

SNAIL STORIES

SECOND
FEBRUARY
NUMBER
20 CENTS



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All Else Is Fake

by THOMAS EDGELOW

The Harem of the Pasha

by BOB DEXTER

Broadway Bait

—a play

by C. S. MONTANYE

A Rectangular Affair

by FRED B. MANN

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Cover

C. Becker

Cuts and Decorations by Lauren Stout; Herb Roth, Donner, Palmer, Arden

The Editors will be pleased to consider stories suitable for this magazine. Where self-addressed stamped envelopes are enclosed, every effort will be made to return unavailable manuscripts safely.

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By the Stream

By Basil Dickey

A WEEPING willow spreads its shade,
Above a murmuring stream,
Where somber rushes raise their heads,
And water-lilies gleam.
A maiden—well, a lady fair,
Is seated with her swain.
(I call him that, 'cause later on
It has to rhyme with rain.)



She speaks—and nature seems to hush
The rushes bend to hear,
The lilies turn their lovely head,
And lend a listening ear.
“Dear John, I fain would linger here
With you for evermore.
But if my husband finds I’m out
He’s likely to be sore.”

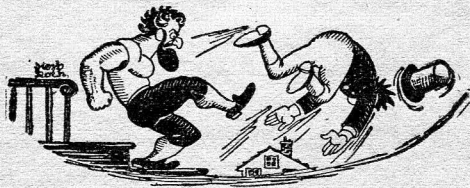


Her gentle smile lights up the glade,
Like sunshine after rain,
And tenderly she bends to catch
The answer of her swain.
(Now that that rhyme is off my chest,
I promise, from here on,
To always call the male-factor,
The “traveling man,” or “John.”)

His voice is like the murmuring depths,
 Of caverns by the sea,
 Or like the challenge of the stag,
 That meets his enemy.
 "Tell me, sweet one, this fearsome brute,
 Who holds my love in charge,
 Whose shadow dims our happiness,
 Oh, tell me—is he large?"



She sighs—her dusky lashes sweep
 The roses on her cheeks,
 As with closed eyes and trembling lips
 She hears the words he speaks.
 "He is the village blacksmith, John,"
 She murmurs, "and alack,
 He threw one drummer off our porch,
 An' darn near broke his back."



Alone—beneath the willow's shade,
 Beside the murmuring stream,
 She sits, where rushes raise their heads
 And water-lilies gleam;
 While through the sylvan, sun-flecked glade
 And down the shady lane,
 The nimble-footed traveling man
 Is running for his train.





In "THE HAREM OF THE PASHA—see page 118.

Flickers

A NOVELETTE

By Pearl Lenore Curran and Elinor Maxwell

There wasn't much she could pin her hopes to but luck—and possibly a man

KITTY KOPITSKI, in charge of the "notions" at Kressworth's five-and-ten cent store, leaned a gaunt little figure against the counter, her smudgy fingers fumbling at a glittering horse-shoe which was pinned in the "not-even-near" file at her throat.

"Cute pin, Kit! Where'd you get it?" Rene Connor edged along the aisle-space, fluffing her hair with a pencil. "What's ailin' you? Tired?"

Kitty turned somber eyes from the direction whence came the wailing tones of a tenor.

"Tired? Gosh! Rene, I'm all in. I was just listening to that 'fields far away stuff' that Jim Calligan is gettin' off over there in the sheet-music department. Say, I wonder if there is surenuf such a thing!" Her fingers closed over the glaring pin, and she laughed a half-hearted, mirthless little laugh. "You know, Rene, I bought this pin for luck."

Rene jangled the cash register open, deposited a dime therein, and shrugged. "Luck, you boob! There ain't no such thing as luck. You can't find it, you can't buy it, and you can't steal it—so how you goin'

to get it? I don't believe in luck."

Kitty listlessly sorted button moulds. "Well," she soliloquized, "I got to believe in *something*. I—I," she hesitated and turned her stark face toward the listening Rene. "I'm up against it, Rene, and there ain't nothin' but luck that can get me out. I tell you I *got* to believe in luck!"

Rene's gaze traveled over the slight form before her, meeting the frightened eyes that searched hers for assurance. "Gee, what's got you—pullin' all this movie dope, Kit? You're pale as a banana split! What's amatter?"

Kitty sacked a card of beauty pins, and turned the task complete, to Rene, who listened anxiously.

"I got to have air, Rene," she whispered. "Ain't it a joke? I got to have air. I could laugh myself sick over it—it's so funny. Oh, no, Kid, I ain't sick! Look at that! Ain't my hand steady?" She held forth a discolored hand, palm up, struggling to steady its nervous twitching.

Rene looked at it, lifting her eyes swiftly and meeting Kitty's direct gaze with a light laugh. "It's

steady all right, all right—'bout as steady as a bunch of gelatin! So that's it—you've seen Doc Bradley and he's told you you 'er goin' to flicker out if you don't get a draft. What you goin' to do, Kit?"

"I don't know, Rene. I don't care much. Only it looks like I ought to do something—that there ought to be something. I feel like a rat in a trap. Ain't there no way out? Have I got to go on and on and on like this—just living up time?"

Rene's eyes clouded as she watched the tense little form. "Don't, Kit!" she whispered. "Bet on luck. There's three ways out for a flicker."

"Flicker?" Kitty repeated. "Flicker? What do you mean—flicker?"

"Just—flicker," Rene answered, "plain flicker, you and me and the rest like us, lit up for a minute for God knows why. There's three ways out—luck, a man or fluey! We're snuffed out, just like that!"

She blew an imaginary atom from her finger tips. "Get me? Now me—I don't want to fluey out, and I'd rather believe in a man than to believe in luck. That's the tip, kid—*man!* If you ain't got one, you got to *hope*, to keep jollied up. And if you've got one, you've got to *believe* you believe in him so's you can keep your sails flappin'. Any way you take it, they're the stuff that makes things or breaks 'em."

