his eyebrows, the little dabs of crimson paint at the inward corners of his eyes. Looking at himself in the mirror, he saw a face that was not young. The tides of the years had left their silt on it.

He remembered he was forty—that dreadful age had been passed the week before. "I look all of thirty," he thought, with a grimace. But another man, seeing him without the paint, would have guessed his age at fifty.

He had been a handsome boy, too; too handsome, with his long black hair and pouting cheeks. Those beauties were gone. Those beauties were dead as last year's roses. It was strange, he thought, that twenty years should have meant so little to Marian. She had stepped, like an imperishable picture, out of the page of day before yesterday. But he, the handsome lad whom she had loved, was growing old.

Dunn had not been greatly surprised to find her no longer in the box when he entered in the second act. He had seen her on the border of hysteria, emotions arising in her too cataclysmic to be dammed. The kindly, solemn man had likely enough led her away.

Vacantly Dunn wondered, while he ranted through his scene, whether the man was her husband, and if it had been jealousy which caused him to take his wife away. No, the fellow was too stupid to understand a cause for jealousy. Marian had made some excuse to him, given some nonsensical reason for her perturbation. "Take me—take me home!" Afraid of what? Afraid of him? Dunn smiled.

When he had changed to street clothes, Dunn looked once more in the mirror. As an afterthought he put a touch of red on his lips and cheeks, and smoothed again the long locks over his head.

V

FAIRBURG seemed eternally the same. Strange how old memories jar. At the corner of Main and Grand Dunn found himself walking slower, gazing around him for some danger he had forgotten. It was hereabouts that Constable Shaner had lain in wait for him night after night.

And thus, though religion had long ceased to mean good or evil to him, while he passed the old Methodist Episcopal Church Dunn felt a sneer arising to his mouth, for there had been sneers when he was a boy. Beneath the shades of elms on Tompkins Lane he looked around half furtively, as though expecting Marian to be waiting for him.

She had waited often for him beneath the elms though not often had he met her. He had known other girls, who had passed from memory. Marian had likewise been forgotten. The buried thought of her would never have been aroused, certainly not in this life, and probably not in the next, had she not been brought back to his thought this afternoon.

Into Barkin's Drug Store Dunn's feet turned. It was here that the tough boys of Fairburg had gathered. It had been their club, their gang headquarters, where they had smoked cigarettes and planned what grand careers they'd know when the dust of Fairburg would be off their heels and they'd be great men in the City.

Old Barkin was not behind his counter, but the man who greeted Dunn with curious intonation looked much like old Barkin, save that he was younger than old Barkin ever had been.

Dunn leaned elaborately over the cigar counter, tapping his cane against the glass. His pose was that of the worldly man for whom the gates of the universe have been opened up. The drug-store proprietor did not seem to be impressed by that air of

arrogant superiority. Drily he asked how he could serve.

"Aren't you George Barkin?" asked Dunn, looking at the man curiously.

Barkin nodded. "I don't remember you," he said.

August Dunn smiled sardonically. He waited with dramatic effect for his self-disclosure to gather effect. Still he tapped his cane against the rattling glass. Barkin had picked up a cup from the drinking fountain, and now with a cloth elaborately polished it.

"I'm August Dunn."

Barkin did not seem to understand. Thoughtfully he polished the cup, then blew his breath on it, and wiped it once again. "Is that so?"

"August Dunn, the actor."

These words meant no more to George Barkin. "What can I serve you with?"

Speaking coldly, Dunn drew away. "Don't you remember? I'm Gus Dunn, that used to hang out with the gang here."

"Gus Dunn," mused Barkin. Then, with swift memory. "Oh, sure I remember you, Gus." He held out a flat hand. "Glad to see you back again. What doing—acting, you say?"

The conversation died between them. Barkin coughed and began to straighten the cigar-boxes in the glass case. "Fine weather we're having," he gave as his opinion.

Dunn would have liked to tell this playmate of his youth of his great triumphs, of worlds laid at his feet. Boasting words were ripe in him. He felt the desire of braggadocio as maddening as the thirst of liquor. But Barkin was not interested.

This was a moment, Dunn thought, deep burdened with huge drama. How he might strut and tear a turgid passion! But there was no support to him. A man cannot set a drama, wave his arms, shout, cry, stamp up and down, alone.

George Barkin meant nothing to him, but just for the tragedy of it Dunn would have liked to embrace this acquaintance of his youth, clapping him on the shoulder, while Barkin wept, and whatever gallery gods there were should melt in burning tears.

Ah, life is barren of grand moments! August Dunn beneath his breath began to curse George Barkin for a dull fool. This was not the home-coming he had dreamed these twenty years.

"You've settled down, George."

"Yes," said Barkin. Reminiscently: "We was going to both go to the city together, wasn't we? I recollect. Well, business ain't so bad. I'm sort of glad I stayed around. How's things been with you?"

Dunn tapped a cigarette on the glass counter, and screwed it in a long holder with dramatic gestures. Each movement of his fingers was an art. He thrust the tube in his face and wrinkled up his eyebrows.

"I have had a great deal of success, George; more, no doubt, than I deserve. The world has been very good to me."

"That's nice."

"It's been a great life. Really, I'd hate to tell you what my income is."

"That's nice," said Barkin again, moving about and wiping off the top of the soda-fountain. "Great weather we're having."

August Dunn strolled up and down. But Barkin was paying no attention. He hardly raised his eyes.

"I saw a girl I knew once, George. A little girl by the name of Marian, who used to have a terrible crush on me."

"What was her other name?"

"I've forgotten."

"Marian," mused the druggist. "Let me think." Upon whatever gods he called for the power to think, they must have answered him. "You must mean Mrs. Stagg," he surmised. "She used to be Marian Jones. Yes, she's married, and got

a boy and girl. Real fine girl but the boy's in college."

This was the way Barkin ended his statement, waving one hand in a meaningless gesture. August Dunn bowed his head till his chin was on his cravat. He clasped his hands behind his back, tore them apart, and clasped them again. His brows were heavy. I will not say these movements were affected. Stage and life had so interwoven themselves in the consciousness of August Dunn that he could not separate the natural from the unnatural. And what gestures, after all, are natural, save a yawn or a sneeze?

"Marian—Marian—" murmured Dunn lowly, but with sufficient tone for George Barkin to hear. "Marian— And now a mother. Who is this Stagg?"

"You recollect him, maybe, Gus," said Barkin, glancing at the clock. "He was a sort of sissy-boy the gang used to pick on—little Orphant Johnny we used to call him."

"A fool!" snarled Dunn, working himself into foam. "She—mated to a fool!"

"Oh, I don't know, Gus," said Barkin, looking more pointedly at the clock. "He's done right well in the printing business, and has always been a good provider."

August Dunn wondered if Barkin knew anything at all of the soul. It seemed little likely. Marian Jones had loved him. Who in Fairburg had sharpness of eye to behold her hidden sorrow? She had married a good provider; that was enough. She, who had loved him, August Dunn, a soul of fire!

Dunn put the question in his mind. "She has been happy?"

"Why, I reckon so," said Barkin, plainly astonished to suppose that anyone could not be happy. "I don't see why not."

"She loved me once," said Dunn. He struck his hand against his breast. "Me! Has she allowed that love to die down? Has no sorrow burned her breast? Does she not think of me at night when her tears are wet upon her pillow?"

Barkin's answer was not necessary. Dunn remembered the tragic glance of Marian as she looked down at him from her box. Though her daughter was by her side, and though her husband was whispering in her ear, they had been to her nothing. She had not forgotten. Through twenty years the shadow of an old love had darkened the sunlight of her heart!

This thought, strangely, was not a sop to August Dunn's love, but to his self-esteem. He had never been in love.

"She has remembered me!" he cried, raising his fist aloft.

"Why, I reckon so," stumbled Barkin. "We ain't forgot you entirely, Gus."

Dunn walked back and forth again, striking his hands together. George Barkin wound the clock, locked his back door with a loud noise, and deliberately slammed his show-cases shut. He watched Dunn's theatrical gestures curiously for a while. He grinned, and immediately felt ashamed of himself for it. But Gus Dunn did look too funny, pantin' and prowlin' around. No man he'd ever seen in Fairburg acted that way.

(Nor, for that matter, do they act that way in New York.)

"It's se'n o'clock," said Barkin at last. "And my dinner's waiting. We'll close up now. But drop in tomorrow, Gus, if you happen to be around. Always glad to see you."

August Dunn followed the directions Barkin gave him to find the home of the Staggs. It was seven of the evening, probably their dinner hour, no time to call. But he would go on the boards again at eight-thirty, and his time in Fairburg was short. This renewal of ties with a woman who once had loved him well was a dramatic interlude not to be avoided.

It was a position of delicacy. A "non-professional"—as Dunn classified anyone

who did not flaunt his eyebrows for a living—would have been overcome with timidity, would have stayed away. Dunn felt that this was a situation his abilities fitted him to fulfill with art. It was as a pugilist enters battle, or as a swimmer threshes out to the drowning voice, that he went toward the home of Marian Stagg.

Mentally he rehearsed to himself the words he would speak, the lines, the cues to which he would respond, as he initiated this drama of lost love and passion.

VI

August Dunn had always been a conceited boy. It may not have been because of his conceit that girls loved him, but because of his good looks. He was a most good-looking boy. Nevertheless, his conceit had been no handicap. A great actor—great for Fairburg—playing at the Academy of Music, had met him and advised him to go on the stage. "You're too handsome not to make a success, young man," he said. And then went on to the next town, and drank too much, and died.

Dunn had been clerking in Chasnoff's Parisian Store at the time, but even then he was not without talent. He had taken elocution lessons, and was in demand at sociables for recitations. His rendition of "Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight" had brought him the compliments of the superintendent of the Fairburg schools, and many and many a time and oft he had hanged Danny Deever in the mawr-rnin. Dry stones could be wrung with the salt of tears, dumb cattle low, the dust upon Grand Street stir and writhe and rise in wraiths, the wooden pillars of the Methodist Episcopal Church jar loose the white paint from the Corinthian capitals, when August Dunn raised his arm and shouted to the stars that he would get a swig in Hell from Gunga Din.

That had been well enough for Fairburg twenty years ago. But even then the dramatic yearnings of New York were different; and in the time which had passed the tastes of Fairburg had followed those of the metropolis. Barbara Frietchie was no longer known to poke her old gray head out of Frederick's window, and the gallant six hundred, sweltering onward half a league at a time, could now arouse only mirth in a flippant generation.

August Dunn had kept to his declaiming. He had never acted a natural scene. He could not portray life. That failure was because he had never lived. He had shouted in bar-room fights, and he had known bought kisses, had given quarters to beggars, patted children on the head, kicked dogs, and the like. But he had never foully hated, with the hate which brings saliva to the lips. And he had never loved, with the love which makes of one frail woman a goddess, an immortal, the epitome of Heaven. He had never known charity, nor self-honoring manhood, nor shrivelling fear of wild beasts, not even stern ambition and a holy consecration to art.

He was a mouth. He was a jointed automaton. He was a futile gesture and a silly oath. He was nothing, for he had not understanding. Yet I believe that if you had called him a ham he would have tried to kill you.

VII

It was coincidence that the last person he should have seen before he left Fairburg was the first he should recognize on his return. Marian had heard he was leaving, though young Dunn had spoken no word to her about it, and had come to the depot before his train bore him away. It had been night, moonless or mooned. She had clung to him and wept on his shoulder. Even now, though his memory was not of the best, August Dunn recalled

the humming annoyance of mosquitoes.

It would have been better if she had threatened to kill herself. Dunn had brooked the thought she might. He had spouted something of the poets, and been very tragic and grand, speaking many farewells and fare-thee-wells, with mention of when-shall-we-meet-again, love-me-forever, wear-my-picture-next-your-heart, and all the catchwords which seemed in place. Not that any of them meant a thing to him. But the hour seemed steeped in tragedy, and he was conscious of playing the leading part. He had mouthed and orated, for drama had been to him a thing of mouthing and orating. He could not still his tongue.

But Marian had only laid her head upon his breast and let her still tears speak.

Well, there are many ways of showing an emotion. All of them, however, are only fully developed by those who never feel emotion.

VIII

A MAID admitted him into the Stagg residence, and to his insistence that he see Mrs. Stagg turned a disturbed face. "I know perhaps they are at dinner," suggested Dunn. "It is a matter of life and death. I must see her!"

The servant seemed curiously unimpressed by the emphasis of his words; there was no force behind them. Dunn had used the same phrase too often. It was always a matter of life and death with him to get a lower berth on tour, to have his stage properly lighted, to have his breakfast eggs boiled to the turn.

"No, sir," she said, "dinner hasn't been served yet. Mr. Stagg went out, but Mrs. Stagg's in her room."

"Stagg went out. There has been a quarrel?"

"He did seem upset," said the maid, with a curious, quickened look on her face, the love of gossip lending it a shallow splendor. "Mrs. came back from the matinée early, and I heard her and the Mister exchanging high words. She's in her room now, crying her eyes out, I can tell you. Don't say anything of this!"

"Your confidences are buried deep as the grave," said August Dunn in his sepulchral tone. "I must see her, Mrs. Stagg, at once."

"I don't know," said the woman doubtfully. "What name shall I give?"

"Tell her it's an old, old lover who has kept through dreary years the memory of her bright love fresh and dewy in his heart."

"What's that?"

"Tell her it's a friend, and a matter of life and death."

IX

AN unknown ill-easiness had come over August Dunn. The terror of being unequal to a situation was a passion he could not know; yet it was something curiously like terror which he felt when Marian Stagg came into his presence. A dozen ways of opening this interview had passed through his mind. He might be ironical, and with a wave of his hand embrace the furniture, sneering: "Was it for this you forswore the faith you had plighted me, Marian?"

Again, he might be sentimental, babbling in broken speech: "Marian . . . Marian. . . ." Arousing her with frustrate gestures to a flow of tears.

He might be amorous, pressing her in his arms before she was aware, kissing her on throat and arm, crying: "I will kiss you, Marian." That he could not even kiss her without saying something, August Dunn knew.

He might be merely leashed by an iron will, clasping her hand gently, looking from beneath his eyebrows into her face,

whispering: "So—so, Marian, after the years! And you have not forgotten me?"

But the setting, these well-appointed chairs and pictures in this comfortable middle-class home, did not induce dramatics. The actor had an inkling, though faint, of the comfortable middle-class stupidity of life.

Marian Stagg's eyes were red. It did not need the bit of lace held tightly in her hand to tell Dunn she had been crying. Some fierce emotion, too fierce for Fairburg, too emotional for this time and place, she had repressed, yet not entirely. A little wind, and this hidden flame would be a holocaust.

Gravely she came before him, her eyes expressed nothing. She caught a word in her throat, putting her hand to her breast. She was trembling ever so slightly, and without a word sat down. Dunn caught the agonizing tension of her profile as she turned her face away.

There seemed a strangeness in this meeting Dunn could not master. Why, he did not know. The situation did not have him beneath its heel, but he could not think he had the situation by the neck. His prearranged plans fell from him.

"I came," he said at last. "I saw you watching me, Marian, and I couldn't keep away. In the matinée—" he ended unauthoritatively, as he beheld her nervous glance wandering.

Marian Stagg was tearing at her handkerchief with her teeth. She choked back a sob, beating her fists hysterically against the arms of the chair. Dunn could not but wonder at the evenness of the tones with which she at last spoke.

"Yes, it's been a warm day," she said inanely.

Dunn wondered whether she had even heard him. She seemed too palsied with her own emotions to heed the records of her senses.

"In the theater—"

"What's that?" Her startling was genuine. "Oh, yes, we were at the matinée this afternoon, my daughter and I."

Dunn cupped his eyes in his palm, the gesture of a man who hides unmanly tears. "She reminds me much of you twenty years ago. Ah, me, how time passes us by!"

He waited, but Marian was still biting her handkerchief, staring vacantly about her. Dunn felt a madness in her gaze, and because it was real and terrible and uncontrollable, no miserly mocking similitude of hysteria, he began to feel a little afraid.

"The image of the girl I loved long years ago," he said sadly, wiping from a dry eye an unborn tear. "She is very lovely, your daughter."

His tone was high. Marian Stagg clenched her fists together in her lap. Now she looked at Dunn with wide eyes, attempting a formal smile. It was sadly wan and weak.

"Pardon me . . . my daughter, you say? Yes," she choked a little. "Yes," she repeated. "You say she is lovely? We all think so. . . ."

Her voice drifted away. Too long speech was beyond his power. Dunn followed her gaze, and saw she was staring at the eternal ticking of a mantel clock.

Some way, Dunn could not extract the drama from the scene. It was there, in spite of all his ranting and his little soul. But it was drama too repressed, too formal, to suit his idea of art.

"And you have a son. . . ."

Marian Stagg had reached the limit of her self-repression. That hysteria which Dunn had noted in her that afternoon at the Academy, which she had tried to repress for long hours, broke suddenly.

"Don't!" she screamed. "Don't! Please don't!"

It was as though she denied her children, all knowledge of them, all love of them; and in so doing denied her husband and

his love. She flung her head back against her chair and allowed herself to be rocked with spasms of sobbing. It was unnatural —more, it was unpleasant—to see those passionate tears from eyes so gentle and calm.

And August Dunn, the actor, the tragedian, felt himself without a cue. It was drama such as he had never known upon the stage, too cruel, too intense for polished periods and fine phrases. There, in what was the climax of his living, beholding the woman who had once loved him in her sorrow, he had no sonorous words. His lines failed him.

He knelt at the side of Marian Stagg. A hysteria fell upon him, also; the hysteria of impotency, not of grief. He had never been without words before. It made him feel a fool.

The woman still sobbed, with her eyes closed.

August Dunn was not surprised when, seeing a shadow across the light, and, looking up, he beheld John Stagg. It was the same kindly, solemn man who had appeared in the box that afternoon, bearing, now that Dunn could trace it, an almost ludicrous resemblance to little Orphant Johnny of boyhood.

Stagg's eyes smouldered with wrath. He gasped and fought for words. There was no hero in him. When he spoke, his sentences were disjointed, his voice shrill and without force.

"I'll thrash him within an inch of his life!" he cried. "Fool . . . fool . . . puppy. No, I'll let him stay in jail till he rots! I'll . . . I'll . . . "

Dunn arose. He faced Stagg with his hand thrust in his waistcoat. Stagg fell back a pace, mumbling: "Who—who are you?"

With one free arm Dunn waved Stagg to silence, waved the grief from the voice of Marian Stagg. The woman now was trying to strangle her sobs. "I'm sorry," she whispered. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to let myself go this way."

"I understand," said Stagg, in his high, nervous voice.

"Wait!" said August Dunn slowly, waving his hand again. He bent his brows and scowled. "I will have none of your recriminations, sir. You are a stranger who intrudes on holy ground. You have come between me and the woman I love. There is no law beyond the law of holy love. Still your shrill tongue, you fool!"

Stagg fell backward another pace, staring at Dunn with pale, frightened glances. He felt for his collar-band, twisting his head nervously. "Who is he?" he panted. "Who is this fellow?"

Marian Stagg rolled her head in dumb negation. "Don't ask me," she begged, closing her tearful eyes.

"I am he whom your wife loves!" thundered August Dunn, raising up his arm to high Heaven. "I call on the sky to witness that our love is an immortal flame. Do not think to come between us! Fate has separated us, but fate again has brought us together. Stand back, I say! Do not touch me with your foul hands. Do you think you have robbed me of Marian's love? See there, by her tears she loves me yet! Look at her! Know now, Stagg, who it is she has always loved."

John Stagg stumbled and fumbled for speech, with silly absurdity. He grasped at his collar again, buttoned and unbuttoned his coat. Twice he strove to splutter words, but Dunn in his impromptu peroration motioned him to silence. Marian Stagg had dried her tears, and now was watching Dunn with strange bright eyes.