Her eyes lighted with a sudden directness. "You ain't soft on the tenor, or nothin' like that?" she de-

manded, holding Kitty with an accusing gaze.

Kitty shook her head. "No, Rene, it's that field-stuff that's got me. I got to get out of this." She made a weak little gesture denoting the kaleidoscopic scene about them. "I'm squeezed dry!"

"Kitty Kopitski!" The voice of the floor manager broke in. "Kitty Kopitski! There's a rush on at the joolery. Cut out the chatter and move up. You, too, Rene Connor! Put on a little speed there!"

Obediently the two "moved up." They had always "moved up" like trash swept before the broom. They had "moved up" ever since they had breathed and wailed their first reproach to Mother Life for breeding them. They took their stand behind the flashing "joolery" counter, greeting the disheveled blonde whose regular charge it was.

"Hello, Leel!"

"Hello, Kit. 'Lo, Rene. Say, dish up some of them signets, will you? I'm black in the face from pawin' 'em over. And while you're at it, wait on them Johnnies too." She nodded toward that section of the counter space devoted to the display of brass signet rings. Above them lounged two be-Stetsoned youths.

Kitty moved wearily toward them, her eyes dreamily curtained with their dark-fringed lids as she again caught the wailing tenor's "fields, far far away—"

"Got a T? Got a T, girlie?" The taller of the two youths unfolded his

long length, and intruded his drawl upon the abstract Kitty, murmuring as she disinterestedly produced the desired emblem from the jumbled heap. "Atta boy! 'T' for Texas. Oh, you Texas!"

Kitty dropped the signet into his palm, flushing as her hand touched his.

"Go on, O. T., put it on!" urged the shorter youth.

"O. T." stood looking down upon the blue enamel "T". "Say," he began, addressing Kitty, his blue eyes meeting hers squarely. "Do you believe in luck?"

Kitty's hand stole furtively to the horseshoe at her throat and she nodded automatically, though her eyes still held their lack-luster dullness.

"Some folks don't, you know. Now me—I'm different—I believe in luck. Listen, sis, I reckon you're thinkin' I'm some fresh, but I ain't.

"Now Red, here," he nodded toward his companion, "is a regular heller—excuse me—with women, but me, I'm different. Right off when you come up here I kinda liked you. Ain't that funny? But you know, out in Texas we don't see many skirts, and them that range in such parts is mostly doboys."

Kitty leaned forward, her lips parted, a new light in her eyes. "But you got air out there," she breathed, then stopped short, one little hand shutting fiercely over a mass of shining signets.

But the level gaze of the youth before her had caught the sudden

smouldering fire within her half-veiled eyes. "We got air all right, all right," he said evenly, watching the color which, beneath his scrutiny, surged and receded in Kitty's cheeks. "Say," he blurted, "what's the tragedy? Something's wrong, and I—I—" He paused and pointed to a glittering drop which had lopped down one of Kitty's cheeks and shattered into a gleaming spray upon the heap of signets. "Say, girlie, don't mind tellin' me. I—I—"

"I don't know you," Kitty protested, turning her head to hide the brimming eyes, "but, but—it's that field' stuff. Listen to him!" She nodded toward the section whence the plaint of the tenor still persisted, 'fields far far away.'

"Sounds like a Cyoute bayin' at the moon," laughed the boy, "but honest, it ain't so bad—not bad enough to start you cryin', you know. Say, I was just thinkin', me startin' up talkin' to you and you talkin' back might be a lucky strike.

"O. T. Smith, that's me. They ain't much more to know. That's Red Rafferty, my partner." He nodded toward the grinning Red who had diplomatically withdrawn to the other end of the counter. "We got a place out between Mansfield and Ft. Worth—out in Texas, you know. That's why I was askin' you did you believe in luck. They're borin' oil all around us and—" he paused and shrugged. "Well, if they was to bid in on us, me and Red could buy up all the air it ud take to fly a air squadron."

Kitty listened, her eyes averted, her hand trailing nervously over the impossible "joolery."

O. T. bent forward earnestly. "Say, kid, what's your name?"

Kitty hesitated, and the tenor lifted his voice in a new agony which bore in upon the dinning and confusion about, cloyingly insistent.

"Come on!" O. T. Smith persisted, "tell a fellow."

Kitty's lips opened as though to speak, then closed again in a firm line.

The boy bent nearer encouragingly. "Well?"

Kitty smiled confusedly. "Well, it's Kitty. Kitty Kopitski."

"Kitty," he repeated. "Kitty, that's a nice name. Say, write it down for me, will you? And where you live."

"What for?" Kitty parried. "There ain't no use."

"Ah, go on," he urged. "There's a heap of use, Kitty. I—I—I'm coming back if luck finds me. Straight goods, girl! I know more than you think. Why," he leaned over the counter and shyly patted one of her grimy little hands. "You're goin' to haunt me, girl. When you said 'air,' there was the same look in your eyes that thirsty cattle turn to the sky."

"You see, most folks has got somebody that's in on their luck, but me, I'm different. There ain't nobody, and I was thinkin'," here he broke off suddenly, holding forth the blue enamel signet, "I tell you what—you wear this, Kitty, and if me and

Red has luck, I'll come back, and we'll hunt up a surenuff one. How 'bout it, Kit? Say it's all right, girl! I gotta go now, or me and the kid'll miss our train, but just say it's all right before I go."

"It's—all right," murmured Kitty, her eyes brimming with tears, her fingers clutching the ring within her palm. "It's all right, O. T."

And smiling through her tears, she watched O. T. as he hastily wended his way down the aisle, past the gayly-colored bottles at the perfume counter, past the popcorn and candy section where Red waited him impatiently, and then, with a backward glance toward her, through Kressworth's red and gold doors.

"Well?" Rene's voice fell like a lash upon her. "I guess you're in the class all right from now on."

Kitty turned bewildered eyes toward her. "What do you mean, class?" she asked in a listless voice which betrayed her dissociation from her surroundings.

"Here's where you start to flicker! No girl lights up without something like that." She nodded to the direction in which O. T. had disappeared, smiling as she beheld the tell-tale color which suffused Kitty's cheeks. "What do they call him at home, Kid?"

"O. T." Kitty answered, and as her eyes caught the gleam of the blue enamel signet, "Smith."

"Smith!" Rene ejaculated, disgustedly, "Smith! If that ain't a lead to a romance! Can you beat it? Smith!"

Kitty rubbed the blue enamel "T" with a smudgy forefinger. "He lives in Texas, Rene, but he's coming back. He told me so, and somehow or other I'd believe anything that fellow'd say. Jiggers! There's Monahan! Me for up front!"

Rene watched Kitty move toward an impatient customer, noting a certain newborn alertness in the slight figure.

The afternoon slipped by in confusion, labor settling down upon the glamorous scene, teeming the instance with complication and burning the tapers of her servants upon her altar. Kressworths became a spueing maw of humanity. Human kind jostled and shoved in and out.

The store took on a tawdry sadness. Limp laces fluttered wearily. Artificial flowers gleamed their impossible colors.

Even the white-faced girls who stood bent and beaten with the lash of labor appeared to lose their meager brightness with the going day and, like the tawdry goods, drop the heavy burden of the play.

At five thirty, Rene encircled Kitty's waist and the two made their way to the locker room. "Goin' straight home, Kit?" asked Rene.

"No, I'm going to stop by Carr Park. I want to think. Rene, I want to be still a minute."

A few moments later, they emerged with the crowd that surged from the employees' entrance, Rene hanging to one of Kitty's thin arms as they walked toward Eighth

Street. Night lights had been lighted. Display windows blared their brilliancy across the sidewalks.

With one accord they moved toward the lighted window of a department store, answering the enticement of the simpering dummies who held forth their postured arms and smiled emptily out upon the passing throngs.

Rene nudged Kitty. "Look at them dames, Kit! Gee, ain't they swell? I wonder how'd it feel to be new all over once!"

They stood entranced before a glowing mass of flesh-colored boudoir accessories.

"They're for brides, ain't they, Rene?" Kitty's voice was soft and wistful toned.

Rene nodded affirmatively. "U h u h ! How'd you like to have a teddy like one of them, at the bottom of a Lord Knows When box?"

"What'd you mean—Lord Knows When box, Rene?"

"You know, a hope feeder. The more you get, the more you hope. A box where you bet every cent you got you're goin' to get a man, only you put up your bets every day in booby prizes. You know, wash rags, tidies, tinware, anything."

"Oh, a hope box!" Kitty's eyes lighted.

"Sure."

"Rene, I'm gonna get one."

"All right! Suppose you do! I'll stake you to the first prize!"

Kitty pulled the reluctant Rene from the tempting array. "Come on,

Rene, I got to hurry. I want to stop at the park. Funny, ain't it, I feel like this is my lucky day. They say horseshoes *is* lucky. Guess you're right, Rene, luck is funny. You can't buy it nor steal it, and if you *look* for it, you can't *find* it. You just got to *wait* till it comes and picks on you!"

Rene laughed. "You wasn't talking that way this morning!"

"No, I wasn't, Rene. Funny, ain't it, how just feelin' that maybe there *is* something to luck can give you a little pep. Say, I'm going to let this horseshoe jolly me. I'm going to believe in luck. I got to! You hear, Rene? I *got* to! If I don't, I'm done for. There must be something beside Kressworths and home. Home! I can see it now—the old man blowing tobacco smoke into the stew—kids, dirt, fighting, ugh!" And after a silence, "yonder's the park, Rene. Gee, it's just swarming, but I could think about Texas leaning against a gum-puncher!"

"All lit up, Kit!" Rene squeezed Kitty's arm closer. "Getting to be a regular flicker. Well, take it while it's coming, hon, even if it spells it's name O. T. Smith! I wonder what that O stands for—Orlando? Oswald? Otto? Huh! There ain't many names commencing with 'O' that'd fit a regular fella!"

"I like Orlando, Rene. I bet that's it!"

Rene leaned nearer and looked long into Kitty's face lighted by one of Carr Park's blue arcs. "Run on, Kit. You look tired," she said.

"Think a headful about Texas and Orlando. So long!"

"So long, Rene!"

Kitty moved slowly away through the crowded park path and Rene sighed as she again noted a certain brave little swagger.

"Well, Orlando," she murmured, "you've got some job! Just between you and me, kid, you're a married man!"

II

Pling! The cash register jangled forth dismally beneath Rene's languid hand as she deposited a wet dime which had been delivered into her palm from the fingers of a mackintosh customer.

Leel dusted a stack of hairpin boxes and placed them alluringly beside the button moulds. "*Some* day!" she murmured. "Just wish you'd look out!" She nodded toward the open door through which dripping beings writhed and jostled. "Wonder where Kit is."

Rene shrugged. "Search me. Poor Kit. Honest, Leel, she's about as cheerful as an undertaker these days. She's just the bouquet to pin on this mornin'!"

Leel pinned back a stray lock that hung limply from one frowsy earbob. "Poor Kit," she said laconically.

Rene gazed wearily out over the crowding aisle. "Nothing stops 'em, does it? Even rain ain't a damper on the kind that crawl the two-jit stores. Dime-lice! Worse in wet weather. Gee! This is the life!"

The two girls slouched against the counter, watching the passing throng, occasionally attending a customer. Added to the verimingled scents which belonged to the spot was now that of wet woollens, dripping raincoats and musty tweeds, over which the fresh cool smell of rain crept weakly.

Rene suddenly attracted by a refreshing whiff of outside air, turned and beheld Kitty Kopitski, tying her black apron on, her drab head bent, and her eyes brimming. She nudged Leel and nodded to indicate the late arrival.