"See the sorrow mirrored in her eyes, those windows of the soul," cried August Dunn. "Do you think, by the evidence of her tears, she loves you or me? Do you know why she is crying?"

Stagg gasped. "Why, you crazy old coot!" he shrilled. "You bald baboon! I guess I do know why she's crying. Our boy Charley was celebrating a football victory last night, that's why she's crying. And he went and got drunk and got himself arrested, that's why she's crying. And he's in jail now, that's why she's crying. And I was fool enough to tell her about it at the show this afternoon, that's why she's crying."

Stagg panted for breath. "Crying!" he boomed, lowering by twice an octave the pitch of his voice. "Say, are you crazy? Who the Hell are you?"

Marian Stagg arose, linking her arm in that of her husband. "Isn't he the sheriff?" she asked. "He came here and began to ask questions about Charles, but he wouldn't tell his business." She dried her eyes. "It was all I could do to keep from crying." She cried again. "And then when he asked something about Charles, I just let myself go."

"Never mind, never mind, honey," said John Stagg. "It's nothing to worry about. You always did lose your head, and run around like a chicken looking for it. But who are you, you lunatic?" he roared to August Dunn, with tones shrill and bass by turn.

August Dunn stepped backward. "I'm an actor," he said heavily. "I play."

"An actor!" repeated Marian Stagg with contempt. "He's that same fellow who was acting at the Academy this afternoon, John. Why, you—you ham!"

The "Tosca" Matinee

By Arthur S. Garbett

"I TELL you, Brioni, I don't like it."

"Can't help that," bomed Giacomo Brioni in his best *basso cantante,* or whatever they call it. "What am I paying you a salary for if not to attend to my little affairs?"

Giacomo Brioni, or to give him his right name, James O'Brien, gave me one of his looks. He was a handsome devil, but had a nasty way of looking down his long nose at you.

"I'm paid to put you across as a grand opera star, not to meddle with your private life," I told Brioni.

"An artist has no private life, Bob, if the public can help it—damn 'em. If the newspapers ever get on to this, my career would be at an end and your salary with it. The old dame has the goods. If she spills what she knows—whoopee! Think of the headlines, Bob. 'Greatest Baritone of the Age a *Scarpia* in Private Life'!"

I saw the point. Brioni was at his best in "Tosca" and some of the newspapers were unkind enough to suggest that the rôle of the treacherous *Scarpia* as played by Giacomo Brioni was suspiciously lifelike.

Scarpia, in the opera, is a Roman Chief of Police of a century back who tried to use his power over a political prisoner as a means of getting what he wanted from *La Tosca,* the Melba of her day. He doesn't succeed in the opera, but that's not his fault.

Brioni, although he was Irish and had adopted an Italian name for professional reasons, was not a policeman, but he had power in the operatic world nevertheless. He was both singer and impresario, and specialized in giving young singers of the opposite sex their "chance" in opera. Unkind gossip-mongers suggested that he did it at a price, much as *Scarpia* would have done. In fact, we were having trouble at the box-office, partly on that account.

"Then what is it? Begin at the beginning and get it straight. What's she got on you?"

"Letters."

"What kind of letters?"

"My letters—to Theodora Robecq."

Phew! I whistled. He had said sufficient.

It was scarcely six months since the body of Theodora Robecq had been found floating in the Hudson, following her sensational début in "Rigoletto." She was another of Brioni's discoveries. Where he picked her up I don't know, but there's no question he had a gift for this kind of thing. He had an ear for voice, an eye for beauty, and a nose for genius in acting. He found all three in Theodora Robecq—enough and plenty to spare. . . .

Not since Galli-Curci set the wires tingling from end to end of the country back in 1917 has any singer created such a furore. And then came her death, right on top of it all.

She had been trained by Brioni and he was undoubtedly responsible for her success. Somebody had quoted Brioni as saying that no great artist can sing in opera till she has been in love, and, as I said, we were having trouble at the box-office.

But that wasn't all. Brioni had it in mind at this time to make a marriage with old "Stove-polish" Wayne's daughter. The papers were on to that, too; and any fresh scandal would surely spoil his chances at the Wayne millions.

"Who is this blackmailing woman? What does she want?"

"Francesca Lutini, the dramatic soprano."

"Never heard of her, Brioni."

"Before your time, Bob. I played *Scarpia* for the first time in my life to her *Tosca* eighteen or twenty years ago—in Madrid. She was nearly forty then and her voice was going. She could act, though, and she knew it. It was a great concession for her to appear with me—an unknown artist in those days. If it had been any place more important than Madrid, I doubt if she'd have done such a thing. She treated me like dirt, but—her voice was not what it had been. She taught me a lot, though—I owe her something for that."

"Is she—reasonable?"

Brioni laughed. "I once saw her hit a Spanish Grand Duke over the head with a property-axe. Luckily it was only wood, and his head was the same."

"If she turns ugly, then, it looks like your finish."

"You've said it. It will be if I don't pay up and look pleasant."

"What's she after?"

Brioni shrugged his broad shoulders. "Cash will do it, I guess. From what I hear, Madame is flat broke—voice gone, looks gone, rheumatism; no money and no friends except a former opera coach—Marie. Marie Delacroix coached Theodora for the rôle of *Gilda* in "Rigoletto"—played her accompaniments, taught her the music, an' all that. I saw quite a lot of Marie when I was rehearsing with Theodora and she didn't like me any too well. I hear she's out of luck, too. She must have got hold of the letters and given them to Lutini, and now Lutini is framing a graft on me—it's Lutini's idea, I'm sure, for Marie hasn't the nerve. It's up to you to go and see what she wants."

"What am I to do when I get there?"

"Pay anything in reason, but get the letters."

"How much is in reason?"

Brioni glared in sudden anger. "All I've got, damn it, and all I can borrow if she has the nerve to ask for it. I'd go myself only I can't trust my temper; I'd as lief strangle the pair of them, specially Lutini. Lutini's got the goods and she's all brass. Haven't I told you?"

He was thinking of "Stove-polish" Wayne's millions, of course.

II

I FOUND the two women living in a downtown studio off Washington Square. A big musty room with a fireplace at one end and a cook-stove behind a screen in the corner. They'd been burning punk-sticks to hide the smell of fried bacon. There was a table or two, a few chairs, a couple of couches, and an old square piano piled up with opera scores. Everything old and shabby or in ruins, and the paper coming off the walls.

The Delacroix woman let me in. I could see at a glance I had nothing to fear from her—thin, scrawny, asthmatical, maybe consumptive for all I know.

Francesca Lutini was different. She was propped up in an old brocaded chair. Her hair was black except where the dye had faded. Her cheeks, though lined and seamed, were defiantly painted. Her eyes shone like a hawk's, though, and her dress, worn at the seams, was a bright blue satin affair trimmed with white silk and fur.

She wore a lot of paste jewels and I particularly noticed a ring she was wearing—an immense thing shaped like a snake

with a ruby in its mouth coiled about her finger. I judged it to be an heirloom, for the ruby looked genuine. Beside the chair was an ebony cane with a silver top.

Her voice and some of her strength may have gone, but I could see she had lots of fight in her yet, and I knew I was in for a session.

She wasn't long in coming down to brass tacks. After bringing her a bundle of letters tied with a pink ribbon, the Delacroix woman faded from view and left us to it.

We haggled a few minutes, but finally Madame named her terms.

They took my breath away.

"But Madame," I answered, squirming, "we will—that is Signor Brioni is willing to pay real money—*cash*. Enough to keep you in comfort for the rest of your life. What you ask is impossible. Ridiculous. With a little income, now—"

"Income — money — cash?" Madame fairly roared the words. "What do you think I am? What do you know of an artist to speak of such things? I tell you once more: This Brioni, as you call him, he shall play *Scarpia* to my *Tosca* again before I die. Full dress rehearsal—lights, costumes, orchestra—everything."

Imagine it, will you? This old crone, doubled with rheumatism, with her shrill old voice cracked and raucous, ranting over the stage with all the lights on, making a monkey out of Brioni, and Carozzi leading the orchestra!

"But—" I cried, and dodged.

The silver-headed cane of ebony whistled past my ear and struck a china bowl behind me, shivering it to pieces.

"But nothing! *Sapristi!* What do you know of opera? It is an honor, I tell you. I play *Tosca* to Brioni's *Scarpia!* I—Francesca Lutini, of La Scala, of Covent Garden, of the Paris Grand Opéra! Otherwise I publish. I give the letters to the papers. I talk. I tell what I know. Everything!"

Well, she was crazy; mad clean through. But she was set on it and she had the goods. One glance at the letters, which she held so I could read some of them, and I knew we'd have to do what she said, regardless.

And then—I had an idea. It came suddenly, in a flash. I could hardly keep from showing my eagerness, but I had to pretend to be unwilling so that Madame would insist the more for that was what I wanted, now.

As soon as I could get away I took a taxi back to Brioni's apartment.

III

BRIONI was dressed in a purple dressing-gown, walking up and down his room, waiting for me.

"How much?" he asked coldly. "Where are the letters?"

"How much? Nothing. We make money by it. We get the best bit of publicity of the century. Listen, man!"

Then I told him. He went straight up in the air of course, as I knew he would; but when his breath began to give out I shut him off and told him my scheme.

"Quit that, you fool, and listen to me. Can't you see it? The great Brioni discovers Francesca Lutini in want—the superb *Tosca* who held Europe in thrall, poverty-stricken here in New York. Always generous, Brioni gives a special benefit matinée for the magnificent artist with whom he made his début in Puccini's masterpiece! Why, man alive, the papers will eat it up. They'll go crazy. It's front-page stuff, and it will shut up all the gossip. We'll have it next week, next Thursday matinée. The biggest thing in New York!"

Brioni stopped howling, and took a turn

up and down the room. He frowned and then he laughed, hard and bitter.

"Good Lord!" he said. "And I get the letters back. Good Lord! The irony of it! Get Breuner on the phone."

I soon had Breuner, the stage manager. We didn't tell him everything—not a word about the letters. We just told him the proposition as it stood, an advertising stunt, and he fell for it. He knew all about Lutini of course and it didn't take him a wink to figure out the effect from a box-office standpoint.

"Well!" he said. "Lutini in 'Tosca' once more. It'll be a scream—in more senses than one; but it'll help take some of the stench off Brioni."

IV

No need to tell the fuss that followed. The papers bit, and bit good. All the old critics came out of their holes and told "I-knew-her-when" stories about Francesca Lutini. Society caught on, too.

I'm new to this game, and not much on musical history more than five years back, but it seemed a lot of people knew about Lutini. The phonograph companies dug up some of her old records and played 'em up in their advertising. There seemed to be money in it all round.

The performance was scheduled for a Thursday afternoon about a month after my interview—when we saw how big it was going to be we had to give it time to sink in.

By the previous Monday the house was sold out at double prices. Everybody seemed eager to fix it so that Lutini would make enough on this to keep her in comfort for the rest of her life, and I never saw so much money come rolling in at one time—not in any operatic enterprise I've ever mixed up in.

I wrote a lot of good copy round the story myself, but I didn't have to use it; the sob-sisters, the critics, the Sunday special interviewers, the columnists all got busy and the papers were full of it for weeks.

And they gave Brioni the glad hand, too, which was just what I wanted. They as good as said that this act of generosity on his part went far to nullify the ugly rumors which had been circulated concerning him.

Generosity!

On Thursday afternoon, the Opera House was packed, jammed. Everything went like clock-work. The prelude or overture or whatever they call it to "Tosca" is short and sweet and the action starts almost immediately, like a movie-show.

Capadori sang *Mario's* part, as usual. Brioni got a good reception as *Scarpia;* but Lutini got a roar. They had to stop the performance while she took the call. She accepted the applause like a queen taking tribute from a vanquished enemy. I never saw such dignity, such assurance.

She had left her black stick behind, and I knew that every step hurt her, but she didn't turn a hair. She was game all through, and sure looked the part in spite of her age.

But her voice was the limit. At the first note I could see that it hit Carozzi, the conductor, like a blow in spite of the private rehearsals he had had with Lutini and Brioni the past week or so. I heard a little gasp, a faint titter, all over the house. And when she struck a high note and cracked in the middle, we all shivered. . . .

Yet after the first shock the house took it in good part; they applauded as though it were Geraldine Farrar at her best, and I think everybody felt the pathos of the situation; for as excitement took the rheumatism out of Lutini's joints, she limbered up and it became plain that, whatever she was as a singer, she was a

great actress. Age had cracked her voice and sapped her strength, but it had not drawn from her the fires of eternal youth. She had the agelessness, the genius of a Bernhardt—or so it seemed to me.

I waited hopefully for the second act. This would be the test, of course, for this is where *Scarpia* forces *Tosca* to reveal the secret of *Angelotti's* hiding-place by putting her lover, *Mario,* to torture in the next room.

Then comes the climax, when *Scarpia* promises to give the tortured lover his freedom on condition that *Tosca* yield herself up to him. This is where she sings *"Vissi d'arte,"* her last tribute to "art and life." After the paper is signed giving *Mario* his freedom, *Tosca* stabs *Scarpia* in the back, even as he takes her in his arms and presses his lips to hers.

It was after the second act was well under way that I found myself standing next to Breuner in the wings.

"The old dame's going strong," I said, pleased.

"She sure is," he answered briefly.

And then he dropped a bomb. Clear out of a blue sky he put one little question that knocked the breath clear out of me and almost turned my hair white on the spot.

"Did you know," he asked, in a casual, half-amused voice, "that Francesca Lutini is the mother of that girl who drowned herself—Theodora Robecq?"

Gosh!

All at once I remembered the tales I had been reading of Lutini for weeks past, about her "vivid dramatic sense," her "fiery temperament," not to say temper. Would such a woman as that lie down after what had happened to her child? Would she hand back the letters just for the sake of one more "artistic triumph" playing *Tosca* to Brioni's *Scarpia* —Brioni, the betrayer of her daughter? As an artist he wasn't fit to black her shoes. In ten minutes she would be knifing him in the back before a crowded opera house, as neat as you please, all in play, so to speak!

"Ring down the curtain," I yelled. "Stop the performance!"

I began dancing around like a crazy thing.

"Shut up, you fool," roared Breuner.

I was so excited I could hardly get the words out, but as quick as I could I put him wise to the situation.

He grinned at me contemptuously.

"Old stuff," he said. "I know all about that."

"But the knife, you idiot, can't you see—"

"Oh, chase yourself! As if I didn't fix that! It's an india-rubber property knife—you couldn't stick it into a lump of butter."

That calmed me somewhat.

"Does she know—about the knife?"

"Course not. Think I'd advertise that? No, sir. She can't do any harm. She has no strength left and the knife is absolutely harmless; moreover, I had the dresser search her for concealed weapons. Nothing doing on that!"

"But—" I said, thinking of the letters.

Breuner seemed to know what I had on my mind.

"That's all right, too," he whispered. "Brioni got the correspondence from her during the *entr'acte.* She parted with 'em quiet as a lamb—knew we couldn't stop the performance, and she gets her money, d'yer see? Everything's going lovely. We're all on velvet."

"Well that's that," I thought to myself, breathing a sigh of relief. Yet I felt nervous all the same, as if trouble was brewing somewhere; but then the music of "Tosca" always makes me feel like that anyhow, it's all so dark and sinister.

Somebody called me and I had to go off

and talk to a fool reporter about something.

My office was under the stage, near the orchestra, but shut off. I could hear the music and the singing, but as if from a distance. And of course every once in a while Capadori, as *Mario*, supposed to be under torture, would let out a wild yell.

V

I WAS still talking to the reporter when I suddenly became aware that something had happened that wasn't in the show. I can't describe it, but it happened a full minute before the orchestra petered out—a grisly, creepy feeling that went all up and down my spine.

Then a hum rose from the front—low, ominous, excited, but subdued to my ears by the walls. A hoarse voice came to me clearly, shouting: "Lower the curtain there—quick."

I hurried out to the passage and tried to get upstairs. Some of the chorus who had been singing off-stage earlier in the act were hanging around, blocking my way, talking, whispering, asking each other what it was.

I could hear the buzzing from the front more clearly now, and one could distinctly hear individual phrases coming out of the blurring *crescendo* of sound. "She's killed him. . . . No she hasn't. . . . It's a fit. . . . Brioni's had a fit."

Suddenly everything went quiet, except that from somewhere up above I could hear a woman shouting and shrieking out a hideous, cackling laugh.

I judged that Breuner must be out front talking to the audience, and tried to shove forward again.

There came a sudden jam. "Give way there!" cried a voice, and I was pushed back by a crowd of supers, chorus men and women, stage hands and the like.

I found myself leaning, breathless, against the door of Brioni's dressing-room. I was there when they carried him in, but I did not follow them inside. I went to the stage instead. It was still lit up and the curtain was down, but it was empty. From behind the wings at the Upper Left I could still hear that horrible cackling laughter, and I went after it.

I found half a dozen men, including Capadori, holding onto Francesca Lutini like grim death. She was a fearful sight, her eyes wild and staring, the sweat making channels through the grease-paint on her cheeks, her hair down and her dress in rags.

She was crazy—plumb crazy. Laughing and shrieking, and crying out.

"They thought they could fool me—me, Lutini! With a little plaything of a knife! As if I didn't know!"

She was taken off—to a lunatic asylum I guess. Anyway, that's where she is now—with everything done to make her comfortable, for she got her money from the matinée all right. She had it coming to her sure enough, but I don't think anybody else would have liked to touch it.

VI

BREUNER afterward told me what happened.

"Everything went well enough till the stabbing scene, and even that looked all right. I was watching, half expecting her to kick up a shindy when she found that the knife was a fake. If she noticed it she made no sign.

"They came together in the usual way, and Brioni put his arms around her. She put hers around him, too, and I noticed she kind of hugged him tight—I thought she'd had a twinge of rheumatism.

"Brioni didn't fall the way he usually does. He staggered a bit, and looked queer, tearing at his throat with his hands. As he sank to the floor, I noticed that his

muscles were twitching. Then he was taken with a hideous convulsion—foaming at the mouth, writhing twisting, and making queer choking sounds. . . .

"It made me sick. Carozzi must have seen it, too, for he stopped the orchestra and signaled for the curtain to be lowered. He didn't need to, for I had already given orders."

"But how—"

"Did you notice that ring she was wearing on the second finger of her left hand—a big snake ring with a ruby? It was hollow, full of concentrated snake-poison from an Indian cobra, they tell me. It was fixed so that the tail was a sharp, hollow point which could be turned outward and driven under the skin with very little effort. Slight pressure on the ruby released a spring which forced the poison into the wound—just as it runs down a cobra's fang.

"When she put her arms around him she jammed it into his neck—on an artery as it happened. He didn't stand a dog's chance to recover after that."

Yes, it was pretty horrible. But if you'd seen those letters from Theodora Robecq!

Lessons

By Katherine Negley

I

THE Queen of Sheba was the most brilliant vampire of all ages. When she heard of a promising man, she immediately hitched up her chariot and horses, went to see him, and came home laden with gifts. Which proves conclusively that women have as much business acumen as men.

II

HELEN OF TROY hardly knew where she was at, as she was handed from one great warrior to another, yet she demonstrated the potency of red hair and started the great Henna Movement of today.

III

IT was unfortunate that Du Barry had to be guillotined, but she gave our theater managers the bedroom-farce idea which afforded us so much entertainment almost, recently.

IV

EVEN though Cleopatra lost her grip and resorted to the asp, she showed modern vampires the great field of comforting men who are not understood at home—especially prominent men with money.

V

CAMILLE brought out the possibilities of young men, when a woman is too faded to appeal to men of her own age.