"Don't let on!" she whispered, "I guess they've been having it at home again."

Monahan wriggled through the crowd before the counter. "Kitty Kopitski," he began addressing the bedraggled little head which bent closer over the eternal sorting of button cards. "Thirty minutes late! What'd you think this is—a finishing school? Never mind them button cards. I want to talk to you!"

Kitty raised frightened eyes. "Who—me?"

"Yes, you! You're the one that's thirty minutes late, ain't you?"

"I—I guess I am."

"You *guess* you are! Say, this ain't no riddle department. You can tell the superintendent what's the reason to-night. Here, give this gent some hooks and eyes."

Kitty's shoulders seemed to shrink as she accepted the card of hooks and eyes from the customer's hand. With one accord, Rene and Leel moved to-

ward her as their common enemy turned to answer a call from another section.

"Don't you give a care, Kit!" Rene whispered. "I got corns all over me from his tongue lashin'. What's a matter, hon?"

Kit batted a tear free from her lashes. "Nothin', Rene," she answered in a dead little voice. "Nothin' *new*. Same fight, same old thing forever and ever; I guess." She shuddered and closed her eyes.

Rene put a tender arm across her shoulder, keeping an eye upon the aisle lest Monahan descend upon them. "Huh!" she half whispered. "And that after yesterday! Why, I thought you'd come in all lit up like a Christmas tree! Lookee here." She removed a flat little parcel from her blouse-front and proffered it.

Kitty blinked.

"Go on," Rene urged, forcing the packet upon her, "it's the startin' of the hope box."

Kitty extracted a pink-bordered wash cloth from the depth of the paper envelope, and her lips parted in a whimsical smile.

"It ain't much, kid, but it's a start," encouraged Rene. "You're goin' to get that box, ain't you?"

"What's the use, Rene? I can't kid myself, but—" Kitty hesitated, "I guess it wouldn't do any harm. Gee, I'd like to have one!"

"Get a mattin' box," Leel suggested, "They're swell, kid! Less go over to the Globe Store at noon hour. They're sellin' out and I bet we can land a beaut. Say, I didn't

know you had a steady. When did it all happen?"

Rene pressed an elbow gently into Kitty's side. "Yesterday," she answered before Kitty could either deny or affirm. "And he's some boy."

Kitty laughed nervously, her cheeks betraying her confusion. "Aw, Rene," she demurred, but Rene again intruded.

"She's going to live in Texas. He's a oil magnet."

"Well, what do you know about that!" Leel exclaimed, her eyes appraising Kitty at a new value. And with an intimacy just born of the confidence, she smoothed an imaginary wrinkle from Kitty's lace collar. "When's it comin' off, girlie?"

"Oh, sometime in the fall," Rene returned summarily as she rang a sale. "Soon as his business gets straightened out. I'm going to give her a shower for her hope box."

Kitty stood by, a bewildered light in her eyes, the icy hand of doubt clutching at her heart. "I—I—" she began but Rene silenced her with a glance.

"Got a ring, dearie?" Leel demanded, reaching for Kitty's hand.

"Not yet," Rene interpolated, "Have a heart, Leel! This only happened yesterday. He ain't had time. But say, he's romantic. You'll never guess what he did. It's the cutest thing I ever heard tell of."

The conversation was interrupted by the intrusion of an ample-bosomed female, wishing to purchase a length of red elastic. Rene gave the de-

sired service, thankful for the respite in which to rejuvenate her imagination, then turned to Leel and continued:

"He come right up to this counter, Leel. He come right up here, and hadn't no more than lit till he ups and lamps off the kid, and when he said 'Texas,' it was like the last flicker at a movie. There wasn't anything handy to make it binding but that fella was sure clever."

"He picks up a brass signet with a blue painted T on it, and bingo! slips it on Kit's fourth left-hand finger. I couldn't hardly believe it, honest, hon, but I just got in at the finish and come to, realizin' that Kit was a engaged woman. He's on his way to Texas. Got a oil proposition out there. They're going to live part the time there and part the time in his home town, Belgrade—sort of a summer home idea, get it? And Kit's got to get ready between now and fall. Gee, I envy her!" Rene stopped to cast an admiring glance at the shrinking Kitty.

"So do I," breathed Leel. "Gosh, to think of Kit gettin' out of it first!"

"I always knew Kit 'ud land," Rene returned, smiling indulgently at Kitty, "she's the kind men fall for—the mountain daisy type. There's a chromo on every corner these days." Then, with a nod toward the door, "Look, Kit! The sun's out. I guess we can go over to the Globe all right. Oh, Oh! Here's little Monahan again!"

Leel preened consciously, meeting Monahan's gaze with daring coquetry.

"Hello, cutie," Monahan addressed her insouciantly. "How's every little thing?"

"Oh, all to the good, I guess. Say, Kitty Kopitski's engaged."

Monahan raised his brows and smiled with newborn interest toward Kitty's narrow silhouette. "Well," he remarked, "I guess that lets her off for being late this morning."

Leel, faintly uneasy at his sudden leniency, glanced sharply at him.

"When's she quittin'?" the floor-man inquired.

"Some time in the fall, Rene says."

Monahan moved toward Kitty with a spritely step. "I hear you're leaving us, Miss Kopitski," he remarked in a fatuous tone that admitted of her new standing.

Kitty started. "I—I, yes, Mr. Monahan, I—that is, not right away." But she was spared further revelation by an insistent demand from the perfume counter for Mr. Monahan.

A moment later, Leel was claimed by a rush on breastpins at the fore of the counter, at last giving Kitty the chance to confront Rene. "What ever made you do it, Rene? You lied! You just plain lied!"

"Well," defied Rene, "What of it? Stickin' to the truth's never got you any place, has it? Listen, Kit, that little lie's lit you up. Did you

notice the difference in Monahan? 'Miss Kopitski!' Huh! Nobody gets nowhere without advertising, I'm tellin' you. Why, I'm pastin' up your billboards for you, Kit. Less just sit tight and see what happens. Any way, *part* of it's true."