VI

BUT it was for Eve, the first vampire, to get the really great idea—clothes.

Hicks

By Dorothy Donnell Calhoun

AS soon as the report ran up and down Broadway that during one number of "The Foibles of 1921" the entire chorus came down into the orchestra and perched on the arms of the aisle seats while they sang that touching ditty, "Dearie, Won't You Make a Date With Me?" the demand for these seats became so great that the management thriftily raised the official price to ten dollars apiece.

Unofficially, the seats cost their owners much more. With lobsters a dollar a bite and champagne almost as expensive as Cleopatra's famous pearl cocktail, the high cost of loving had hit Broadway hard.

The final guarantee of success for the show was furnished when the militant minister of a Fifth Avenue church attended the performance and, in the interest of a Thorough Investigation of the Evils to which Mankind is being Exposed, procured an end orchestra seat, and afterward told his enthralled audience of his experiences.

The sermon, which was entitled "Are We Living in Babylon?" was listened to with flattering eagerness, and at the end his parishioners made a simultaneous rush for the box-office.

"He cert'nly pounds a mean pulpit!" Thula May observed indignantly. "Lissen to this: 'My companion wore a gown cut so low that I felt myself blusning whenever I looked at her'—doesn't that take the hand-embroidered soap-dish though?"

"It must have been Girlie Flynn," suggested her audience, a small girl with bobbed curls of an astonishing crimson hue; "she made that new black crèpe evening gown herself, and I think she lost a piece outer the pattern."

"Oh, well, if it was her, with those collar bones of hers she's more to be pitied than *censored!*" Thula returned, "I thought at first the parson must be the lad with the white foliage on his face that I drew last night, because he cert'nly tried to live up to the text about loving thy neighbor! Oh, his brain could prove an alibi all right; but who cares what size hat a man wears so long as his clo'es are made with quart-size pockets?"

"You hafta put up with the men for the sake of the men-u!" punned Rea Laroche rather sorriiy. "I was reading a piece in a magazine yesterday called "Budgeting Your Salary," and it said a girl should allow fifty per cent for living expenses. But what are you going to do when you're not *earning* fifty per cent? With silk stockings three dollars a pair, and marcels gone up, if it wasn't for being able to date a John for a square meal now and then us girls would have to economize by cutting eating out of the budget!"

"You said a forkful, dearie!" Thula slipped a vanity-case out of the neck of her gown and surveyed herself critically in the infinitesimal mirror. "Still, I noticed you didn't fatten on the feed-bag last night. What was the matter with C Aisle Left—didn't he know what to say to a lady?"

Absorbed in repairing her cupid's bow with the first-aid kit, Thula missed Rea's tiny start of embarrassment. "Oh, *him!*" she murmured. "Well, you see, he's from some hick burg in Ohio. He hasn't got his dress shirt tamed yet; but he said he'd be in the same seat tonight, and I think

this time I can pry an invitation loose—"

The orchestra broke into the strains of "Dearie, Won't You Make a Date With Me?" and they drifted out onto the stage with twenty-two other young ladies clad in the extremes of the mode—both extremes, in fact.

A stir ran over the audience.

Ladies from the suburbs, who had come hoping to see something shocking, leaned forward, peering at the first figure that parted the velvet draperies and stood posed against them an instant before tripping down the glass gang-plank into the audience—white-gold hair, polished like metal; an immense parasol of blue ostrich plumes; a gown that ended at the knees in front, displaying a poem in silk stockings of the shade known as "Nude"—a coles-phillipic in fact, with a long forked train sweeping for yards behind. Then the next, with hair like black lacquer and flame-colored draperies; then a haughty beauty in green, wearing green eyelashes to match; a saucy coquette with butterflies painted on bare dimpled knees; then a vivid, provocative little figure with crimson curls, smoking a jade meerschaum pipe daintily. . . .

C Aisle Left sat forward, a slow red tide rising to the roots of his carefully brushed blond hair. She was the fifth one. He consulted his program, moving a big, blunt finger down the lists. "Rea Laroche," that was it! The name just fitted—it was kind of dashing and daring and different—like her.

He fumbled awkwardly with his cuffs; smoothed back his hair. His evening suit was impeccable in cut, but on his broad, muscular shoulders it sat uneasily, making them look almost misshapen. As Rea smiled down on him bewilderingly, he broke into a gentle perspiration.

"So you had enough left to pay for your ticket tonight!" She gibed under cover of the music. "I suppose, though, you keep your money fastened to your shirt with a safety-pin?"

He managed a sickly grin, looking up at her with honest eyes of admiration. "I'm willing to unpin it whenever you say the word, ma'am"—he was plainly frightened by his own unsuspected glibness of repartee. "I—I like your looks first-rate."

"Say, Dearie, Make a Date," sang Rea gaily. The white shoulder next to him was fragrant with violets; a floating wisp of gauze touched his cheek troublously. She leaned impishly forward and blew a smoke wreath across his face. He mopped his forehead honestly with a pocket handkerchief the size of a tablecloth.

"I'd admire to take you some place for a bite to eat afterward." He had evidently read somewhere that such things were done, and quite as evidently, from his agonized confusion, he had never committed such an astounding indiscretion himself in all his blameless years.

"You cert'nly do say the cleverest things!" Rea assured him as she rose. "Wait round by the stage entrance till I change into my street complexion. So long!" She waved him a kiss as she danced away in the pool of the spotlight up the aisle and disappeared through the curtains.

C Aisle Left glanced about to see whether the kiss had been observed, and catching unmistakable envy in several masculine eyes, sat back complacently, trying to look as though he were in the habit of taking chorus girls to supper every night.

II

"My Gawd, dearie, what are you doing in that dress? You're a sight for nature lovers!" Thula regarded the small person in the extremely low-cut black crêpe amazedly. "On Girlie Flynn it wasn't so bad, because she's got the kind of a face people don't look at if they can help it, but with

that hair and that back you're about as inconspicuous and retiring as a brass band!"

Rea set a black-lace hat with a sweeping green plume at an impudent angle on her flaming curls, added a green crescent-shaped patch at the corner of her lips, and regarded herself critically in the glass.

"Do you think," her tone was anxious, "do you think that I look devilish?"

"You certainly do!" said her friend grimly. "Nobody'd ever guess you were respectable. You look as innocent as a keg marked *Dynamite*. You look as if you were all made up for the part of co-respondent in a divorce case; you look as if—"

"Did you ever notice that men like to feel kind of reckless and wicked?" Rea asked inconsequentially. "They're apologetic about their virtues, and kind of ashamed of 'em, but they like to boast about their sins, especially if they never committed any!"

Light broke upon Thula. "That hick from Ohio! He'll call for help when he sees you!"

"Not Mr. Ninian Conroy!" said Rea confidently. "I know hi—that is, I know his kind. They don't care about the sweet little country maid that gathers the new-mown milk every morning and wears a white muslin dress and a blue sash. They come to the wicked city to sit up after nine o'clock and drink root-beer neat and raise hell generally. All chorus girls are sinful—to Main Street! They come under the head of luxuries, too, and there's some luxury tax to pay. Being notoriously kind-hearted, I'm simply trying to give the poor boob his money's worth of thrills!"

"He'll probably try to treat you to ham and eggs in Childs'," Thula prophesied gloomily. "These country lads are martyrs when you try to lead 'em to the steak! They're generally so reckless with their money that they'll risk any amount—at solitaire!"

Her voice followed Rea's exit, barbed with malice: "Better wear your pearl beads, dearie—you might sit in a draft—"

C Aisle Left did not flinch when his companion removed her coat in full view of the diners on the Roof. "How do you like my envelope?" Rea asked brightly. "Suitable for any occasion—an opera or an operation, as they say!"

He watched her light a cigarette with the horrified satisfaction of a small boy looking at the snake-charmer at the State Fair. "I—I never knew any chorus girls before," he confessed awkwardly; "but I've always thought I'd like to."

Rea blew a smoke wreath, regarding it critically. "Nineteen-twenty-one model, stream-line body, self-starter, sports model—that's me!" she admitted modestly. "I suppose you don't see 'em where you come from—that's one thing you can't order from Sears Roebuck. What's your home town, anyway?"

For a fleeting instant he looked oddly embarrassed: "Olena. Olena, Ohio."

"Olena? It's a grand place to come from, with the accent on the *'from'!* I was through there once but I missed seeing the city. There was a cow standing in front of it!" She laughed a trifle breathlessly.

He stared at her, a big, hurt boy. "You got me all right." He looked down at his great brown hands: "I guess it takes more'n a suit of evening clothes to make a farmer over into a city fellow—the real kind that can wear white kid-gloves without looking dressed up; the sort that knows—" he groped for words to make his meaning clear.

"That knows what knife is good form to eat his peas with," Rea supplemented. "But what's the big notion? You haven't left Olena, Ohio, for keeps, have you?"

The orchestra finished "She Walks in Her Husband's Sleep" with a flourish; the immense drum burst into illumination and a pretty girl in pink fleshlings curled

within waved her hand to the diners.

Ninian Conroy stared about the great, gaily-lighted place with frank delight, drawing a long breath as he turned back to Rea.

"You bet I have!" he cried exultantly, bringing his fist down on the table with a crash that made several people turn and stare amusedly. "Olena is a great place for an ambitious young undertaker!"

"Tut! Tut! Naughty!" reproved Rea; "mustn't speak unkindly of the dead!"

He leaned toward her, leaving his dinner untouched as he poured out the resentment of years; the longing to see life, to get free of the farm and its tiny tyrannies; to "be somebody."

"I used to buy magazines, the kind with ladies on the cover—ladies like you," he finished. "I'd read 'em evenings when the chores were done, and wonder whether I'd ever get a chance to do the things the men in the stories did—wear silk pajamas, and ride in taxis and—and take chorus girls to supper—"

It was funny, but his hearer did not laugh. She did not even have to try not to laugh.

"How about the girl?" she asked, eyes intent on the cigarette she was lighting. "The girl next door? There always *is* a girl next door!"

He shook his head. "There was one when I was just a kid—Rachel Brown, her name was; a nice, quiet little thing with yellow hair. We used to post letters to each other in a hole in the apple-tree that grew between our folks' places. But somehow she was like the rest of it—mowing and planting and going to church Sundays. I wanted something *different*. Her folks sold out and moved away, and since then,"—he laughed ruefully—"the girls on the magazine covers are the only ones I've looked at. I've got 'em pinned up round my room; the one with the bathing suit, and the one with the pajamas, and the one that's winking kind of cute and knowing. I never dreamed, though, that I'd ever really *know* one—"

Rea finished her squab and mushrooms with the thoroughness of one who has learned by experience that it may be a long time to the next squab.

"So you've sold the old farm and come down to discover New York?"

"Better than that," Ninian declared. "They've found oil under the south field! I've got an offer of a million for the farm—the papers are being drawn up now, but I didn't wait for them. I took the four thousand I'd saved out of the bank and come on to get started being a millionaire!"

His voice cropped to the depth of confession! "I can work, and I can save money, but I've never had any practise *spending* it! I thought that maybe—if you were willing—you could show me how."

Rea stared at him, then deliberately reached up and pinched one white shoulder. "Ouch! Then I'm not dreaming!"

She regarded Ninian Conroy with awe. "Man, you're in luck! New York is cert'nly the best little health resort for getting your pocketbook reduced, and I'm probably the most talented spender in town. Your S O S received and my answer is C.O.D. Tomorrow morning you can come around to the theater at eleven in a taxi, and we'll go shopping for something nifty in English tailoring."

III

LOOKING more like a *Flip Fiction* cover than ever in a slim blue tailor-made, a pert little gold turban with tassels, and gold silk stockings rolled at the knees, Rea piloted her pupil breathlessly from one suave, subtly elegant specialty shop to another, choosing ties, crêpe silk shirts, gloves, stickpins and pearl studs with an assurance that dazzled him.

Over luncheon in a smart gray-and-gold

tearoom he tried to put his admiration into unready words. "There was one cover I liked best of all: A girl in a suit and hat carrying a chain, only instead of a dog on the end there was a little figure of a man with a big pink bow round his neck. You—you make me think of her a heap; same kind of lively way and cute trick of looking sideways. And you can order waiters and clerks around and buy the right things. Waiters always scare me—they look so grand and almighty."

He looked at her with visible anxiety. "I suppose I seem like an awful hick to a regular New Yorker like you?"

His blue gaze was tragically solemn. In the rococo room with its fragile gilt chairs and its sophisticated interior decoration his shaggy yellow head and massive shoulders loomed incongruously. With his new, uneasily worn clothes and his childlike eagerness to be like "the men in the magazines," he was rather ridiculous. But for some unknown reason Rea Laroche felt her eyes fill with tears. To cover them she laughed jarringly.

"A man with a million can get away with murder. Look at Sockless Jim Anstruther, the fellow that made his pile in garbage contracts. He parks his napkin in his collar and eats soup with the Australian crawl stroke, but there isn't a show girl on Broadway that would refuse the chance to eat opposite him for life. Money talks, and, let me tell you, it says an earful!"

Naturally, after several weeks of shopping trips, visits to a dancing academy, where Ninian wrestled grimly with the mysteries of the toddle, and suppers after the show, Rea's hick became the favorite topic of conversation behind the scenes.

Night after night the other occupants of the aisle seats changed, but C Aisle Left remained the same: big, blond and blushing under the mischievous glances from bright eyes that passed.

"O' course, dearie, you know your own business and I'm not nosey or anything, but honest, I thought you had more sense—a boob that comes from a town with a name like a butter substitute!" Thula lamented, this being her idea of approaching the subject tactfully.

Rea's eyes flashed dangerously but she went on beading her lashes. "A lot you know about a little town! You got your idea of the country from the by-gosh plays! But I—I used to visit in a place like Olena once—"

Her tone grew wistful: "It's—it's not like Broadway, of coûrse; it's sort of nice and friendly and everybody speaks to you—"

"They speak to you on Broadway, too," Thula interpolated; but Rea went on, unheeding:

"In the fall they rake up the leaves and burn 'em, and the air is all hazy and smells like ripe apples; and in the spring when they plow and the orchards come out—"

"My Gawd!" the lining-pencil splashed from Thula's fingers into a bowl of liquid-white as its owner stared in horror at her friend. "You sound as if—you can't mean you're going to marry a farmer and go and live in a jay burg where they eat dinner in the middle of the day?"

The soft light faded from Rea's eyes. She shrugged her shoulders and went back to her beading. "Don't worry, dear! There's one little detail I guess I didn't mention. He's a millionaire—or he's going to be when he sells his farm to an oil company tomorrow morning." There was marked lack of enthusiasm in her tone.

"A millionaire!" Thula repeated reverently. "You mean he's going to stay here? If you marry him you'll have a house on the Drive and a glass car and servants and everything?"

"I suppose so," Rea nodded listlessly. "A butler with a solid English accent and a valet for the Pomeranians and an Indian

guide! There goes the bell. Darn these dresses that fasten on with sticking plaster!"

"You should worry if you're late and lose your job!" Thula remarked enviously. "What gets me is: How did you know that he had money? You must have used a divining-rod! It just shows you can't almost always sometimes tell!"

Rea picked up the jade pipe and lighted it, holding it rakishly. "Maybe he won't come across with a proposal—maybe I don't suit him—"

"Don't you worry!" Thula encouraged her; "if it isn't a union suit it's a breach-of-promise suit. He's in love with you—I'd ought to know something about love! Haven't I been divorced three times?"

Rea looked at herself somberly in the mirror. "Yeah, I guess he likes me because I'm different and kind of devilish and not quite proper—like the girls on the magazine covers—"

"But there's one thing I don't get still," Thula said as they went down the winding iron stairs to the wings; "when we was all thinking you was crazy, why didn't you tell us he was a millionaire?"

Rea stared at her blankly. "Well, you see," she murmured, "you see, I guess I forgot about that myself most of the time—"

She moved away toward the curtain where the girl with green eyelashes had already disappeared, leaving Thula to collapse weakly upon a marble garden-bench of plaster. "Well, what do you know about that!" she apostrophized the universe in general. "She forgot he was a millionaire herself! I ask you, Britannica—you tell me, you got the words!"

IV

Rea's hick was in his usual seat, but as the spotlight followed Rea down the aisle and rested upon him, it revealed a figure that raised a flutter of amusement from the gallery. In a clumsy suit of obviously country origin, a made bow-tie under his doggedly set jaw, wide slouch hat balanced on his knee, Ninian Conroy was an incongruous contrast to the sophisticated little creature who perched on the seat of his chair, staring down at him amazedly.

"What's the idea of the way-down-east make-up?" she whispered. "Did you have to hock your Ritz overalls, or what?"

"I'll tell you afterward," he answered; "that is, if we can find some place to eat where they'll let me in without my waiter's clothes."

When she came to meet him in the alley it was his turn to stare bewilderedly. In the shabby little suit and plain velvet sailor hat he hardly knew her. It was as though a gorgeous butterfly had donned blue-checked gingham wings. But it was Rea's own laugh that answered his amaze.

"Hist!" she burlesqued; "disguised as respectable! I might almost be headed for an oyster orgie at the Presbyterian vestry in Olena, mightn't I? Flash Alley would never know me now!"

For the first time he winced. "I don't like to hear you talk like that!" he said roughly. "You can't fool me—I guess I know a nice girl when I see one, even if I can't call all the cocktails by their first names!"

"Discovered!" Rea hissed, but a wave of color swept to her gay bobbed curls. She led the way into a white-tiled lunch-room where a chef stood in the window endlessly turning endless cakes on a griddle.

"Brown the wheats!" she bade the waiter crisply. "Draw two in the dark, and fetch two orders of Adam and Eve on a raft; wreck 'em!"

Having delivered this cryptic order, she leaned across the marble-topped table,

chin cupped in hands. "Alone at last! Come across now—did you honestly hock 'em?"

He nodded.

Rea whistled softly. "Well, I always did say New York was an easy place to cash a ten-dollar bill!" she admitted. "But you can get them out tomorrow with the change from your first million in your pocket!"

Ninian Conroy looked at her quietly. "I pawned them," he said, separating his words deliberately, "so as to have enough money to buy a one-way ticket to Olena, Ohio, good on the eleven o'clock train tomorrow morning!"

Here the waiter interrupted to clatter down cutlery and plates of wheatcakes and poached eggs.

When he had gone Rea spoke in a queer little voice: "You mean—you're not going to sell your farm? You're not going to be a millionaire?"

The big man opposite shook his head. "They wrote me today. They want to back out—don't think there's enough oil to pay. Oh, I suppose I might fight it out in the courts, but I'm not going to. He burst out as if in self-defense: "I've been thinking it over—and, well—they were going to set up *their damned derricks right in the middle of the finest cornfield in Ohio!*"

The girl made a little sound which he interpreted as scorn. He leaned to her passionately, great fists clenched on the table before him, big, boyish face dully crimson.

"When I got their letter today I was almost *glad!* You couldn't understand. I thought I wanted to be a gentleman and live soft and pretty with a he-nurse to tie my neckties for me! I thought I wanted to splurge—to drink cocktails and smoke through a cute ivory handle, and be devilish and—"

"And play around with naughty little chorus girls," Rea suggested with a hard laugh that jangled.

Ninian Conroy looked about him. The tables nearby were empty. A charwoman mopped apathetically in a sudsy surf of dirty water; beyond, a motorman held forth noisily upon his grievances to a uniformed companion.

"I didn't mean to tell you—after I knew I'd got to go back—" he looked down, laying his knife and fork in intricate geometrical designs. "I suppose you'll laugh at me, but I can't help it. *I'm crazy about you!*" The silverware jangled in his fingers. "Oh, I'm a hick; but I thought maybe if I had money and could give you the things you wanted—a fine house and a car and a pearl necklace, and like that—maybe you'd be willing to put up with me—" he cleared his throat noisily to cover the shake of his voice.