Kitty gazed down upon her ring finger. "Yes," she mused, her eyes happily reminiscent, "part of it is true. Oh, Rene, I wished it was *all* true!" Her lips trembled. "But there's nothin' like that gonna happen to me!"

"How do you know?" Rene demanded. "I'll bet you my last cent on Texas, Kit. That fella ain't the kind that fools. He's coming back. Didn't I bet a wash rag on him? Wish on that horseshoe, Kit. Say, you're gonta back me up, ain't you?"

Kitty nodded dubiously. "I guess I am, Rene."

III

THE morning hours slipped swiftly into afternoon, bringing no halt to the gala pageantry which swarmed the aisles of Kressworth's—a vericolored pageantry which moved restlessly, concerned in its own purpose.

The first glimmer of radiance had warmed within Kitty Kopitski's little breast. Mid-afternoon fanned the tiny flame with a new consideration for her drab existence.

The news of her "engagement"

crept subtly from lip to lip, engendering gracious attentions. Five o'clock found her the center of an admiring group in the locker room, her eyes alight, her head lifted with a new pride.

"Ain't it grand, Kit? And you goin' to Texas!" Leel squeezed Kitty's arm affectionately. "Say, did you get one of them boudoir caps that come in this mornin'?"

Kitty pinned on her flat little hat, and perked the near-filet at her throat, letting her hand linger for a moment over the horseshoe pin. "I'm goin' to, to-morra. Rene give me a wash rag, and Lottie Regan at the tinware's goin' to give me two aluminum saucepans. Say, we sure got a bargain over at the Globe Store. A mattin' box, dustproof and everything, and only three ninety-eight! I'm just crazy about it."

"Ain't it grand to be engaged?" Gert Boger from the popcorn stand breathed dreamily. "If Ed gets a raise I'm gonna be next."

The bustle of departure obliterated further conversation. Kitty slipped an arm through Rene's as they emerged from the employees' exit. "Less go through Carr Park again to-night," she suggested. "I—I—love Carr Park these days."

IV

SPRING followed dismal winter, flinging her thin sunlight half-heartedly over the sooty roofs and

weather-stained buildings of the town. Kressworth's red front flamed, new-painted and gilt-adorned, its windows flaunting impossible flowers and foliage, its doorway importuning the passer-by.

Rene gazed pensively streetward as she mechanically sorted stock. "January, February, March, April and half of May," she murmured, as she abstractedly counted the months on her fingers.

Leel, who was ringing a sale at the cash register, glanced up sharply. "What you doin', kiddo, pagin' Father Time?"

Rene started guiltily. "No, I was just thinking."

"Thinkin'. Say, you must have a headful, talkin' months all to yourself!"

"I have, Leel, but I don't know whether I ought to say anything about it or not."

Leel caressed the design on the cash register with brilliantly manicured finger tips. "I know what's eatin' on you."

"Well, what?" Rene asked with lowered eyes.

Leel placed a confidential hand upon her arm. "It's Kit," she whispered. "I'm scared, too."

Rene bent forward, her eyes dilating. "What do you mean—you're scared too?"

"You know what I mean. I've been on to your stall for some time. That's a phony tip you give us—Kit bein' engaged to a oil man. I had my doubts all along, and what I know now—"

"Leel!" Rene gasped, the color draining from her face. "You—you—what do you know?"

Leel extracted a scrap of newspaper from the pocket of her cerise corduroy skirt and presented it triumphantly to Rene. "Look," she commanded. "The jig's up."

Rene took the paper clipping between icy fingers, her heart pounding frantically as she read. "That's him," she confirmed at last. "'O. T. Smith married at half past four Wednesday afternoon at St. John's Cathedral to Miss Jane Frances Lorillard, daughter of Col. and Mrs. Sidney Lawrence Lorillard, at their summer home, Belglade, on Clayton Road.' That's him, that's him! Oh, my God, Leel! What'll we do? How'll we tell her?"

"I don't know," Leel returned dully. "It'll kill the kid. I hated to show it to you, Rene. Honest I did, but she's bound to find out some time or other that he ain't comin' back. I've been watching her, poor kid. She's worked herself to death. That fool hope box of hers is all cluttered up with tattin' and teddy bears and tidies."

"And have you noticed how swell she's lookin'?" Rene demanded. "Same schedule every night—regular as clock work. Gives that hair of hers a hundred strokes of the brush, daubs herself all up with cold cream, blows out the light and—off for Texas! Gosh! Here she comes now. Say—look at her eyes! They're all swelled. Reckon she knows, Leel?"

The two gazed fascinatedly at the transformed face of Kitty Kopitski as she struggled through the crowd and took her stand at the jewelry display, her face resolutely turned away from them.

"Hello, Kit," Rene said.

"Hello," Kitty answered without turning.

"Yes," Rene whispered to Leel, "she knows. Somebody's told her, or she's read it, or something. Ah, the poor kid—the poor little kid!"

True enough, the rejuvenated Kitty Kopitski had disappeared and those young eyes that, during the last few months, had been luminous with the light of hope, now smoldered with despair.

Those young lips that had laughed so defiantly at care now drooped pathetically. The poise, the charm, even the beauty with which her imaginary engagement to O. T. had endowed her had all disappeared as if by magic, leaving her stark in the ruin of her dreams.

Day dragged tediously on—a day filled with spring witchery which lured the heart to depart from labor, and to play.

At five, Kitty moved wearily toward the locker room, deftly avoiding the group that was wont to greet her. Hastily procuring her hat, she started for the door, only to be halted in her flight by Midge Reichert of the Complaint Department.

"Wait a minute, Kit," Midge called.

Kitty sped on, pretending not to hear.

"Oh, Kit!" Midge persisted, "wait a minute!"

Kitty reluctantly turned about, confronting Midge with Rene Connor at her heels.

"I got a little something for your hope box," Midge stammered, proffering Kitty a tissue-wrapped parcel, which she accepted with icy fingers, her eyes shifting under Rene's penetrating gaze.

"Well, ain't you goin' to thank her for it?" Rene demanded, conscious of Kitty's perturbation.

"Thanks, Midge," Kitty muttered, her voice sounding in her own ears like that of a stranger.

Midge somewhat surprised and disappointed at Kitty's reception of her gift, murmured: "Oh, that's all right. It ain't much, but I hope you like it." And disappeared into the crowd that thronged through the exit.

Rene caught Kitty's arm, bringing her sharply about.

"Come on, hon," she said tensely, "less get out of this. I wanta talk to you."

"Oh, Rene," Kitty began hysterically. "Oh, Rene! Oh, Rene!"

"Hush!" Rene commanded tenderly. "Wait till we get outside."

She elbowed their way through the crowd, Kitty following her blindly. Once without, she slipped her arm affectionately, bracingly, about the girl's waist. "What's amatter, Kit?" she crooned. "Come on, tell Rene."

"Oh, Rene," Kitty sobbed. "Oh, Rene. We ought never done it!"

"You—you—seen the paper, did you, Kit?"

Kitty nodded dumbly, her fingers digging into the flesh of Rene's arm, her teeth chattering together uncontrollably. "He's married, Rene. O. T. Smith's married, and to a swell. We might a known he was kiddin'. I never really believed he was in earnest, but the way you talked and then the girls all beginnin' to give me stuff for the hope box, and—and—oh, my God, that hope box!"

"Hush, Kit," Rene soothed, "hush!"

"I can't hush," Kitty wailed, "I can't. It's all wrong, Rene. Everything's wrong—my hope box and Kressworths and everything. I ain't never had nothing that didn't turn out to be phony."

"Don't talk like that, Kit! Don't get so wild, honey. We got to be level about this thing. We got to fix somethin' up to tell the girls."

"To-morrow," Kitty repeated with a shudder. "To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow! And *he ain't never coming back!*" She turned a stark face toward Rene and tore loose from her grasp. "Let me be, Rene," she panted. "Oh, God, let me be!" And with a despairing gesture she turned and fled into the night, leaving Rene Connor to stare after her with troubled, tear-filled eyes.

V

KRESSWORTHS ground its servitors with hungry jaws. Spring, with its

new urge, lay upon the usual gray day.

Kitty Kopitski remained as a shadow of the old grayness in the midst of the gala-draped department. Each day had taken its toll of her spirit. Each day had weighted her down with increased depression. She stood stolidly through the hours, mechanically acting in the capacity Kressworths called her unto, but removed, hunted, despairing. Rene watched furtively, jealously, sure of the fading of the pitiful little figure.

"Kit's wore out as the rubber on a kid's pencil," she confided to Leel. "She can't stand up to it, Kid. What we goin' to do?"

Leel sagged upon one hip and watched Kitty smooth her pallid cheek with a blue-veined hand, and rest her weight against the counter, her eyes closed, a cloud of suffering settling upon her countenance.

"She's sure all in," she agreed, "None of us has let on anything. The whole bunch is sorry for her."

"That's just it!" Rene answered. "You're *sorry* for her. Don't you know, you boob, there ain't no poison like 'sorry for'? If I had that Smith guy—" She broke off and watched Kitty finger at the horseshoe pin which still twinkled feebly at her throat. "I don't get the idea of what luck is. They may be some-thin' christened by that name, but I ain't ever met it face to face."

"Why, if I was to find a million dollars in a silk sack, the guy that lost it would be standing there when

I raised from pickin' it up! Now, Jinx is a regular fellow, but Luck, nothin' to it, I tell you! Look at Kit." Rene shuddered. "Luck for a day kidded her into gettin' almost good lookin', but 'long comes Jinx and she pines off to a slat! And there's spots on her cheeks. Have you noticed?"

Leel nodded.

"She's got blue vallies under her eyes, too," Rene continued, "and, oh gee, the kid's just all in! Monahan told me they was goin' to let her off if she didn't speed up. God, ain't it awful? She's playin' on raw flesh now."

Leel dispatched a sale and returned to Rene's side. "Rene," she whispered. "They're goin' to bring down the Easter stock this afternoon. We got to stay to-night and get it ready for to-morrow. How's that kid goin' to last out. She's weavin' now, and if she squeals, Monahan's goin' to ditch her, sure. It's got to be Luck that gets her outa this mess, I'm tellin' you."

"Well, she believes in Luck, so maybe she's got a speakin' acquaintance with it. She told me the other day that she called it Luck that she even had the fun for a while. I don't see the point. Looks like findin' a empty pocketbook to me! I wish I'd never started that lyin'."

Rene bit her lip. "But it wasn't a lie altogether, either. I thought that guy had the look of the real thing. He sure seemed to like Kit, but the war made a lot of 'em that way, I guess. Swells got used to

chuckin' dames under the chin, and they can't stop it now. Have you seen her laugh? Looks like death's playmate, rompin'!"

VI

MORNING wore on, dinning into noon and from thence to a languorous afternoon. At three, Monahan stopped at the jewelry counter, his voice coming raucously forth from behind a stack of tissue-paper lilies. "You! Say there. I'm talkin' to you, Kitty Kopitski. Do you think this is a rest room? Come here!"

Kitty roused herself from a man-tling depletion, grasped the counter-edge, and stood still for an instant, striving to regain her poise.

"Well," Monahan's voice cut in once more. "Get a move on!"

Rene watched the shrunken figure walk unsteadily from behind the counter. "I wish he'd swallow his tongue and choke to death," she whispered to Leel, who stared as Monahan delivered into Kitty's hands the huge bulk of tissue lilies.

"Take 'em to the basement," he commanded, "and don't lay the pavement on the way!"