The smile on her lips slipped askew.

"Like in the magazines where the chorus girl always marries the millionaire for his money—"

"I tried," he said heavily, "I tried to learn to be different, but it wasn't any use. I didn't seem to take to dressing up like a Christmas Tree and eating outlandish food in uppity places and not doing anything—with my hands! And then the noises pretty near drove me wild; the jabbering and the autos screeching and the jazz everywhere I turned. I don't belong here—I belong back in Olena on a farm, and I guess I knew it almost ever since I came. But I'd have stayed and kept on trying to make myself over so's to be near you—"

The little face in its frame of bright hair was very close to his. Rea's eyes were like two blue stars.

"You're—you're crazy about me *because* I'm a Broadway girl and have bobbed hair and smoke cigarettes—because I'm different and dangerous and—and devilish? Because I remind you of that girl on the magazine cover?"

He gazed at her, bewildered. "You don't remind me of her tonight. But it's queer—there's something like as if I'd seen you—as if I'd always loved you—"

Rea touched his sleeve. She looked triumphant. "You have—always!" her voice sang. "If you knew how sick I was of it, too—the crowds and the gilt and the jazz—if you knew how I've wanted to get away and go back to where people look at you kindly, and to the lilacs and the little white houses and the apple-tree with a hole to post letters in—"

Ninian gripped her wrist. "The apple-tree with the hole—you used to post letters in it—for *me?* You're Rachel Brown? You're the girl next door?"

Rea nodded, smiling through a mist of tears. "And I had to come to New York and get my hair bobbed and hennaed and go into the chorus with a fancy alias just so's you could come to New York to fall in love with me!" she marveled. "Isn't Life the darndest, though?"

The apathetic charwoman slopped her murky floods about their feet, but they did not heed; the somnolent bus-boy dropped a cup, but they did not hear, awed by the miracle that had befallen them.

"Queer birds!" the waiter observed, pausing by the counter where the blonde lady cashier was making a few alterations in her color scheme. "They ain't touched what I brung 'em, and just now when I passed she was saying: 'I've got enough for my ticket,' she says; 'I was saving it to buy an umbrella for a rainy day, but now there ain't going to be no rainy days,' she says, 'only sunny ones.' Whatta you make of that, eh?"

"Plain nuts, if you ast *me!*" returned the Blonde One, dusting off her nose with a grimy chamois-skin. "Here they come now—"

Almost simultaneously it had occurred to Rea and her Hick that there was an extremely substantial table inconveniently placed between them. They rose, and moved down the aisle, hand in hand.

A pause at the cashier's desk, then still hand in hand they stepped into one compartment of the revolving door and disappeared from sight.

"Did you see that?" the cashier inquired of the waiter who still lingered. She raised her fashionably threadlike brows patronizingly, patted her glittering coiffure. "You can always spot 'em when they don't know how to use them doors—*hicks*—"

There was profound pity in her tone.

The Story of a "Follies" Girl

By ——— ———

Part II

EDITOR'S NOTE—*In* Part One *the "Follies" girl leaves her dull little home town for Chicago, where she earns a meager living behind a ribbon counter in a department-store. Bored by her monotonous surroundings, she follows the advice of a former clerk, May Morrows, now a chorus girl, and haunts Redding Hall, where new shows are going into rehearsal. In spite of frequent rebuffs she persists in her dream of going on the stage, and finally gets a place in the chorus of a new show. She quits her ribbon counter for rehearsals, only to have the show go under at the end of three weeks. Jobless, and alone, she makes another attempt and secures a place in the chorus of a show which, at the end of the month, is booked for a try-out in Madison, Wisconsin. She is a real chorus girl at last!*

MY first show opened in Madison on a Monday. No matter what great events, if any, may take place in my life, I'll always remember that day.

We were to leave Chicago at eight o'clock Monday morning. I learned, later, that for some unknown reason the manager of a road show always finds the most inconvenient train out of town. If asked, he will say that it is the only train that will get the scenery in town early enough.

He may be right. There must be some reason for choosing one o'clock at night or four in the morning instead of two in the afternoon. Shows always leave at the wrong time.

I had heard the girls say you didn't get your trunk often, so I put the things I needed most in my suitcase. I found that "not often" was conservative. On one-night-stand tours you live in your suitcase and see your trunk about once every ten days.

The baggage-man called for my trunk Sunday night. After it was gone I felt a combination of blues and happiness. I really was going away the next day—on the stage. A new life! What would it mean to me? I could hardly sleep that night.

I hadn't bought any make-up. I didn't have any money and I didn't know what to buy. I had never seen a stage make-up closer than across the footlights. I used rouge and powder, but that didn't seem much of a help. I had heard the girls speak of a drug-store that sold theatrical things.

At seven that gray, drizzly Monday morning I kissed aunt and uncle good-by and took the elevated train to the loop. I stopped at the drug-store and managed to say that I was a chorus girl and wanted a complete outfit.

I left the store a few minutes later several dollars poorer but with a shining black make-up box in my hand. I found out, later, that he had sold me liners and grease-paint that you only need for character work. But he had included the things I really needed.

I had borrowed fifteen dollars in advance on my salary. You can always get an advance just before the show goes out. I had fairly good clothes, which I had bought when I was still selling ribbons. I had bought a new pair of shoes and now

the make-up box and still had money left.

At the station I met the company, a bit heavy-eyed. They were standing in little groups. Josephine Maynard, who was going to be my room-mate, was there and so was Viola Renny, who roomed with Grace St. Frances, the girl she'd known the year before.

You room with someone on the road because it reduces your expenses and keeps you from being lonely. On the road you have to pay for your hotels and your sleeper jumps. All the company furnishes is ordinary—the most ordinary—transportation.

There were sixteen girls in the company, but we four stuck close together. The other three were blondes and I'm fair, though my eyes are brown, so they called us the "blondies" or the "taffy girls"—things like that.

The manager was late and the train was not made up. I looked at my future traveling companions. I found out later, that it was a typical road-show company. About half of the chorus girls were rather bedraggled looking, with hard lines around their mouths. The others were young and pretty. All of the girls had made attempts to look stylish and perhaps a bit sporty. They had added a trifle too much rouge or a bit of bright color to their costumes.

New York chorus girls aren't like that. I pay one hundred and twenty-five dollars and up for my suits and around thirty-five dollars for my hats and keep them conservative and plain. I try to look as if I'd always just stepped out of a Rolls-Royce.

In those days I looked like the rest of the girls. I wore a black velvet hat with a red rose on the side and a cheap blue suit with a lace waist. I carried an old suitcase and the new make-up box. The box looked like a cash-box, enameled and tinny, with gilt lines on it. I was no beauty, but none of the others had anything on me.

The chorus girls, as usual with a road show and most city shows, looked better than the women principals. The ingénue with my first show was a coy little thing of about forty with a giggle and a lisp. From the front they say she looked cute. Her husband was the stage manager and played "bits"—a policeman and a butler.

She had tiny wrinkles on her face and her hair looked like rope. But they were rather decent to us, which is more than you can say of most road-show principals.

Oh, the conceit of those road hams! My great social triumph would be to have those I'd played with pass me so I could cut them dead. Occasionally I meet one of them and he is always *so* pleased to see I'm with the "Follies," the Mecca of most musical-comedy people.

The comedian was a good sort and we all loved him. We called him Uncle Charlie and used to visit in his dressing-room. He was always eating the cheapest sort of candy and, as he never offered it to us, we'd swipe it and make him furious. His salary was small and he had a sick wife and was trying to save for a little farm. Being a comedian with a cheap company was all he could do, but he gave pleasure to a lot of people, at that. Backstage, he made many a gloomy hour pass pleasantly. We soon knew all of his jokes, but we always laughed because the oftener he told them the funnier they grew.

The juvenile was named Walter Del Mar, and, though I know there are hundreds of Walters around the country, it doesn't seem possible that the American public will let them live. Walter thought he'd be leading man on Broadway within a day or two. The fact that he hasn't been heard from shows that Broadway managers have more sense than they are usually given credit for.

Walter was conceited, big-headed and stupid. He sang and delivered his lines in a heavy, pompous manner. Everything

he wore was too flashy and cut wrong, so of course all of the small-town girls were crazy over him.

I can see Walter, now, exhibiting poorly written notes from simple-minded rural maids and simpering over them. Sometimes, if I happen to be on Broadway, I see lots of Walters looking for jobs, and it's all I can do to keep from yelling, inelegantly, "you big boob," as I pass them.

The rest of the company were rather middle-aged and drab. Road companies are like that, mostly so neutral and indifferent that you forget them a few weeks after you leave the show. They are rather pitiful people.

It's no fun, playing one-night stands through darkest Illinois. Yet, year after year, people play those awful tank towns, eat impossible food, sleep on uncomfortable beds, get small salaries. It must be the supposed lure of the stage. Yet, with their little scandals and their little troubles, these people are narrower, in their way, than the narrowest of the small-town people whom they look down on.

Chorus girls in road shows are about alike, too. Some of the girls in that first show, like all other shows I've seen, were frankly immoral and rather proud of their unsavory exploits. The rest of the girls were good, in the usually accepted moral sense, but a bit flighty.

Even the good ones dared not dwell on their goodness. There is an unwritten law in the chorus that it is better form to talk about your lack of morals than your ownership of them. Some girls pretend to be devils when a little harmless graft is the worst thing they ever did.

II

We stood around the station, that Monday morning, until the manager came and found our train. A coach had been reserved for us. I found out, later, that a company has to pay for a certain number of seats in order to have a carload of scenery. We always had a private coach. Some small companies don't even have that. The larger ones always have sleepers as part of their equipment.

We settled down in the red-plush seats. That first ride was typical of all the rides that followed. Some of the men and one or two women played poker. Some of the girls gossiped. A few read tattered copies of cheap magazines. The magazines read by theatrical people on the road are always dog-eared and soiled. I sometimes think publishers manufacture them that way for the profession. Some of the company slept, curled up in their seats. That first year, I was one of the sleepers. You never seem to get enough sleep, on the road. Even now, I sleep a lot.

When we got to Madison, we went to the hotel. It, too, was like all of the hotels I stayed at, later. On the call-board at the theater you find the name of the next town the show will play, the time the train leaves and the names of the hotels. The best hotel on the call is the one you can't afford. There are always several people in the company who have played the town before and they tell you where to go.

That day, we left the train and, ignoring the busses and taxis, went to the hotel we had agreed upon. In the unpleasant hotel lobby a group of loiterers, an intermingling of the town's cheap sports and traveling salesmen, stood around. We signed the register and Josephine and I followed the bell-boy to the room assigned to us.

I had been in only a few hotel rooms in my life, so that one interested me. I can't distinguish it, now, from thousands of others. But there must have been a torn carpet; an iron bed, once white, brass trimmed and with one knob missing; a dresser with a wobbly mirror, and a wash-stand with a bowl and pitcher. There

were, too, I know, half-soiled fancy lace curtains at the one window, two straight chairs, and an uncomfortable rocker. Some rooms have running water. Three times, that first season, we had a room with a private bath!

The first day I unpacked my suitcase. I learned to take out just the things I needed, after that. Then we had lunch. It was the usual hotel lunch, tasteless, greasy soup, two slices of unrecognizable meat covered with a gummy substance that passed as gravy, two kinds of vegetables in individual dishes, and dessert, a square of stale cake covered with sauce.

We went to the theater for a final rehearsal and back to the hotel for dinner, a meal just like lunch with additions of stewed fruit and pickles.

Then, the first night of the show. I still shiver when I think how nervous I was. Except for the last rehearsals of the show, I had never been back-stage in my life. I followed Josephine, now.

Josephine had had a season of one-night stands and a season of split-weeks in vaudeville. She thought I was experienced, too. Not for worlds would I have told her my dreadful secret—that I was rather an innocent girl, absolutely new at the show business.

"Well, here we are," said Josephine, "and, as usual, we'll draw the worst dressing-room."

In small-town theaters, the dressing-rooms are much alike, varying only as to size. They are bare rooms, with electric lights hung on cords, shelves for make-up, mirrors above the shelves and, sometimes, running water.

The chorus girls usually have one large room. Along the walls not occupied with make-up shelves and mirrors are hooks for costumes. As soon as she reaches the theater, each girl chooses several hooks for her costumes and, of course, each one tries to pick out the best place.

The assistant stage manager, a fellow who plays "bits," or a chorus man who wants to increase his allowance, brings in the trays. These fit into big trunks and there is a tray for each girl. In the cheaper shows there are now dressers and the girls have to pack their own trays.

All of your clothes go into the trays except large hats and make-up boxes, and there are trunks for them. On top of each tray is a sheet. You fasten that to the wall and hang your clothes over it. As each costume is worn it is replaced in the tray, so by the time the show is over you are nearly packed up again. You tip the man who takes care of the trays. I know all that, now. I didn't know any of it that first day.

We hung up our costumes. I had brought a sheet from my aunt's, as I'd heard about that. I'd brought a towel from the hotel. Chorus girls are supposed to steal towels. A well-known theatrical joke is: "Did you play Albany last season?" And the answer: "Wait till I look over my towels and I'll tell you." You're supposed to have a whole linen-closet full. The truth is, you'd have no place for towels, for you've got to lug your own suitcase, and nobody wants to take cheap towels in it.

As a matter of fact, in each town you do take a towel from the hotel, if you can get away with it. You take the towel to the theater to remove cold-cream and make-up. Then, the next day, in the next town, you take a fresh towel and leave, in exchange, more than likely, the soiled towel. Nobody gets cheated very much and the laundries ought to be glad of the extra business. At the end of the season, you ought to be one towel to the good.

As a matter of fact, if hotels have extra soft towels, or an unusual supply, you repay their goodness by swiping two or three, so, at the end of the season, there are about half a dozen left over. If steal-

ing towels was the worst thing that chorus girls did!

III

THAT first night, after I hung up my costumes, I didn't know what to do. I sat down at the make-up table and opened my box. I was afraid to begin making up. The call-boy yelled "half hour." He would call "fifteen minutes" in a little while, I found out, and then "overture."

If you get in at the first call you have lots of time; at the second you have to hurry. At "overture" you *ought* to be in the wings waiting for the curtain to rise.

I watched the girls. I was afraid to do the wrong thing or I'd be the "patsy." There is always a "patsy," whom everyone picks on. The girls took off their street clothes and put on kimonos. So did I. They brushed back their hair. My hair went back.

The other make-up boxes were scratched and worn. Mine drew attention. I knew I had to say something.

"L-o-o-k at my box," said I. "Isn't it a beauty? I lost my old one when I left my last show and now I'm the sport of the company. Did you ever see anything prettier than all of this?" My frankness disarmed the girls. Then I buried my head in my hands and complained of a headache. But I peeked through my fingers.

"You'd better hurry up," said Grace, "or you'll never be ready in time."

Now I knew what to do and I did it. My first make-up must have been a fright from the front. In a few weeks I was making up as fast and as well as the others. I put on a good make-up, now, if I do say so myself, *et cetera*. I look like a raving beauty, from the front, they tell me. I'm not ugly, close up, or anything like that, but across the footlights I have great soft eyes and a baby mouth that nature didn't quite take care of.

Do you know how to make up? This is how it is done:

First you smear your face all over with cold cream. Some folks use a theatrical cream but I use any I happen to be using off stage. Just now, we girls in the "Follies" think a certain kind is wonderful but it will be another brand next year, most likely. When I think of the stuff I've rubbed into my skin it's a wonder I've got any features on my face at all.

Then you rub the cream off with the hotel towel. Next you apply a thick coating of powder. Any heavy powder will do. A cream or pink shade is best. If your skin isn't good, you can rub a little grease-paint on before you put on powder, but, if your skin isn't good enough so you *don't* need grease-paint, you won't get far as a chorus girl.

For a character make-up you'll need grease-paint and lining pencils and lots of other things. I don't know much about character make-up. Men always use grease-paint that makes them look like red Indians close up and beautifully athletic and tanned from the front. How the matinée girls would howl if they found that their sun-browned hero was a sallow, pimply fellow with light eyelashes!

After you have a heavy, clownlike layer of powder on your face you apply rouge. You begin it just under your eyebrows and put it on over the eyes and cheekbones, blending it into the powder farther down. You apply a bit more to your chin and to your forehead, if it protrudes.

Now you are ready for your eyes. You brush the powder from your eyebrows with an eyebrow brush and apply a thin, dark line of eyebrow pencil. You wipe the rouge out of your eyes with the end of the towel. On your eyelids you put a penciling of either brown or blue, usually the color of your eyes, though my eyes are brown and I use blue because I find it more becoming. Then, with a black pencil,

you draw a line just below the eye and extending out a little on each side. Some girls black above the eye, too. It depends on the eye.

Now you heat your *cosmetique* in a tiny frying-pan until it is liquid and you do the only difficult thing in making up—you "bead your eyelashes." Dip an orangewood stick into the melted *cosmetique* and apply it to your eyelashes with an upward motion to the upper eyelashes and with a downward one to the lower lashes. The *cosmetique* dries as it touches the lashes and forms beads at the ends.

Some of the girls can make their eyelashes look an inch long and curling up from the eyes. But you can't do that the first time. If you drop hot *cosmetique* in your eye it hurts all evening.

Then comes the final red. You hold your lips peculiarly and paint a red, wax-doll mouth on it with lip rouge and your little finger. Draw a cupid's bow on the upper lip and redden the center of the lower lip. For my pouting lower lip I redden quite a bit below the actual color of my mouth. That first night I just dabbed the rouge on and called it a night.

With another orangewood stick, apply bits of color to the inner corners of your eyes. Then pink the lobes of your ears and inside your nostrils, give your nose another dab of powder, arrange your hair and you are all made up or I'd like to know why. At the end of the evening remove the make-up with cold cream, being careful not to pull out your eyelashes taking the beads off.

The girls were too nervous, that opening night, to pay much attention to my make-up. We slipped on our costumes. The boy called overture. We stood in the wings. The music started. My heart gave some awful thumps. Overture was over. The opening chorus started. The curtain went up. We danced on the stage with a gay "Here we are to greet the happy marriage day, to greet, to greet, the marriage day—"

A great burst of light nearly overcame me. Instead of the stage and audience I had expected I seemed to be swimming in a bowl of light with a vague orchestra below the footlights, outside the bowl, and a barely discernible audience below that. Mechanically I danced and sang. My brain seemed numb, but my body did the required things. Opening number over, we danced off.

"Well, I went through with that," I breathed in relief.

We changed our costume to the next number, danced, changed again, danced, changed, sat around—rather a long wait—danced, changed, danced, sang, changed. The show was over! I was an experienced chorus girl!

We packed our trays and went back to the hotel. Some men were hanging around the stage door. We didn't notice them that first night.

We went to bed as quickly as we could. It seemed that I had scarcely dozed when there was a loud rap on our door.

"Half-past four," boomed a voice. Josephine shook me.

"The gay life has begun, old dear," she said.

The jump was for five o'clock. We had read that on the call, the night before. We threw our clothes on and crammed our things into our suitcases. In fifteen minutes we were on our way to the station.

The company straggled in. We sat at a high counter and had coffee and doughnuts, just as we were to have them many mornings after. The train came.

Three hours later we were in the next town. Another hotel. Another theater that night. I knew what to do, now. I knew how to make-up. I knew about the bowl-like stage with the black cavern in front.

IV

THE days went on. Every day or night there was a jump from one little town to another. The jump might come right after the show or might be any time before eleven the next day. The trips might be from one to five hours long. We got our routes several weeks in advance and copied them down into little route-books and sent them to our friends, so they could tell where to write to us.

The towns were all alike. The only way we could tell where we were was by looking at the call or in our route-books. The men we met should have distinguished the towns. They didn't. They were too much alike, too. Outsiders would call these men stage-door Johnnies. On one-night stands we called them Johns. Here in the "Follies" we don't call them anything like that. But they are the same, no matter what you call them.

Of course we wanted to know men. Otherwise life would have been awfully dull. More than that. I knew I had to save for the months of idleness that follow every engagement. If there were no men to buy meals and occasional treats, where would we have been? One of the best things men do is to spend money.

There are several ways to meet men on one-night stands. One way is to pick them up at the stage door. As you come out with your room-mate or your girl friend, a couple of local swains will join you and mutter something about taking you to supper. If you haven't an engagement and don't feel like going to bed hungry, you nod an agreement and in a half a minute you are headed toward the local rathskeller, where, in exchange for stories of adventure that never happened and much flattery, you get a fair meal.

If you've played the town before, you actually may know a man there. In that case you drop him a card, a week before, saying when you'll be in town and that you'd like to see him. If he is a real sport, he will arrange a party for you and ask half a dozen men and allow you to choose the girls. Then there will be a private dining-room in the town's best hotel and regular food and drink. I went on perhaps half a dozen rather nice parties that first season.

The third way is the route-book method. Before you leave Chicago or New York or wherever the show comes from, you find out your general route and exchange names with girls who played those towns before and make notes in your route-book. Like this:

La Crosse. Harry Delancy. Friend of Rosie May's. Will spend money if encouraged. Engineer. Engaged—or married—to a home-town girl. Thinks he's sporty.

Maysville. Louis Detters. The banker's son. Nice kid if treated kindly. Flatter him about his city ways. Went to —— College one whole year and don't care who knows it.

Williamsport. Morris Emerson. Good-looking but stupid. Knows everyone in town. Will give a party if urged. Don't encourage Morrie too much.

Of course, when you come to a town where you have a victim, you telephone him and give him the message from the girl he knows who is with another show. He'll probably give you a party and feel flattered at having chorus girl friends who remember him.

The last method is to pick up men around the hotel, and this isn't as pleasant. You usually get commercial travelers and they are a fresh lot. Though I might say, right here, that when it comes to grafting, commercial travelers are the easy marks. The yokels will buy meals but edge away at anything else. The drummer who thinks he is a wise guy will fall for the oldest sort of graft.

There are dozens of petty grafts and you learn them all the first season on the road. There is the sick room-mate, all alone at the hotel without any money, who needs a good doctor. If the victim has a soft heart, it's candy and flowers, and a check, maybe.

The lost purse—with a whole week's wages in it—is good. Or, someone in the company, whom you borrowed money from, is about to tell the manager and you'll lose your job. There is the pawn-ticket for your mother's wedding-ring—the oldest of all—a dozen more.

Every girl gets perfume and candy and cosmetics when she can. Not pretty, but quite the right attitude as a rule. The man who takes a chorus girl out thinks he is awfully sporty. He may just buy her an oyster stew at a lunch-counter, but the next day he winks and says: "I had a pretty girl from 'Left Alone' out last night—rather sporty, those chorus girls—" It's up to the girls to prove that they are sporty, in their own way.

I had good times with the men I met. I let them buy me food and drinks. Several of them kissed me and I thought myself rather fond of them—nice fellows, in their way. I promised to write to a dozen. But there wasn't a single one who really made a deep impression on me; whom I really cared ever to see again.

V

THE season wore on. I got thinner from the poor food and the uncomfortable hotels and the hard traveling. But I enjoyed it, too. The girls were lots of fun. We gossiped in the dressing-rooms and in our rooms at the hotels. We sewed a little and helped each other make waists or collars or retrim hats. We quarreled and made up and quarreled again. We fussed at the hotels, the dressing-rooms, the principals and the train-jumps.

But, on the whole, I liked it. I thought that the season would go on, uneventfully, to the end, when our manager, a comfortable old fellow, who spent most of his time smoking big cigars, got ill and they sent J. J. Jansen in his place.

From the first minute I saw Jansen I didn't like him. He was a thin, blond fellow with a lined face, high cheekbones and an ugly eye. For a few weeks he left me alone and I thought that I'd misjudged him. Then he started to worry me. Just little things, at first. Then he'd put his hand on my bare shoulder. He would manage to come into our room at the hotel—to bring me a magazine or something to eat. Then, one day, in the wings at the theater, he tried to kiss me.

Now, kissing wasn't rare at the theater. Various people kissed and got kissed. It didn't mean a great deal. But this meant a lot to me. I got furiously angry and slapped Jansen. I slapped him hard.

He didn't say a word. Just walked away. The next day, back-stage again, he greeted me with an odd smile.

"Now, girlie, you didn't mean that slap, did you?" he asked me.

"You bet I did, and a couple of other slaps that I didn't express," I told him.

He frowned then.

"You're too touchy," he said. "Nobody ever slapped me and got away with it."

I didn't like his tone. So I wasn't surprised when, four days later, I found a note in my pay-envelope, saying that my services were no longer needed. A two-weeks' notice!

I stayed out the two weeks and Jansen left me absolutely alone, though I noticed he was being attentive to another girl, a girl I didn't like, especially.

I should have felt blue at being fired. But I wasn't. I was not tired of the show business but I was tired of the same show, dancing the same dances and singing the same songs every night. I thought that

it would be different in other ways, too, with another show.

I'd had nearly a season in the show business. No real adventures, to be sure. But I knew the business, now. I'd get something good.

At the end of the two weeks I left for Chicago.

(To be continued in the March number)

Memory

By Katalina A. Soulé

THE sea is like a glass;
Not a sigh—not a toss—
And the stars are little fishes
In a King's net caught;
The shore's an ebon wall
To hold the solemn lights;
And my heart is a lilting laugh
Because of old delights.
Your face is but a mist;
Your name I don't recall—
But you were with me such a night—
Have you forgot it all?

Lines Graven on a Skull

By Aurélie Ségalas

O LAMP, what hast thou done with the flame?
O Skeleton, what hast thou done with the soul?
O Cage, what hast thou done with the singing bird?
O Slave, what hast thou done with thy master?
O Archbishop, what hast thou done with thy God?

WHEN you kiss a girl she says, "Oh, you mustn't—" but she does not mean it.
When you kiss a married woman she thinks, "Thank you," and she *means* it.

MARRIAGE is a treaty in which both parties resign all their rights.

"No Imagination"

By George Briggs

"AND she went back to the chink." Eddie finished his story, and waited for my applause.

"It may have happened that way," I admitted; "but if you sent that story to a magazine—"

"You writers gimme flat feet," Eddie interrupted. "You got no imagination. You can't see—"

"My dear boy!" In a superior, condescending way I broke into his tirade. "If you think you can take a story complete from life, and persuade an editor to print it, you are mistaken. You've got to juggle and coax and pat a story into shape. You've got to—"

"No imagination," he repeated, gloomily looking about the Automat where we were consuming a couple of cups of coffee. "No imagination. Why, you write the same stories over and over again! No imagination."

From the street came the sounds of automobiles as they sped northward carrying the after-the-theater crowd. Newsboys shouted, exhausts barked, the mingled noises of hundreds of people as they talked and laughed and shuffled along Broadway came to us muffled by the closed doors of the self-service restaurant.

"Take the case of the Nolans," Eddie began. "You'd never guess how that story ended.

"I was playing the drums in a small town in Wisconsin at a five-a-day small-time house. The orchestra was Steve West at the piano and yours exclusively at the drums. Steve is writing songs now; you've heard his 'Clinging Kisses' foxtrot; but in those days he was pounding the black keys for eight per.

"The Nolans, that I'm telling you about, were the usual thing. He looked like an actor, and now you know what he looked like. Sporty, clothes a trifle extreme, hat hanging at an odd angle, deep lines at the corner of his mouth, a voice that could carry to the rear rows. Bessie Nolan was a peach.

"Have you ever wondered where and why these perfect pigeons are annexed? Bessie was pretty, just as soothing to observe as a case of pre-prohibition hooch. Eyes, mouth, nose, figure, all the sort to make the neighbor women keep an eye on their husbands. But she couldn't sing, or dance, or act. At first, I wondered why Nolan had doubled up with her. She kept him back, because he had something.

"Yes, sir, Nolan sure had something. I don't know what it was, whether it was the way he walked, or talked, or sang, but he certainly had something. All he had to do was come on the stage, and you could feel the people in front begin to loosen up. He didn't smile in a particularly friendly way, and he couldn't dance extra, and his voice was just medium, but he got the boobs in front."

"Personality," I suggested, and received a glare that made me vow I would not interrupt again.

"Bessie was almost a total loss. Of course, a pretty girl is a pretty girl, and, as such, likely to make a hit anywhere. But she didn't have sense enough to stand still and be looked at, and Nolan didn't have the courage to tell her. She'd prance

around, and titter, and almost beg for a hand, and not a hand did she get.

"Well, it's not among the duties of a snare-drummer to tell the performers what to do. You know how the 'perfession' laps up criticism anyway. As long as you spread the salve, they smile like an advertisement for a tooth-paste. But, on the other hand—

"The first performance they gave was enough. I was doubtful during their rehearsal, but thought maybe they'd come through with something different when the nuts were out front. No, they pulled the same old stuff—Nolan in white flannels and a straw hat, Bessie in a summer dress—the flirtation, the kidding, and then a dance.

"Not a new line in their act, and their songs were 'old' in Milo, Ohio. Nolan could have done a 'single' and gotten on the better time, I believed. Bessie should have married some hick farmer and raised a dozen children. As things were, she was stealing the spot from Nolan, and not getting anywhere herself. For she couldn't sing, and she couldn't act, and she couldn't dance.

"I say she couldn't sing, but maybe I'll have to take back a little of that. She had a voice, and a rather good voice, but it was dull. Have you listened to a hash-house waitress at the end of a hot day as she shouts, 'Pot Roast'? No pep, no joy, no happiness. Just weary. Well, that was Bessie's voice.

"Come to think of it, she could act a bit. She smiled when Nolan said, 'Hello, little girl, aren't you afraid to be on the street alone?' Yes, she smiled all right. She smiled and gurgled 'I'm not afraid when I'm *alone,*' but the gurgle spoiled her grin.

"But I'll stick by what I said about her dancing. She hugged the floor like a sticky piece of chewing-gum, and her feet were languid. Oh, she tried! Tried hard! Tried so hard she looked like she was bringing an armful of wood into the kitchen.

II

"On the second day they played the town, I found out why Nolan and Bessie were teamed up. It wasn't any particular thing I noticed, but just a lot of little things. Bessie was his wife, and they were in love. That's the story so far. Bessie was his wife, and they were in love.

"That's not unusual. There are thousands of them, three-, four- and five-a-day people, traveling over the country, just as happy, just as contented as any of the people out front.

"Nolan knew that Bessie believed she was a first-class performer, and he didn't have the courage to tell her the truth. He fostered her belief that the agents were down on them, or that they didn't have 'pull,' or that the public didn't appreciate them—

"You know how every actor believes in himself, no matter how rotten he is. Well, Nolan let her believe the usual stuff—that they were as good as the headliners on the Big Time, but that luck was against them.

"On the same bill that week was Estelle Barton, a tight-rope walker. She had a soft, purring voice, snappy black eyes and—"

"So she vamped Nolan, and—" I began.

"Listen!" Eddie's voice was scornful. "Don't leap at conclusions! I'm telling this story, and I'm telling it just exactly as it happened. Estelle and Bessie were the best of friends, and they never quarreled in their life! Don't you know that the triangle is dead and buried? Except on the screen, and the stage, and—"

"In real life!" I jeered at him. "Why, that story you just told me, the one about the jockey, the girl and the chink was—"

"No imagination," he retorted. "No

imagination. You're thinking of all the stories that were ever written. Leave me get on with the Nolans.

"Well, Estelle and Bessie were the best of friends, and all was sweet and lovely. Estelle's husband was a booking agent, and maybe Bessie thought that Ted Barton, Estelle's hubsand, could perhaps get the Nolans on better time next season. Anyway, they chummed together, eating at the same restaurants, and coming in to the theater at the same time.

"At that time, I thought the Nolans would keep on playing the small time until Bessie admitted being forty. You know when a vaudeville actress admits she is forty she is at least eighty-seven. But my guess was wrong.

III

"My next meeting with Bessie was exactly six months later, when she was billed as the principal feature at the Palace in New York.

"Changed? I'll say she was changed! She came out in a simple evening gown that didn't cost a jitney less than a thousand, walked to the center of the stage, and began to sing. The first thing I noticed was that she had, somehow, acquired a personality.

"Her flightiness was gone, her kittenish ways were gone, and her broad, wide smile had left her. Her face was sad, sad with longing, and beautiful beyond mere prettiness. Her eyes, that used to be pretty in a kid sort of way, were deep and intense. They were filled with sorrow, and you couldn't look at her without a sob in your throat.

"You've heard the old hokum, 'Make 'em laugh, make 'em weep,' and so on. Bessie made 'em weep, just singing a simple little song that everybody knew, and didn't want to forget. Her voice had deepened and grown stronger; it held a pitiful note that seemed to accelerate the tear-ducts. And she sang that song as though she was begging and pleading with someone. Have you heard 'Come Back to Me'? That's the song she sung."

"I've heard it," I answered. "I've heard about three hundred songs with exactly that title. Which one do you mean?"

Eddie snorted, and then sighed. "No imagination," he murmured. "No imagination. All above the soft collar is road-making material. Dempsey could slam you and you'd think it was a mosquito bite.

"This is what had happened: Nolan had left her. He had gone away, and Bessie was on her own.

"Naturally, I was interested. I remembered when I had seen them in that small Wisconsin town, and so I made a few inquiries. You know how it is in the profession. Everybody knows a lot of gossip, everybody repeats it, and the actual facts are covered up by a lot of guesses.

"The strange part of this affair was that I couldn't find out why Nolan had left her. Nobody seemed to know why. I heard that it was because of a woman, and I heard that it was because of a man. I heard that it was because of two women, and that it was because of two men. And so on.

"But none of these things were true. Bessie was as much in love with her husband as she had ever been, so the wise ones declared. It was because she loved him that she could put that song over.

"Nolan disappeared between the last show at night and the first one the next afternoon. Bessie was dazed; she didn't know when or why he had gone. She and Nolan had been planning to use 'Come Back to Me' in their act. They had made a few changes in their routine in order to lead up to the song, and were going to use it that afternoon.

"A contract is a contract, and Bessie always did have a fairly husky opinion of

herself. Since Nolan had gone, she went on that afternoon, dazed and crushed, and began with 'Come Back to Me.' After she sang it the first time, the audience went wild. They wouldn't let her do anything else; they just wanted that one song. She had eight encores, and she sang it eight times. Even then they didn't want to let her go.

"It sometimes happens that a theatrical agent is on hand when he should be, and Estelle's husband signed Bessie. She played the Moon circuit for a month, and then he brought her East. She had a try-out in Newark, and was booked solid for a year.

"Ted Barton was as sharp as a safety-razor blade. He changed her routine, coached her in some new material, fixed up her act, and settled down to draw his ten per cent. Meanwhile, he was hoping that Nolan never would show up again.

He wasn't the only one who had the same hope. Gilbert Fenwick expressed the same desire a thousand times or more. Gilbert was one of those sleek, well-fed, carefully brushed men that money seems to like. No matter what he dabbled in, the currency raced in his direction. He was certainly wild about Bessie.

IV

"At that time, I was beating the snare in the Café de Picardy, a combination of the Little Club and Sherry's. The common mob didn't drift into the Café de Picardy for two sound reasons. The first was that they couldn't get in, and the second was that they couldn't stand the prices. Only those who had an engraved silver card were admitted within our portals, and by the time they had eaten and danced their check amounted to the amount of jack they had with them.

"Gilbert and Bessie were our regular customers. Every evening after the theater they occupied the same table. It wasn't hard to guess that he wanted her, and it wasn't at all difficult to know that he wanted her right.

"Bessie had a husband, and she still loved him. Even though Nolan had departed without a good-by kick, she was still enraptured. It's strange that women love the hand that slams them, but it is exceedingly true.

"Divorce didn't enter Bessie's mind, though I am sure Gilbert suggested it. One evening, as I happened to pass their table, I overheard a bit of conversation.

"'I know he's alive,' Bessie said, and the pathetic note in her voice made me want to kill Gilbert. Why should he cause such suffering?

"'But he's never written—'

"That was all I got, but it was enough.

V

"The Café de Picardy changed hands, and I was out of a job. By that time, I had made a few friends in New York, and when there was an opening in the orchestra at the Palace I applied for the position. My luck held, and so I was present when Nolan returned.

"Every night was 'S. R. O.' at the Palace when Bessie Nolan was on the bill. She came out, slowly and gracefully, and began the song that had made her famous. Eva Tanguay has 'I Don't Care' and Fritzi Scheff had 'Kiss Me Again.' And you can't think of Bessie Nolan without 'Come Back to Me.'

"The orchestra followed her, keeping the tempo from force of habit. They had played the song thousands of times, and the words are nothing much. Ah, but the way Bessie sang! Even the first violin, a hardened Swiss, had tears running down his cheeks! The others couldn't see the music for the mistiness in their eyes, but, fortunately, they didn't need the score.

"With all her longing trembling in her voice, Bessie sang. The slide trombone, who had a 'rest' during the last four bars, leaned over and told me a bit of news. Between sobs, he managed to inform me that Bessie was going to divorce Nolan, and that she planned to marry Gilbert.

"That caught me in the wishbone. I had wept myself out, not a single drop of moisture remained in my tear-ducts. I squeezed the water out of my wet handkerchief, and looked out over the audience. Women were frankly crying, men were looking grim while they fought with emotion. Then, sitting in the third row of the orchestra, I saw Nolan.

"Yep, he was there. Not exactly the same Nolan I had seen on the stage in that small Wisconsin town, but the same man, all right. He had grown a bit stout, and there was a strange expression on his face. He looked—he looked as though he was being wicked!

"Well, Bessie didn't recognize him—I don't believe she saw the audience that night. This was her actual farewell to Nolan, and she remembered every incident of their joyful life together. But I saw him, and I thought I knew what would happen later.

"About the middle of her next song, I saw Nolan give a note to one of the ushers, and knew that he was writing to his wife. Ten minutes later, the usher came back with an answer.

"I packed up my stuff quicker that night than I've ever done before. I was anxious to get back-stage and find out what had happened. And when I got back there—"

Eddie paused, and looked at me fixedly. "No imagination," he groaned; "absolutely no imagination."

"Not so fast! I can tell you what happened." His groan had aroused my ire. "Let me take up the story now! Nolan went back-stage, and Bessie met him at the door of her dressing-room. 'Dearest! Thank God, you have come back to me' and they embraced. Next day, they put on their same old act, and went back to the four-a-day, and stayed out in the sticks for the rest of their lives!"

Eddie brought a sigh from his insteps. "No imagination. He never had any imagination! This is what happened:

"Nolan went back-stage, as you said, but there was no embracing.

" 'Hello, Bessie!' He stood in the doorway, but he didn't go in. 'I'm pained and shocked,' he said, 'to see you steeped in iniquity and sin. Your dress was a disgrace to your sex.'

"She just looked at him. At first she couldn't believe it was her husband, and when she heard what he said she was sure of it.

" 'You've changed,' she whispered.

" 'I have,' he said solemnly. 'I have cast aside the flesh and the devil. As a charter member of the Stage Reform Association, and as its president, I plead with you. As your husband, I command you. You must leave the stage!'

" 'Why? I don't understand—'

" 'The stage is a force for evil, it is Satan's right hand. When our legislation is put upon the statute books, it will be a crime for women to appear before a mixed audience unless the woman is—'

"Right there I left. Nolan had been converted, or something, and his brain was twisted. That's why he had that wicked look upon his face when he sat in the orchestra of the theater. He believed he was doing something he shouldn't, and he enjoyed it.