Kitty staggered beneath the lopping load, entirely submerged by the crisp elusive burden. Turning the corner of the popcorn booth near the entrance where the brass-rimmed stairway led below, she suddenly met an obstruction. A long arm parted the lilies in her embrace and an eager voice cried, "Kitty! Oh, you Kitty!"

Kitty raised bewildered eyes. "O. T.," she gasped; "O. T.!" and with a soft little gurgling sound, she crumpled to the floor.

O. T. leaned over, gathering to his breast an armful of lilies and Kitty Kopitski. The crowd surged in upon them, shutting out the air. "Get back," Monahan commanded, wriggling to the spot. "Get back! 'Tain't nothin' but a kid fainted. Give her air. Gosh, look at them lilies!"

O. T. raised his six-foot-one with Kitty sagging in his arms. Lilies waved and toppled floorward. "Get me out of this!" he shouted threateningly to Monahan. "Get me outa this to somewheres I can lay her down."

Monahan meeting the threat with strange submission, led the way to the retiring room, where O. T. deposited the unconscious Kitty upon a couch.

"Now, get out!" he commanded, turning and shutting the door in the face of the astonished floor manager and the crowd which followed at his heels. Walking to the couch, he looked down upon Kitty's pallid face. One slim hand lay upon her breast. The other hung limply over the couch side. "Poor little Kid," O. T. murmured, taking it within his own. "I'm here to know what's behind them eyes." He raised her hand toward his lips, and, suddenly catching sight of the tarnished circlet upon her finger, gathered her warmly to his breast.

"Kitty," he crooned. "Kitty, I'm here. I've come back, honey."

Kitty's eyes fluttered open and gazed blindly up into his.

"I've come back, Kitty," he repeated softly.

Suddenly conscious, she writhed loose from his encircling arms. "You can't act like this!"

O. T. caught her shoulders in his strong hands. "Why? I want to know? Ain't you waited?" He pointed to the circlet upon her finger. Kitty hung her head.

"Ain't you, *glad*?" he demanded. "Why, what's the matter, honey?"

Kitty extracted from her blouse-front the clipping which had shattered her house of dreams, watching the boy furtively as he read it; but he met her gaze squarely, honestly—with no show of confusion.

"Well?" he interrogated. "What's that got to do with *us*?"

"You're *married*, ain't you?" Kitty flashed. "That surely ain't any way to treat me, is it?"

"Me, married? Well, I guess not! That guy—"

"But it says 'Belglade—O. T. Smith, Belglade.'"

O. T. let out a long, low whistle. "So you thought I was that guy, did you? Why, Kitty, honey, that's not me! I'm O. T. Smith, Belgrade. Belglade and *Belgrade* ain't even cousins! Nix on that stuff, girl! You've got it all wrong! But listen, Kid, there's a star right in the west out at Carysville, hangin' over the hills. Wait till I show it to you. Red's goin' to meet us with the hack, if you say so. I reckon I ought to waited till we was acquainted, but me—I'm different! There's plenty of time to get acquainted. And lissen, honey, they've leased Red's and my tract, and we, you and me, Kitty, leave to-morrow for—Texas."

"Texas," Kitty breathed. "Texas! Kiss me, O. T.!" And after a second, "I believe in luck, don't you?"

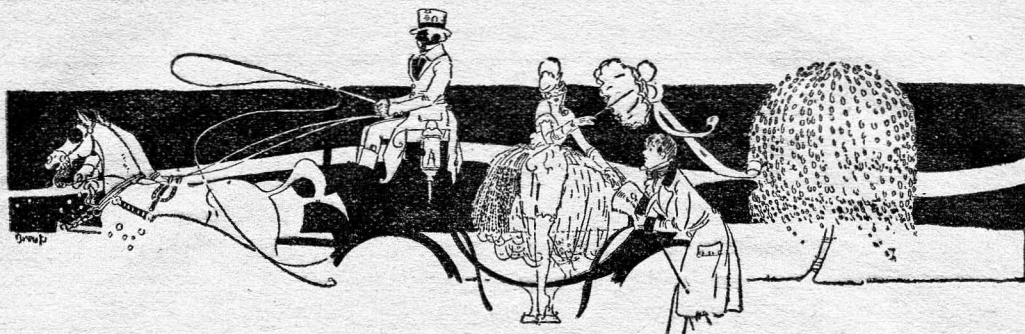
"I'll say I do!" O. T. returned jubilantly. "Come on, Kit, let's go tell it to the world!"



"Free" Love

I BELIEVED in free love, and so did a girl I met. Finally I tired of it. Then she sued me for \$100,000 in a breach-of-promise case, and I gave her \$25,000 to keep it out of the papers and call the suit off. She accepted it with a smile.

Free love isn't always free!



The Puzzle

By Helen Hysell

"I hope he doesn't try to kiss me," she mused and added a bit of rouge to her already too scarlet mouth.

"I hope he doesn't try to kiss me," she murmured and draped a scarf alluringly about her piquant face.

"I hope he doesn't try—" She tripped into the living-room where he waited and greeted him effusively with seductive glances and a lingering hand-clasp.

"I hope he doesn't—" She snuggled against him in the shadow of the taxi and sighed in gentle languor.

"I hope he—" She suggested that they drive through the park on the way to the theatre.

"I hope—" She allowed him to slip his arm about her shoulders.

"I hope—" As they passed beneath a street light she shot him a provocative glance, and he saw invitation in the pout of her lips and the droop of her eyelids.

"I hope—" He kissed her.

"I don't see why it is that every man I know tries to kiss me," she mused as she stepped out of the taxi before the theatre.



The Dengel

By Paul Hervey Fox

Part angel, part devil, she tried
to ensnare the very souls of men

TEMPLE RAWSON, in tweed knickerbockers, with sleek, blonde hair, and a cigarette burning lazily between his fingers, lounged upon the clubhouse float. Across the bright blue lane of water that wound through innumerable islands, an insignificant launch drove its jolting course.