"No imagination," Eddie groaned again. "No imagination. Bessie got a divorce, and married Gilbert Fenwick. He is building a theater and naming it after her. She retired from the vaudeville stage for two years, and next fall she will invade the drama. And when—"

"Eddie, Eddie!" I interrupted. "Stop

there! You really don't think I believe that story. Why, it's improbable, impossible!"

"Her name wasn't Nolan," he said. "You know that theater on Forty-ninth Street? Well, it's not called the Bessie Nolan, but—" He whispered a name that has been famous for years.

"No imagination," he growled, as he left me.

Bernice

By Gordon Malherbe Hillman

THERE was more beauty in your face
Than seas or skies have shown,
More of transient loveliness
Than in a rose, full-blown.

There was soft magic in your eyes,
Your lips were a cupid's bow,
Once it was you laughed with me,
But that was long ago!

Then the songs were well worth singing,
Their tales of love were true!
Now only I am left to sing
The beauty that was you.

Jason and the Elusive Lady

By Valma Clark

HIS Aunt Enid is fond of telling a childish anecdote on Jason: how she sent him into the garden to gather flowers for her very special dinner-party; how Jason simply walked by the gorgeous red peonies and the bland pink roses, and returned, hours later, with a bunch of poor little elfin wild columbines squeezed tight in his hand.

His Aunt Enid might have learned something about Jason from the incident, but Mrs. Selby-Smith was too busy and too modern, too deeply occupied with the sophistications of Ibsen and Shaw, to make subtle deductions about her perfectly normal young nephew.

II

JASON had spent the day alone in the open. He had seen one blue heron, one doe, and two porcupines, and for several hours he had lain on his back on a couch of sun-warmed, fragrant pine-needles, and had watched the gulls wheel overhead.

When the sun was a crimson balloon hanging low over the western waters of Georgian Bay, he sighed, faced about, and paddled home, through devious little island channels, to his aunt and her guests. His beloved cedar canoe shot forward and swerved to the Selby-Smith dock in a perfect landing; and Jason stepped reluctantly back into tame civilization.

For Aunt Enid had built herself an Italian villa in a spot that called for a log cabin. She had sprinkled pergolas and things about, and had made orthodox vines grow where nothing but blueberries and wild cranberries and poison-ivy ever grew before. In short, Aunt Enid had turned a heap of rocks surrounded by water into a pretty little garden, and had quite effectively screened out the wild Canadian scenery beyond.

Jason sometimes wondered why Aunt Enid came North to sit in a basket-chair, when she could just as well sit in a basket-chair at home, if she'd only stop long enough.

But this evening, as he climbed to his own room and got out of his khaki breeches and into his white flannels and drifted down to the living-room, he was wondering chiefly what these new guests would be like. There was a girl, he remembered, faintly hopeful.

"Ah, Jason!" Aunt Enid hailed him. "I was hoping for a word with you."

He lit a cigarette and slouched obediently over to her.

"It's about the Kirwans. Kitty Kirwan is a delightful child. I want you to be nice to her, Jason." With her lorgnette she tapped his arm for emphasis. "She's criticized at home, you understand. Mothers of swaggering girls, and mothers of choppy-stepping girls, frown upon Kitty's hip movement when she walks across a room. 'You shall not sway your hips,' they say. Nonsense! As well tell the breezes not to blow! Kitty is really very charming. She has a little manner—a poise and finish all her own. She has more real culture back of her than any other girl in that younger set; her mother is musical, you know, and her father reads voraciously. Kitty herself has a very pretty little talent—plays, has composed a little, writes occasional verse. She

promises well. She's artistic, and a wee bit original, I suspect. And she's romantic, Jason; like a girl from a storybook, you know, all a-tingle for the big adventure—the romance around the corner—"

"If she's counting on *me* to play the lead to her Big Adventure!" muttered Jason darkly. Already he hated the girl.

"Kitty is one of my enthusiasms, you perceive," Aunt Enid finished with a smile, having summed up the girl to her own satisfaction at least. "You must like her, Jason. They'll be down any minute. . . ."

But the faint hope in Jason had turned up its toes and died. He knew the type—pretty little girls that his aunt was always bringing around. They played sweetly and danced lightly; and when mamma's back was turned, they sometimes puffed at a cigarette too daintily or said "Damn" or did the littlest shimmy—and thought themselves very rash and reckless. Invariably they wore organdy—usually *white* organdy.

Jason loathed organdy; the sheerness of it that dares, and the stiffness of it that forbids and wilts down as though it's been poisoned if you so much as touch it. Not for nothing had Jason spent three college years in a metropolis and looked in on musical comedies and Bohemia!

Wherefore Jason got to his feet and eyed Kitty Kirwan without interest. So he *was* right, even to the white organdy. He mumbled "How-dye-do?" and took the girl's cool hand. This one wasn't even very pretty, he noted; slim and tall, with dark hair combed back from a rather colorless small face.

Dinner was interminably long. Aunt Enid and Mrs. Kirwan finished Oscar Wilde and the Van Wyck divorce and *Main Street* and Mrs. Brady's atrocious new stucco house. Matsu pad-padded back and forth.

Through the open window, Jason watched a round moon floating high above the pine tips of the island opposite, and caught the glint of water, palely gold, very still. He squirmed.

"It's a fairy barge!" chuckled the girl beside him.

Jason stared. Clearly she was referring to the mint leaf floating in her lemonade.

Rot! But he relented toward her somewhat. She had none of the pretensions of the accomplished sweet young thing. She was a mere child.

When presently a stray gnat got into the lemonade and drowned there, and she shuddered and pushed the glass away as any fool girl would, instead of fishing it out sensibly and finishing off her lemonade, his dislike of her turned definitely to tolerant contempt.

At coffee, he condescended to smile upon her. She was drinking her coffee so eagerly that you could tell she hadn't been long graduated from nursery porridge.

"Do you want *yours?*" she asked him greedily under her breath; and when Jason said no, she sneaked it so surreptitiously that he laughed outright.

Her face, he discovered, with its pointed chin and its frame of dark hair curving backward from a point in the middle of her forehead, was heart-shaped. She had a funny kid way of wrinkling up her nose and making quick little grimaces.

"You *like* coffee?" he inquired with some interest.

"No. It's nasty, bitter stuff. I like the way it makes you feel." That sounded promising. She glanced sideways at Jason. Was there, or was there not, a dancing something back of her eyes? But she looked down at her plate again, and her profile was so quiet and demure that Jason decided there was not.

"Talented—romantic—a little poise and finish all her own," Aunt Enid had said.

And then Kitty Kirwan turned to him

and made her one contribution: "I adore peppermint squashes, don't you?"

"Peppermint squashes?"

"You know. You screw a peppermint-stick into a lemon and then suck the lemon juice through it. It's sour sweetness—makes your mouth ache, like teary laughter makes your heart ache."

"Peppermint squash! 'Poise and finish!' My eye!" Jason did not utter the exclamations aloud. But he sat there and looked at Kitty Kirwan in her white organdy, and saw instead dainty blonde Aline of the "Fairies' Frolic"—Aline in daring black satin, pert and deliciously slangy, smiling at him over the rim of a champagne glass. And Jason turned again to the moon.

However, he saw what his Aunt Enid had meant, when after dinner the girl put on her drawing-room manner and sat herself down at the piano and played for them. Jason edged toward the door.

"Do 'Love's a Flower,' Kitty," commanded Mrs. Kirwan. "A little thing of Galsworthy's—the air is Kitty's."

She struck the opening chords, and noiselessly Jason bolted. On the veranda he paused a moment. The girl was singing in a not unpleasant voice that had little lilts and unevennesses in it:

"Love's the rhyme of a summer minute
Woven close like hum of flies;
Sob of wind, and meaning in it
Dies away, as summer dies.
Love's a shimmery morning bubble—"

Not bad, that! The sorrowful cynicism of it rather appealed to Jason's youth. But if he was going to make his getaway—

Jason crept silently down to the dock and his waiting canoe.

III

Hours later Jason drifted moodily down a silver stream between purple splotches that were islands. He guessed that he was a long way from home, but he was giving Aunt Enid time to get off for the night before he returned.

The canoe slid gently into shadow and a spruce branch swept his face. Well, tomorrow he'd clear out—a camping trip up the French River. He'd have the devil of a time with Aunt Enid of course. Aunt Enid had good taste about some things, but when it came to girls —

Cradled there, stretched out in the curving bottom of his canoe, his head pillowed against his bunched-up sweater, wrapped about by the warmth of the night and the odor of balsam, Jason must have slept.

When he awoke, stiff and rather damp with dew, the moon was setting. He pulled himself up with the feeling that someone had spoken to him.

"Moonlady, Moonlady!" The voice of a girl, lyric, whimsical, came out of the black heart of the shadows before him. "The round moon is your yellow hair, cropped close like a boy's. The black filigree of the pines is your black lace shawl and the silver water is your spreading silk train. The white birches yonder are your slender white fingers. Go to sleep, O Moonlady! Pouf!" Suddenly she broke out whistling a rollicking rag-time, and Jason, peering into the night, saw the prow of a canoe move out from the shore into the dim light.

She was almost quite past him before Jason found his voice. "Hello!"

"Oh!"

"Did I give you a start?"

"I—I— Where *are* you?"

"I'm over here."

"Oh!"

"'A whistling woman and a crowing hen'—how does it go? I say, that's a wrong start, isn't it? I'm only trying to be clever," Jason explained.

She lingered, trailing her paddle, a shadowy figure at the stern of the other canoe.

"Where are you going?" he tried again.

"Oh, drifting—just drifting. I can't see you," she complained.

"No? I'll come out. We might have drifted together. They drove *me* away from home. Silly little simpleton of a girl!"

"You too?" she sighed. "Such a stupid prig of a boy! The mater will be giving me Old Harry."

"Jove, that's a funny thing—both of us! Look here, who are you?" he demanded suddenly. "I don't remember any camps close."

"Perhaps I'm a dryad and live in a tree. Dryads do live in trees, don't they?"

"Do you come from over Shawanaga way?"

"Perhaps."

"But, good heavens! That's a clean six miles!"

"Yes?" — indifferently. "Well, I'm bound to catch it anyhow, so there's no hurry."

"You've a nice voice," murmured Jason tentatively.

"Do you think so?" The girl laughed softly.

"I say, I've got to see you! I've a box of matches here. If I light a match and show myself, will you do the same?"

"Hm."

The match flared. The girl made a little indeterminate exclamation.

"Fair," she said, after a moment's silence. "Rather young, though . . . I wonder if he doesn't take himself a bit too seriously."

"Now!" He reached her the matches.

She weighed the box in one slim hand—suddenly laughed and tossed it overboard.

"You cheat!" he charged hotly, grasping the side of her canoe.

"Let go. I must hurry and swim before the moon goes quite down." She slid away from him; was swallowed by the shadows. Came a sharp scraping against rocks, a muttered "Bother!" a prolonged crackling of brush, and the girl stood out on the pale cliff above him.

"My suit is red satin and my cap is yellow, and I look like a gypsy—only nicer," she teased, and stood poised on her toes, her arms pointed over her head.

"But Lucifer, you're not going to dive from there! Do you know what's below?"

"I'm not sure." And she dove clean, making the least splash.

Jason, clutching the two sides of his canoe, dug his nails into the wood.

But her voice reassured him: "You see, it was all right."

He breathed again. The little fool! But she was none of your namby-pamby parlor maidens . . . a little dare-devil . . . a slim athlete. . . .

"Your name," he hazarded abruptly, "would be Zoe—or—or Caprice. Wouldn't it?"

"I like Satinka better."

"Satinka?"

"It's Indian for *Magic Dancer.*"

"Do you dance, too?"

"I'll do the dance of the fireflies, shall I?"

"Please. Only wait." Jason caught hold of a spruce bough, stepped precariously onto a rocky ledge of the island, pulled his canoe half out of the water, and climbed to her.

The girl stooped for something, and danced away from him.

"Where are you?" he cried.

A spot of light answered him, was gone—a pocket flashlight, he guessed. It was a game then! He darted after her.

"Here!" she mocked him; from quite a different direction, came the firefly glimmer. He plunged after her, stepped off into a cleft in the rocks, scrambled up again.

Jason caught the zest of the chase. He skinned his knees, and his face was bleeding from a scratch, and the wonder of it

was that he didn't break his leg; but his heart was racing, and he was unconscious of anything but that maddening, elusive voice of hers and the tingling of his own hot blood in his veins.

Her laughter bubbled up at his very elbow; her breath was on his cheek; he grasped—and caught the air. By heaven, he would get her yet!

She had Aline stopped, this strange girl; Aline only played at being a fairy sprite in a cooked up fairy ring under a spotlight; this girl *was* a fairy with the whimsical mind of a fairy.

At last he swerved and stumbled over her, a laughing, choking little heap. He found her wrists, twisted the pocket light from her. "I've *got* to see your face," he panted, "because I think I'm—falling for you—and how can a fellow fall for a girl without—a face?"

With one arm he held her tight to him, while the fingers of his free hand felt over the flashlight for the button; found it. Jason chuckled—a triumphant little gurgle of laughter—and tilted up her chin.

But somehow, at that moment, she eeled away from him, eluded him entirely. Jason was after her again, swearing softly; she was down there on the ledge by the water.

But she was too quick for him. He heard the swish of the prow and the slap of the stern as she pushed off in a running leap.

The moon was down and it was suddenly very dark; he could just make out the moving shape of her canoe. Her derisive laughter floated back to him. The night was still—just the receding splash of her paddle.

Then, far out on the water, the girl began to sing, and the thread of her song trailed back to Jason, faint, provocative:

"Love's the rhyme of a summer minute
Woven close like hum of flies;
Sob of wind, and meaning in it
Dies away, as summer dies.
Love's a shimmery morning bubble—"

The truth of it hit Jason squarely between the eyes; the direction of the expiring song was his own Aunt Enid's sleeping Italian villa.

Jason sat down suddenly on a patch of harsh, sun-baked moss. "Good Lord!" he breathed.

For Always and Forever

By Harold Hersey

"For always and forever," the lady said,
"O King of Kings."
And yet to dust
His mighty empire crumbled in a broken heap of things,
As all things must.

"For always and forever," sang the priests of Babylon
Who lived too well;
A song upon the lips of many lovers in Illion
Before it fell.

"For always and forever," Antony said unto one,
And kissed her hands;
Their glory was a moment, their dreams of dust . . . now does the sun
Beat on the sands.

"For always and forever," said the Roman emperors,
"Glory is ours!"
But where are all the golden hosts that went upon their wars;
Their shining towers?

"For always and forever," cried they on the great crusades,
"For God we fight!"
Today . . . a memory of shattered fields and broken blades . . .
An aching night.

The Prima Donna's Jewels

By Peter Condet

OLIVE BOURNE was half asleep. Suddenly she sat up, startled and awake. Something had banged against the window.

Peering through the darkness she could see two dangling legs silhouetted against the dull night sky. Down, down they came until one foot rested on the window-sill. An instant later the second foot joined its mate.

Olive reached under her pillow and drew out a tiny pistol. Then her left hand slipped silently over the wall until it found the electric button. Her eyes never left the window.

It was like watching a shadow play. The dim, one-dimensional figure moved quickly and silently. The legs entered the room followed by a suitcase. With a sudden twist the body followed.

Olive pointed the pistol at the dark mass on the floor. Then she switched on the light and the same instant said clearly:

"Don't move or I'll shoot!"

"Don't shoot!" exclaimed the intruder. "I promise to sit still until kingdom come."

He was a most astonishing-looking burglar; in fact, he didn't look like a burglar at all. He looked a good bit more like a collar ad or a moving-picture hero; only it would have been a shame to have lost his extraordinary coloring in the gray and black shadows of the silver screen.

There was nothing astonishing about his features: his nose was straight and neatly carved; his mouth was a little large but altogether likable because at the slightest provocation it parted in a roguish smile, showing the even white teeth; his chin boasted a tiny cleft, a cleft so small that a girl would be apt to call it a dimple.

But his eyes and hair! They were different. His hair, which he wore very long and brushed straight back, was a copperish gold. In certain lights it looked almost henna. It was plainly very curly but with the aid of an oily preparation and much brushing he managed to make it lie almost flat. His eyes were a sapphire blue and had very long, very *black* lashes!

His very light skin seemed to cry for blond hair and light lashes, lashes as light as his eyebrows which were a pale brown. That copper-gold hair and those black lashes made him startling, exotic.

As he sat there on the floor, his cap in his hand, he looked like a naughty boy surprised in his naughtiness. He couldn't have been more than twenty-six years old, possibly younger.

Olive was so taken back by his appearance that she lowered the pistol.

"Wha-what do you want?" she demanded rather weakly.

"Nothing."

The stupid remark made her lift the pistol again. She wasn't in the least afraid and she was a little angry.

"Just a friendly call, I suppose," she remarked sarcastically.

The stranger lowered his long black lashes and gazed at the floor. He was plainly very much embarrassed. Finally he looked at her and said appealingly:

"Please put down the ordnance. It might explode."

"Indeed it might. It will if you make a single move." Olive was indignant—and very curious. "What do you want, anyway? My jewels aren't worth stealing. Half of 'em are paste."

"I don't want your jewels." This a little sullenly.

"Well, what *do* you want?"

"I want to get out of this house."

"The front door opens from the inside and the stairs were still there a little while ago." Olive's irony said as plainly as words that she thought he was lying.

Suddenly he sat erect.

"I'll tell you all about it," he cried. "I owe Mrs. Hilton three weeks' rent and I haven't a dollar to my name. Tomorrow's pay-day again, and she told me this afternoon that she'd make trouble for me unless I appeared with the cash the first thing in the morning. The only thing left for me to do was to beat it. I didn't dare go out the front door because she sleeps right there in that front room. If she saw me sneaking out with a suitcase the jig would be up." He hesitated as if disliking to continue.

"Well?" That single word as Olive said it was a verbal prod.

"Well, I bought a rope this afternoon. It took my last cent. I tied it to the bed, packed my suitcase, and started down. My room's right above yours, you know, and—and I got dizzy, awful dizzy. Gee! I thought I was going to drop the whole four stories. First I thought I'd rest on your windowsill, but everything went round and round. I—I had to come in."

Olive had lowered the gun. There was nothing to do but believe him; she could not doubt his sincerity.

"What's your regular work?" she asked gently.

"I'm a draughtsman, but you know there's no work now. The architects aren't doing a thing. I haven't had a job for five months and all my savings are gone. I've tried and tried to get anything. I didn't care what it was; I'd have dug ditches. I've pawned everything I own, and I've moved from one cheap room to one that was cheaper until I landed in that little room upstairs a month ago."

Now, Olive was as kind-hearted as she was pretty—and that's saying a whole lot. She was a slim little thing, with yellow hair, bobbed and curly, clear blue eyes, a nose so little that it would have been insignificant if it hadn't been saucy, and a mouth kissable enough to tantalize the whole choir of saints.

She was altogether adorable as she sat there gazing at the stranger, her forehead wrinkled into an earnest frown, her mouth thoughtfully puckered.

"What's your name?" she asked and placed the pistol on the table beside the bed.

"Dan Tredennick." He smiled and added. "My friends call me Danny."

"I'll call you Mr. Tredennick." And that settled that.

"Yes'm. . . . May I go now or are you going to call the police?" He started to rise.

"Don't be a fool—and sit down." He obeyed the second order promptly, relaxing to the floor with a bump.

"I think I can get you a job," she continued. " 'The Girl with the Gems' starts rehearsals tomorrow. I'm Olive Bourne, the soubrette," she added by way of explanation. "I heard the manager say this morning that he needed chorus boys." Can you dance and sing?"

"Yes," he replied. "I can do both, but I'll be darned if I'll be a chorus boy. I've got some pride left."

"Oh, have you? Well, you haven't any money, and it's a decenter thing to be a chorus boy than it is to sneak off owing three weeks' rent."

Tredennick lowered his head. "I guess

you're right," he murmured. "I'll be a chorine if you can get me the job."

Olive thrust her hand under a pillow and drew out a purse.

"I'm going to loan you some money," she said decidedly, "and I don't want to hear any of that 'Oh, I couldn't borrow money from a woman' stuff. It's better to borrow from me than steal from Mrs. Hilton."

She tossed him a wad of bills, and he fingered them reluctantly.

"Put them in your pocket," she ordered.

He obeyed without a word.

"I'll meet you at the front door at nine-thirty tomorrow morning," she said quickly. "Now get out."

Tredennick scrambled to his feet. "I don't know how to thank you for—"

"Get out!"

He obeyed promptly, and chuckled to himself as he climbed the stairs to his own room. Once there he proceeded to haul up the rope and hide it in the dresser. Then he looked in the mirror and laughed at his image.

"Danny," he muttered, "you're in for it now. A chorus boy!" He laughed softly. "What will Bill say?" Then he added soberly, "What a damn fool mistake for him to have made."

II

THE chorus boy job was easily obtained. Danny proved to have a pleasant high baritone voice! it was untrained but sweet and true. He danced easily and well, but his repertoire of steps was rather limited. That, however, did not worry the manager; one doesn't expect much from chorus boys.

He loathed the work and made no bones of the fact to Olive.

"It isn't a he-man's job," he said bitterly. "They are going to make us wear silk knickerbockers. Me in silk panties!"

She laughed. "Never mind, Mr. Tredennick—"

"Danny, please."

"Very well, Danny, then. I think something better may be in store for you. Burton, the second juvenile, is sick and I think you can get his place. You could carry it easy."

And so it turned out. Danny became second juvenile. He was much happier and set to work on his part in great spirits. He swore that he would make the leading man look like a bushleaguer.

The most important effect of Danny's promotion was that Laura Fawcett, the star, noticed him—and Olive saw her noticing. Laura looked at Danny's blond skin, copper-gold hair, blue eyes, and black lashes.

"How interesting," she drawled—and then she looked again.

Olive's eyes glinted with anger.

"Going to vamp Danny, is she?" she thought viciously. "Well, we'll see."

III

"FOR God's sake, Bill, do a good job," Danny begged. "Laura Fawcett's got eyes like an eagle, and she's always getting her hands in my hair."

"Trust me, old kid," Bill replied. "I'm going into the business. Hold still now."

They were in Bill's room on the lower East Side. Bill, a dapper little fellow, was carefully dyeing Danny's hair, and he talked while he worked.

"Gee, Danny," he said, "your hair sure grows fast. If we didn't do this every week Laura would sure get an eyeful some day. Ain't this great dope, though? You'd swear that your hair grew this way. Some color!"

Danny had been thinking and had paid no attention to his friend's remarks.

"Say, Bill," he began suddenly, "how did you ever get Olive Bourne and Laura

Fawcett mixed up? They don't look a thing alike, and you might have known that Laura wouldn't live in a common boarding-house. You certainly got me in a devil of a mess. Good thing for me that Olive's such a peach of a sport. That little girl's all there, even if she did make a chorus boy out of me for a while."

Bill stopped his work to laugh.

"I nearly die laughing when I think of you as a chorus boy," he chortled joyously. "What did you say you are now?"

"Second juvenile. I sort o' float around looking young and handsome, helping the plot along—only there isn't a plot. I've got one song with Olive. She's teaching me a dance, so maybe it'll get over. Do you know, I'm as nervous about the first night as a regular actor."

"I'll be out front," said Bill.

He paused to survey his handiwork. "There, if Laura gets hep to that head of hair she's clever. . . . Now for your lashes. Shut your mouth and your eyes and don't budge or you'll be blind forever."

Danny leaned back and closed his eyes.

Working very slowly and with infinite care Bill stained his lashes their startling black. Danny sat quite still until they dried and Bill talked at him.

"Do you know, Danny," he remarked proudly, "this red hair and black eyelashes is the best stunt in the world. I don't know you myself. I'll bet your own mother wouldn't. I hope things get a move on, though; that bottle of dye is almost gone and the stuff costs a fortune. . . . Did you say Laura's getting a crush on you?"

"Can't tell," muttered Danny. "She's kind o' interested in me all right, but she's so crazy about her sparklers and her publicity that she can't think of anything else."

IV

LAURA FAWCETT and her jewels were famous. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the jewels were famous because public interest centered far more in them than in Laura. Which was just as well; the jewels were real, and Laura wasn't a very good imitation of an actress.

She was beautiful in a dark, brilliant way and had been a show girl when James Fawcett, a supposedly wealthy Londoner, had met her. He promptly fell in love with her, married her, and presented her with the wonderful Fawcett jewels. Then he had the good taste to die.

When the estate was settled it was found that the assets barely equalled the liabilities. So Laura went back on the stage—with the jewels.

"The Girl with the Gems" was a frank retelling of her own story, properly sentimentalized. The first scene was in the old home town, with Laura, the village beauty, about to leave for the great city.

Her rustic beau pleads with her in prose and song to remain and occupy a cottage "with roses entwined" with him. And in prose and song she declines because "Broadway's lights are beckoning to me."

The second act finds her a cabaret girl. She was a cabaret girl because a cabaret gave an opportunity for any number of specialties. There she meets the millionaire who woos her with song and jewels. She succumbs.

In the third act she blazes with jewels in her Fifth Avenue home. She doesn't do much in that act but blaze and be unhappy. But everything comes out joyously in the end.

The millionaire dies, and in the fourth act she puts the jewels in a safe-deposit box and returns to the village and the bucolic lover to live happily forever after in the cottage "with roses entwined."

A silly, sentimental story it was, badly mangled in the telling. That, however, did not worry the producer. He had live young press agents who kept the world informed in regard to Laura's jewels, and the world would come to see them.

The show itself and everybody in it were of secondary importance; Laura and her jewels were all that mattered.

Laura was promptly fascinated by Danny, and made no attempt at all to hide the fact. Olive, naturally enough, considered him her own private property. The remainder of the company watched the contest with no little interest and amusement.

All in all, Danny handled the situation very well. He tried to make Laura feel—and succeeded nearly always—that he was much too humble to approach her except in awe and admiration; that he was merely the second juvenile and she the prima donna; that she was famous and that he was nobody; that she was an *artiste* and that he—well, that he was a lucky stiff to have a job at all.

His attitude was very boyish, very modest, and very appealing.

His manner with Olive was just the reverse. He never wearied of telling her what a great little pal she was. He was never sentimental, but once or twice he managed to suggest that he would be if circumstances were different.

However, Danny's tactics, clever as they were, did not altogether succeed. Laura, imperious and wilful, could not conceal her jealousy of Olive. She became temperamental—the artistic word for bad-tempered—and made rehearsals an agony for everybody.

Finally Bernard Daum, the producer, called Danny aside.

"Look here, Tredennick," he said excitedly, "something's got to be done. Laura's going to bust up this show unless you calm her down some way."

"What can I do?" Danny demanded. "I'm not Miss Fawcett's keeper."

"Oh, don't be so damned innocent," retorted Daum. "You know as well as I do that Laura's got a crush on you, and that she's swinging all this temperament because you aren't playing up to her. I tell you right now that none of us can afford to let Laura get up-stage. She's the show, and if she balks—good night! Play up to her, man. Make love to her. Tell her she's your dream of happiness."

Danny shuffled his feet, looked down at them, and then growled:

"How do you get that way? I'm not up to this heavy-lover stuff."

"Well, make a try at it anyway." Daum pleaded. "Be doggoned nice to her and don't let her see you with Olive Bourne. That's what's drivin' her nutty."

"I'll do my best," Danny agreed.

He proceeded to be so nice to Laura that Olive was offended and took care that he should know it. However, he managed to make his peace with her away from the theater, and the first night arrived with Laura mollified, ready to display her meager talents and many jewels to the ever critical New York audience.

V

"The Girl with the Gems" was a long way from a success. The plot was trite, the lines dull, and the music flat and ordinary.

Olive was the only member of the cast with real talent and her part practically prohibited any display of it. Laura's jewels were not enough to save a worse than mediocre show.

It staggered along for two months and then closed. Daum didn't consider it worth while to take it on the road. He almost changed his mind the last night, however.

On that night an incident occurred that gave Laura so much publicity that she could have made even a poorer show than "The Girl with the Gems" a success.

In the last act, just before the finale, Laura and the leading man had the stage to themselves. They had a song in which Laura, modestly gowned in white *sans* jewels, told him that she wanted to leave the wicked city and live with him forevermore in the little cottage "with roses entwined."

It was while they were trying hopelessly to put that number over for the last time that Ethel, Laura's colored maid, rushed out of the dressing-room screaming:

"Miss Fawcett! Miss Fawcett!"

Daum happened to be standing near. He rushed up to her and clapped his hand over her mouth.

"Hush, you fool!" he whispered fiercely. "Do you want to bust up the show and start a riot? What the devil's the matter, anyway?"

"Oh, Mr. Daum, Mr. Daum," the girl sobbed. "Miss Fawcett's jewels!"

"Well, what about Miss Fawcett's jewels? Quit bawling, girl, and speak up. What's happened to Miss Fawcett's jewels?"

"They're stolen!"

"What!"

The girl nodded and managed to choke out between sobs a confirming, "Yes, sir."

"You go right back to the dressing-room and stay there," ordered Daum.

Then he went to the door-man and told him not to let a single person out of the stage-door under any circumstances. He telephoned to the nearest police station and demanded that a squad of policemen be sent around at once.

He managed to quiet Ethel and get a coherent story out of her.

She said that just after Laura had received her last call that she, Ethel, had left the dressing-room for just a moment. She was sure that she wasn't gone more than two minutes. When she got back the jewels, which had been in a tin box on the dressing-table, were gone.

The curtain was rung down for the last time. Daum went on the stage before the cast and chorus had a chance to leave it. He told them peremptorily to remain where they were. Then he turned to the police sergeant who arrived with a squad at that moment.

"Please see that all the exits are guarded," he said, "especially the stage door. As soon as the audience gets out every exit will be locked."

He turned to the stage manager. "Send every man you have, carpenters, electricians—all of 'em on the stage."

When everybody was assembled he made his speech:

"I don't want any excitement," he said quietly. "Miss Fawcett's jewels have been stolen—"

And then the excitement broke loose. Everybody turned to exclaim to everybody else, and Laura promptly had hysterics. She was finally calmed, and Daum continued:

"Somebody standing before me took those jewels, and not one of you is going to leave the theater until the jewels are found. The theft occurred while Miss Fawcett and Mr. Belden were singing their last number. Unless the thief confesses and gives up the jewels, every one of you will be searched."

He paused and looked sternly at the large group before him. There was much shuffling of feet and many downward glances, but no one stepped forward to admit that he—or she—was the culprit.

Daum waited.

"Send up the curtain," he commanded, "and turn on every light in the house."

In a minute the entire theater blazed with light. He turned to the sergeant:

"Have your men search every inch of

this place. Don't overlook anything. We will attend to searching these people."

The sergeant gave the order to his men, and then Daum continued:

"Miss Fawcett and her maid will search the women and Mr. Belden and I will search the men. The men will line up on the right of the stage and the women on the left. We'll use Mr. Belden's dressing-room for the men and Miss Fawcett's for the women. Hurry up and get in line."

Mechanically they obeyed. Not a word was said. Everyone looked bewildered and, strangely enough, guilty. It would have been a super-clever detective who could have picked the thief from the expressions on the faces.

VI

ONE by one they were searched and the hours crawled by. Finally everyone was called on the stage again and Daum announced wearily that nothing had been found.

The sergeant had the same report to make. Every trunk, dresser, and pocket in the place had been carefully gone through. Every inch of the theater from the top gallery to the basement had been scanned by eager eyes—and not a thing had been found to give a hint of who the thief might be.

"There is only one thing more that I can see for us to do," said Daum, "and that is make everyone give an account of where they were when the theft took place. We'll see how many can establish an alibi."

"That seems the best plan to me," agreed the sergeant. "You go ahead with it; you know their names and I don't."

Daum began with those nearest to him and worked to the other side of the stage.

It was an easy thing for the stage-hands to prove that they were not near the dressing-room. All of them had been busy at their appointed tasks, and so had the carpenters and electricians.

The same thing was true of the chorus, both men and women. They were making a change of costume for the finale, and, of course, each one had plenty of witnesses to establish the necessary alibi.

Finally it narrowed down to the members of the cast. One by one they proved that they had not been near Laura's dressing-room at the time of the theft.

It happened that Olive and Danny were the last ones questioned, and because they were the last everyone waited tensely for their answers.

"I was behind that pile of scenery over there," said Olive pointing to some "flats" that were stacked against the wall.

"What were you doing back there?" demanded Daum. His manner betrayed the fact that he did not believe her.

A stage-hand spoke up. "I saw Miss Bourne back of those flats," he said positively. "I saw her when she went there. I remember for sure."

"A fine story," shrieked Laura. "A fine story! What would she be doing behind those dirty flats?" She was deliberately insulting.

"One minute, Miss Fawcett," said Daum. "You mustn't accuse Miss Bourne because she was behind the flats."

He turned to Danny. "Where were you, Mr. Tredennick?"

Danny hesitated, and every eye lighted accusingly.

"Well, Mr. Tredennick?" Daum was tired and impatient.

But Danny never answered because Olive answered for him.

"Mr. Tredennick was with me," she said defiantly. "He was behind the flats with me. That's why he didn't say anything. He was afraid I'd be embarrassed."

She was extraordinarily pretty in spite of her smeared make-up. Danny looked at her gratefully.

Laura's eyes gleamed dangerously.

"Of course, I don't doubt your story at all, Miss Bourne," she said sarcastically. "But it's nasty of you to use Mr. Tredennick as a cat's paw." She turned dramatically to Daum.

"Mr. Daum," she screamed, "you know who the thief is as well as I do. She is just using Mr. Tredennick as a blind. Have her arrested!"

"Oh, I couldn't do that," objected Daum, "and I wouldn't advise you to either. Miss Bourne has a perfectly good alibi. Two men are ready to swear that she was behind the flats at the time of the theft."

Laura, wild with anger and jealousy, cast all reason aside.

"Well, what were they doing there?" she demanded hysterically. "What were they doing behind those flats? That's what I want to know!"

It was Olive again who answered. Her blonde head was proudly raised; her eyes sparkled triumphantly.

"It isn't any of your business," she said with obvious scorn, "but I'll tell you . . . Mr. Tredennick was asking me to marry him!"

VII

THREE months later Olive was sitting alone in a Fifth Avenue tea-room. Finally she became conscious of the fact that a young man a few tables away was watching her very closely.

She nibbled her cake and returned his stare.

There was nothing particularly interesting about him. He was a rather good-looking young fellow in his early twenties. His ash-blond hair—it was so light that it was almost gray—was curly and parted in the center. His light eyebrows, lashes, and silly little mustache made his otherwise pleasing face insignificant and uninteresting.

Olive decided that she didn't know him—and that she didn't want to.

He finished his tea before she did, and had to pass her table to reach the door. He carelessly dropped his hat just as he was opposite her and stooped to pick it up. He went on without looking at her and left the tea-room.

A minute later Olive, reaching into her lap for her napkin, touched an envelope. Rather surprised and a little irritated she tore it open. A beautiful diamond ring set in platinum fell on the table.

She stared at it dumfounded, and then picked it up and examined it admiringly. It was a beauty—but why had the young man dropped it in her lap?

Finally she looked in the envelope and found a letter. She drew it out and read:

My Dearest Olive:

I call you "dearest" because you are the best sport and the dearest girl that I have ever known. I hope that you don't mind.

I am going to explain everything to you because I think that you have a right to an explanation. You will hate me when you finish reading this note, but somehow I want you to know about me. I am giving this to you instead of mailing it because I want to see if you will know me. I am willing to bet that you don't.

The whole thing happened because my pal got you mixed up with Laura Fawcett, and when I dropped into your room that night I thought that it was Laura's room. I thought, too, that nobody was there, but I was ready with a story—you know what it was—in case I did bump into somebody.

I was after Laura's jewels, and you know, of course, that I finally got them. I dropped them out of the win-

dow of the washroom to my pal; that's why they weren't found in the theater.

It was a brave thing you did to lie for me. I think that it was the bravest lie that I've ever heard told. I wish that we were going to get married, but I'm not good enough. A respectable life bores me to death. I have been a draughtsman and lots of other things, too, but Raffles is the only game that's got any fun to it.

This ring was bought with the money I earned acting. It's an honest ring, you see, and you needn't be ashamed to wear it. Do wear it, please, for DANNY.

Olive stuck the note in her bag and then slipped the ring on her finger. She moved her hand back and forth, admiring the diamond's expensive glitter.

"Well," she said to herself, "if that's what he really looks like I'm well rid of him."

She looked again at the ring and added: "Laura, old dear, I guess the laugh is very much on you."

A Momentous Day

By L. B. Birdsall

TODAY is a happy one for me, worthy of a celebration. I shall give it a place of honor in my memory.

I have purchased today the house that I have long desired to possess; to make my bachelor quarters. It was in this house that I had my most thrilling adventure and my narrowest escape.

Twenty years ago I voiced my first and only proposal of marriage in this house—and was turned down.

Of Two Evils—

By Ruth Hallam

THERE was a lad, who went away . . .
And so I sit and fret,
Because he looked so dear and gay . . .
But still, we never met.

But it is really not one half
As bad as it might be . . .
Suppose that we had met, and that
He had not cared for me!

The Big Gamble

By Katherine Negley

I

JOHN THOMAS and Roy Charles were rival wits at a house-party.

One day, most of the guests, led by Roy Charles, came into the living-room and found John Thomas on his knees, searching for something under the couch.

"What seekest thou?" asked Roy Charles.

"A wife," answered John Thomas, clutching the missing cuff-link.

"Here is one," said Roy Charles, as Lorelei came in.

Without rising from his knees, John Thomas proposed; and to show she could take a joke, Lorelei accepted him.

Later they were married, and lived happily ever after.

II

EVADNE loved Lee madly, but he married another girl. Robert loved Elsie madly, but she married another man.

So just to show Lee and Elsie and everybody, Robert and Evadne were married—and lived happily ever after.

III

LIANE was absent-minded and dreamy, but all the boys liked her.

One evening Ned took her out in his car. Liane looked dreamily at the trees and fields and houses they passed, thought a little about the Prince Charming she hoped would come some day, and a little more about the dress she was making.

Ned was talking, but she did not listen. Finally he stopped and she said "Yes." (Yes was less embarrassing than to ask him to repeat what he said.)

Ned stopped the car, kissed her a while, then asked her to name a day; and she understood what he must have asked her.

Liane kept her promise; they were married, and lived happily ever after.

IV

SARAH LEAH worshipped Loren. She thought in superlatives how handsome, clever and charming he was. She dreamed of him day and night, and was sure their marriage would be ideal.

Loren adored Sarah Leah. He considered her the most beautiful, sweet and alluring girl he had ever known. He could not attend to his daily work for thinking of her, and he was sure of their future happiness.

Of course they married.

And before the honeymoon was over, they began to quarrel, and were divorced at the end of two years.

By Peter Holbrook

A LITTLE Theater director once confided to me that every one of the women members of his amateur group itched with the desire to play such parts as Paula Tanqueray, Magda, Laura Murdoch, and Camille. The older they were, he also added, and the more children they had, the more eager were they to parade behind the footlights in the rôle of a crimson lady for their envious friends and patient husbands.

Just what this signifies, I do not know. I refer the case to Freud.

But the strange part of it is that not only do amateurs long to perform such parts. It even stirs the ambitions of our Broadway stars.

Josephine Drake, I understand, is perfectly happy this season. She has always wanted to act what she calls a "tough part," and this winter in "Lilies of the Field" she at last has her wish.

To those who scan the programs yearly, the name of Josephine Drake is not new. She has always been one of those actresses whom managers cast for the sweet, wholesome woman. And consequently she has never had quite the recognition her splendid talents deserve.

It was Daniel Frohman who gave her her first chance. Always a keen observer, he noticed the dramatic ability of the young girl coupled with the beauty she had inherited from her mother, Ida Hicks Smart, one of the famous beauties of Washington. They met on a boat returning from Europe where Josephine Smart—her real name—had been spending two years following the close of her school life.

At first she was afraid to enter a profession of which she knew so little. But Mr. Frohman, after several kindly chats, overcame her timidity and persuaded her to read some plays which he sent her shortly after their arrival in New York.

And then he gave her one of the biggest surprises of her life when he offered her the lead with Lawrence D'Orsay in "The Embassy Ball." Miss Smart accepted. And then, like Julia Marlowe, Mary Pickford, and countless other actresses she decided that she simply must have a stage name. And since she is a

descendent of the gallant Sir Francis Drake, Mr. Frohman suggested that she make her stage début as Josephine Drake. (Had her ancestress been Pocahontas, would she have called herself Smith?)

When she had been on the stage about six weeks, one of the Chicago papers sent a special feature writer to interview the young actress for a Sunday story. Miss Drake, being unused to interviewers, was afraid to speak for herself, so, having an excellent memory, she repeated almost verbatim everything that Daniel Frohman had ever told her regarding the theater, as well as his opinion on affairs of the day.

As she says herself: "There wasn't an original thought in it."

But upon publication of the interview she sent it to Mr. Frohman. The good man utterly failing to recognize his own views and sentiments sent her a characteristically charming note, not only commending her for the excellence of the interview, but also expressing amazement that one so young could have those wide, comprehensive views and such sound judgment.

After "The Embassy Ball" came another season with Lawrence D'Orsay. And then the leading rôle in "The Boys of Company B," with that—at the time—popular comedian, John Barrymore.

More leading parts followed. But Miss Drake seemed doomed to play always colorless, well-behaved women. She even took a fling in musical comedy, where she holds the World Championship as being the only prima donna who confesses to having never sung a note.

Then last spring she read the William Hurlbut comedy, "Lilies of the Field," and decided that the only thing in life that could make her happy was to play the part of Maizie, one of those ladies who "toil not, neither do they spin."

It was the best thing she ever did. And now, if some ambitious playwright will write her a star part *à la* Maizie, Josephine Drake's name will flash in electric letters over the door of some Broadway playhouse.

II

THE other evening I met the perfect company of players. Actors who do not strut up and down Broadway. Actresses who do not seek publicity. They never talk about themselves. They never show their press notices. They never speak intimately of producers and playwrights. They never say cutting things about each other. They never clutter up hotel lobbies. They never dye their hair nor curl their wigs. They are not afraid of the tell-tale marks of old age.

They are the perfect players.

They are Marionettes!

To tell how they work would be giving away a secret, but they make gestures with their hands, wiggle their heads, and even dance a minuet. And all in their own theater which, mind you, can be taken down, packed away and carted off in a small trunk.

The inventor is Remo Bufano, a bright-eyed, vivacious Italian lad, who came to this country from Naples at the tender age of three with but two memories—a rainy night and a dinner aboard ship just after a heavy wave had struck it. For years he worked with his little puppets, experimenting and dreaming. And at last he has succeeded in producing something new with Marionettes.

The figures are made of *papier mâchè*. The theater has scenery all its own and lighting effects that rival a Belasco production. The plays range all the way from "Little Red Riding Hood" to "The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife" and an episode from "Orlando Furioso."

A year ago Mr. Bufano met Mrs. Fiske. She was so interested in his work that she persuaded him to produce a prologue for

her play, "Wake Up Jonathan." The tremendous wave of public approval that greeted this innovation was immensely satisfying to those who believe in and take pleasure from Marionettes.

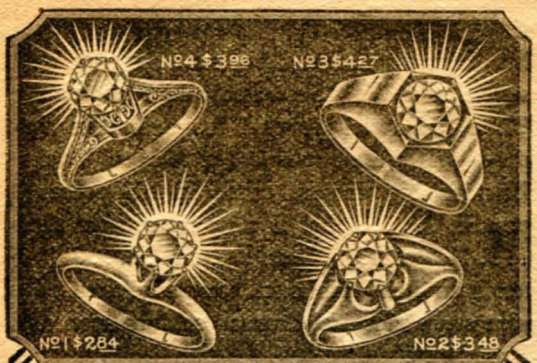
For such a modest and fascinating company of players are sure to prove popular not only to those who care for the thrills of childhood but to the sophisticated as well. You'll have to see for yourself the dragon in "Orlando Furioso" that spits fire to believe this.

III

I started to write the story of the rapid rise to fame and fortune of one of our younger leading men. But I lost the press agent's yarn and have forgotten the name of the actor. However, the story is one that is being used often this season, and will fit any male performer now before the Broadway public. Here it is. Fill in the blank spaces as you will; the result is the same:

"Mr..... was born not more than twenty years ago. He had no intention of following the drama as a profession. Having graduated from .... University, he was headed toward a business career; largely because his grandfather was a successful business man and his entire family were anxious to have the ambitious .... follow in the footsteps of his famous grandfather. And so to please his relatives and fulfill their expectations young ..... was actually clerking in a Wall Street broker's office when he discovered one rainy night that the work was uncongenial. While still in college he had proved his histrionic ability and had always retained his interest in amateur dramatics. That

(Continued on page 126)



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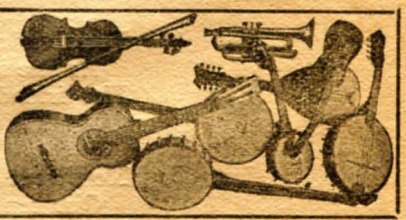

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(Continued from page 124)

is why he was playing in a special amateur production for charity of Ibsen's 'Hedda Gabler' one afternoon in the very theater where he is now having such great success in ...., when ....., the famous producer saw him, and immediately offered him a part in one of his latest plays. Young ..... accepted on the spot, and the contract was signed that same night. From his first appearance his success was assured, and Wall Street saw him no more. Then followed several engagements in plays that were not brought to New York. But his big chance came in his present part in ..... that is now running at the .... Theater. Next season ..... intends to head his own company, and revive some classical dramas seldom seen on Broadway."

A Lady's Weigh

By Thomas J. Murray

IF too obese she would not care to live;
Scales often turned her sunny skies to gray,
Her secret, this machine of steel might give
Away.

For slender lines her heart would sometimes ache,
As she increased her poundage day by day;
Her friends observed that she would never take
A weigh.

No sweet relief on her horizon lies;
Our tender sympathy we now convey;
Here we must leave the lady to devise
A way.

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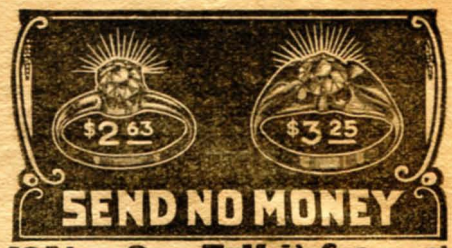

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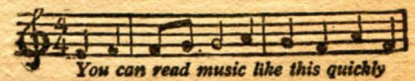

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Instant Bunion Relief

Prove It FREE

Just like the touch of the fairy's wand, FAIRYFOOT banishes the pain and inflammation INSTANTLY. They disappear like magic. It absorbs and draws out the inflammation, softens and dissolves the accumulated layers of cartilage which really make the bunion, thus reducing the enlargment and restoring the deformed foot to its healthy, normal size.

Wonderful—yes. And it costs you nothing to find out. **Don't send me one cent—just let me prove it to you** as I have proved it to over 72,500 others in the last six months. I claim to have the most successful remedy for bunions ever made and I want you to let me send you my FAIRYFOOT treatment FREE. I don't care how many so-called cures, or shields you ever tried without success—I don't care how disgusted you are with them all—you have not tried my remedy and I have such absolute confidence in it that **I am going to send it to you just for the asking. Send no money—only coupon or post card.**

FAIRYFOOT

is a wonderful yet simple home remedy; it removes the cause of the bunion and therefore the unnatural enlargement of the joint disappears—your foot resumes its natural shape and the pain also is gone—all this while you are wearing as tight shoes as ever.

Surely you will not let this opportunity pass to get rid of that ugly, painful, distressing deformity. When I say "Try FAIRYFOOT at my expense", I mean it. All you are asked to send is the coupon. That will bring the free treatment. I want you to have it because I know that when you have found what FAIRYFOOT does, you will tell your friends about it. Most of our business comes in this way. People are so glad to have found such quick relief that they spread the good news everywhere. That is why I can afford to send out these free treatments.

Send the Coupon Today for Free Treatment

Read the testimonials in this ad. See what FAIRYFOOT has done for others. Thousands and thousands of grateful users praise this amazing remedy. And you will do the same once you have tried it. Sit down right now and sign the coupon. Get it into the mail. Don't suffer any longer while this free offer holds good. Remember—not a penny to send, and no obligation or promise on your part except to use it as directed. Just the coupon, or you may send us your name and address on a post card—today.

FOOT REMEDY CO., 2207 Millard Ave., Dept 197, Chicago, Ill.

Fairyfoot Accomplishes Wonders

I'm sure I can't find words in the English dictionary that would fit to praise the wonderful work which Fairyfoot has done for me. I am very pleased with the remarkable results.
Thanking you kindly, I am, Sincerely,
MRS. E. WEEKS, 326 W. 52nd St., New York City.

Conquered the Pain Instantly

I wish to thank you for the relief I have had from your treatment. I am an elderly lady and have been troubled with bunions nearly all my life and am glad to say that from the time I began using your Fairyfoot I have never had a pain. Shall surely recommend them to everyone I know troubled with bunions. Yours sincerely,
MRS. SCOTT, 6439 Wade Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

After All Others Failed

You can use my name as much as you like in praise of Fairyfoot for they are the very best thing I have found yet and I have tried everything. The soreness is all gone and the swelling nearly gone. I shall tell all my friends for I am so well pleased with it. Wishing you the best of success, I am,
Yours respectfully,
MRS. CHAS. T. MORSE, Walloomsac, N. Y.

Eliminated All Inflammation

I am very much pleased with your Fairyfoot. My feet feel fine. The foot that was all inflamed is entirely cured. If you wish to publish my testimonial, I will be satisfied.
Yours sincerely,
AGNES SIEGLER, 418 Reed St., Philadelphia, Pa.

Reduced Unsightly Enlargements

Every word you say in regard to Fairyfoot is truth. My bunions were very much inflammed and enlarged, could not wear shoes with comfort, used Fairyfoot and now can walk with ease.
GERTRUDE A. KOSER,
1600½ N. 5th St., Harrisburg, Pa.

Now Walks With Ease and Comfort

I just wish to let you know in a few words, that your Fairyfoot is a wonder My bunions were of more than fifteen years' standing and I suffered agony winter and summer until I started to use your Fairyfoot.
My foot is now once more restored and I walk around with perfect ease and comfort. You can use my name as much as you like as a testimonial, as I can certify to the good your Fairyfoot has done me.
Wishing you success, I am, Sincerely yours,
C. W. PAULK, Sellers, Ala., R. F. D. No. 1.

No Other Remedy So Effective

In regard to your Fairyfoot, I wish to state that they are the greatest things I have ever seen. I will state that my bunion was so bad I could not even wear a shoe and there was a hole in it nearly to the bone. Now I can wear my shoe as usual and do not feel the bunion. You may use my name if you wish and if anyone doubts it, I will gladly answer any letters sent to me as I cannot recommend them too highly.
Thanking you for the relief I have had, I remain,
Yours very truly,
B. T. MARSHALL, 4 N. Y. C. R. R.
Louisiana St., Buffalo, N. Y.

So It Is Highly Appreciated

I will just drop you a few lines to tell you I have been wonderfully relieved since I used the Fairyfoot you sent me. Many, many thanks. I shall tell all my friends. I certainly do appreciate your remedy. With best regards, I remain,
Yours truly,
MRS. F. W. WILTISON, 8 S. Liberty St., Cumberland, Md.

FOOT REMEDY CO.
2207 Millard Ave., Dept. 197, Chicago, Ill.

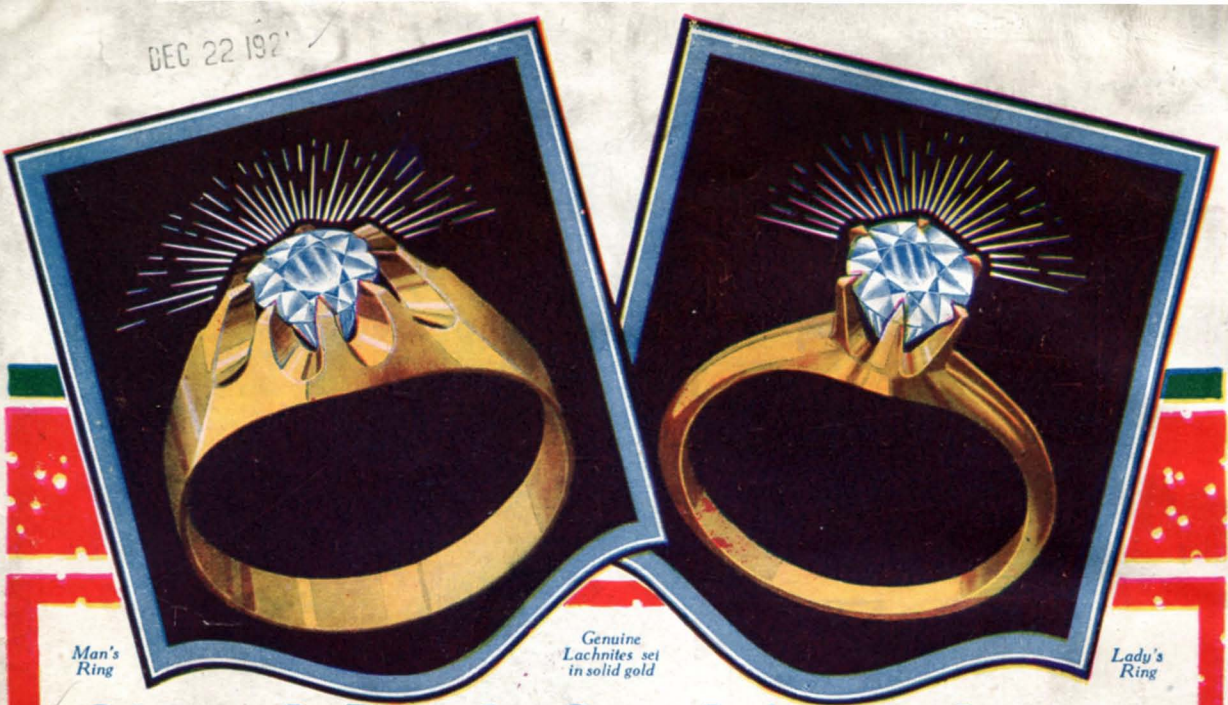
I accept your offer to send FAIRYFOOT free so that I may learn without any cost or obligation what wonderful power it has to relieve me from bunions. I agree to use it as you direct.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

CHARLES FRANCIS PRESS, NEW YORK



Man's Ring — *Genuine Lachnites set in solid gold* — *Lady's Ring*

300,000 People Saved $150,000,000 by Sending this Coupon

A few years ago an important discovery was made by the world famous scientist, M. Verneuil. While studying the effects of the terrific temperatures at which diamonds vanish into vapor, Verneuil accidently created a new and unknown gem stone. His associates examined the new gem and declared the secret of making diamonds had been discovered. Scientists and jewelers scrutinized the new gem in every way, put it to every test and pronounced it a diamond! Verneuil alone was undeceived. The new gem he said, flashes like a diamond, acts like a diamond in the chemical tests, and will last forever, but the composition is not identical. The new diamond-like gem stone was given a new name—Lachnite.

Already over 300,000 Americans wear them in place of diamonds. The cost of a Lachnite is nominal. These 300,000 people have probably saved over $150,000,000.00.

For your convenience the same coupon that they used is now published at the bottom of this page.

Diamonds and Lachnites Resist Tests

This table shows the astounding similarity between Lachnites and diamonds. They defy the same corrosive acids. They resist the same fiery temperatures. They flash with equal brillance. No wonder men can not distinguish them, even when they are placed side by side. Knowing that Lachnites are produced slowly and so have never been plentiful, a number of firms have attempted to take advantage of the Lachnite reputation. You will find the Lachnite name and advertising extensively copied. But Lachnite quality you will find only in the original genuine Lachnite itself, sold in America by Harold Lachman Company alone.

Tests	Diamonds	Lachnites	Imitations
Hardness	**10** (highest known)	**9.4** (next highest)	**3 to 4** (very soft)
Resistance of Hydrofluoric acid	**100%** (not affected)	**100%** (not affected)	**0** (easily dissolved)
Melting Point	**4970F.**	**5050F.** (platinum melts at 3187 F.)	**850F.** (quite low—melts as easily as lead)
Chemical Composition	contain no lead nor glass	contain no lead nor glass	contain both lead and glass
Color	variable—brown to blue white	blue white only	transparent white
Refractive Index	**2.417** (very high)	**2.105** (very high)	**1.98** (only when new)
Reflective Index	**.942** (very high)	**.921** (very high)	**.381** (very low)
Cutting	**56** facets (hand cut)	**56** facets (hand cut)	**28** facets (machine cut)
Permanence	everlasting	everlasting	a few weeks
Value per Carat	**$500** (good quality)	**$14.50** (unmounted)	**10c to 60c**

Wear a Lachnite Ten Days at Our Expense

Why buy a diamond, when a Lachnite will give you the same beauty and permanence for but a few cents a day? Lachnites are cut by the diamond cutters of Europe. They are guaranteed to keep their radiance forever. When subjected to laboratory tests, they re-act so like diamonds (see chart) that the two are interchangeable.

You need not take anybody's word for the beauty of a Lachnite. Just mail the coupon below and we will send you a Lachnite in a solid gold ring for a ten-day test at our expense.

Imitations Fail

To show how common "imitation diamonds" fail to withstand the diamond tests, we have added a column to our chart. See how the imitation diamonds fall short in hardness, dissolve in the acids, melt in the heat test, and fade in brilliance. Buy **Genuine** Lachnites.

If You Can Tell a Lachnite From a Diamond, Send It Back

Send the coupon and only $1 deposit. When the Lachnite arrives wear it for ten days. Then if you or your friends can tell it from a diamond send it back. We will refund your deposit at once. If you decide to buy send only $2.50 a month until $18.75 has been paid.

$1 DOWN

Mail this Coupon

Harold Lachman Co., Dept. 1692, 204 S. Peoria St., Chicago

I enclose $1.00. Send me prepaid on 10 days' free trial Ladies' / Men's solid gold ring set with a genuine Lachnite as pictured above. If I can tell it from a diamond, I will send it back by registered mail and you agree to return my money at once. If I keep it more than 10 days I will send you $2.50 a month until the balance has been paid. Total cost to me $18.75. **I enclose my finger size.** (Cut a strip of paper that will just meet around knuckle of ring finger).

Name _____ *Size* _____

Address _____

Your Money Back if You Want It

Trade Mark Registered