Rawson's eyes rested with indifference upon the launch and its occupant. The launch gradually drew nearer, and Rawson flicked away his cigarette and stared with sudden attention.

A tall man, very lean and grave, switched off the engine, and silently clambered upon the float. He had a dark, thoughtful face that seemed diffident, seemed inarticulate, yet his gestures and powerful frame were decisive. In the gentle, nebulous eyes there lay the shadow of some odd, unuttered humor.

Rawson recognized him as Starke, who had leased the big house on Arbor Island for the season. He recognized him because for the past three days Rawson had thought of Mrs. Starke more often than of any other woman. And Rawson's thoughts concerned themselves at all times very largely with women.

"Good morning," he said in his

good-humored, drawling voice. "Fine day, isn't it?"

Starke looked up with a frown, not of dislike but of discomfort. He mumbled some sort of incoherent greeting, and bent to lift a canvas knapsack and a duffle-bag out of the launch.

"Yes . . . going away . . . fishing," he murmured awkwardly. His prehensile arms hung limply at his side. His eyes, with their air of quizzical humor, fell upon Rawson's face for one flying instant.

The younger man gazed back with a contemptuous analysis he was wise enough to hide.

Temple Rawson had inherited much money and a strong sense of pleasure. He liked race horses, he liked to drink deep, and though he had seen the dawn often, it had always been before, and not after, sleeping.

"How long will you be gone?" he asked. "Not for any time?"

Starke put out his hand in a vague gesture.

"Two weeks," he said as if with an effort. He seemed about to smile, apparently thought the better of it, and lifted his packs. "Good-by," he got out abruptly, and trudged slowly away.

Temple Rawson surveyed his back.

"Damn fool!" he ejaculated in an undertone, and fumbled for another cigarette. So Vera Starke was to be alone on Arbor Island for two weeks! What luck!

Rawson remembered again the pale, pretty woman whom he had met ever so casually at a club dance three evenings before. He remembered the violet eyes with their pleading look, the slim, supple figure, the hands that were as graceful as flowers. . . .

It was barely two o'clock that afternoon before he was skimming across the water in a catboat that he owned. There was enough wind to puff his sails, and half an hour's tacking threw him near the shores of Arbor Island.

Temple Rawson tied his boat, and began the ascent to the house.

All at once a voice, very clear and cheerful, hailed him. He halted, waved his hand, and strode into a grove of young trees. Though he moved at a leisurely pace, he was excited and stirred as he always was at the prelude to an adventure. Mrs. Starke was lying back in a deep wicker chair with two or three books tumbled listlessly at her feet.

Rawson, greeting her, held her hand just the tenth of a second too long. He drew up another chair.

"Happened to sail near here," he said. "Thought I'd drop in and see you and your husband."

"But Jack—Jack's gone away. He left this morning on a fishing trip."

She gazed at him with her frank and innocent eyes. She seemed unprotected, very young somehow—a girl in a tan-colored frock. She was surely no older than twenty.

"Well, I'll try to stand it," he said with an air of banter. "I hope you're not taking it too hard yourself."

"I? I shall miss him very much, of course."

Rawson looked at her alertly. She had made the statement simply, yet Rawson was privately skeptical. Of course she was pretending something; women always were; only this one did it better than others.

"Do you mind if I sprawl on the ground," he asked. "Chairs make me feel too formal. I don't want to feel formal—with you."

He fell into desultory talk about mutual acquaintances, a tennis tournament, told a story or two exceedingly well. Mrs. Starke laughed the gay, agreeable laugh of a very young girl who is amused without knowing why.

A sense of intimacy and friendliness deepened between them. All at once Rawson moved nearer.

"Your hands are wonderful," he said in a slightly husky voice. He looked up and caught her eyes. What was their expression—embarrassment, fear, amusement?—he could not quite determine.

"Do you think so?" she asked naïvely.

That question at once convinced him, and encouraged him to believe what he wished to believe. He took

one of her hands gently in his own, and turned it about as if in examination.

"I can read your palm. There is a sign on this line here."

"A sign?"

"It means that there is a kiss for you from a stranger."

"From a stranger?"

"From me!"

He rose suddenly to his feet, pushed himself without awkwardness across the arm of her chair, and put his hands upon her shoulders, his lips against hers. She averted her head with a sharp little twist, and Rawson drew away. He waited quietly, calmly expectant of a laugh, an outburst, even a tempestuous accusation.

But he did not expect what happened. For she did nothing at all except to say "Oh!" in a kind of horrified sigh, and regard him with eyes that never left his face. Then at last their meaning was clear to him. They were eyes of terror.

Rawson was overcome by a wave of remorse. He felt like the spoiler of a shrine. Was it possible, after all, that this woman with the pretty, demure air was as innocent as she looked?

"I feel so humiliated!" she said at last in a low, unhappy voice. "I feel so humiliated! I never—no one except my husband—ever kissed me."

"Good Lord!" said Temple Rawson thickly. "You don't mean that? But you're too pretty! I mean—oh, I'm sorry, but I couldn't help it. Are you angry?"

"No, no; it isn't that. It wasn't your fault. Didn't you say it was in my palm? I believe things like that, you know."

"You don't mean you believed—" Rawson began incredulously. "Mrs. Starke, I hate to tell you, but I'd like to be honest with you, even if you dislike me for it. I begin to think you're the only woman I ever met who— What I'm trying to say is, I merely invented that nonsense about your palm."

She looked at him with her wistful air, and the words seemed to come home to her slowly. Then all at once she fumbled for a handkerchief with desperate little movements.

Her face twitched, her eyes clouded, and she began to cry helplessly. Rawson was not the sort of man whom women's tears melt. As a rule they merely irritated him. Now they made him curse himself for a fool.

"Forgive me," he said in a voice that was too honest to be dramatic, "I'll never bother you again, I swear I won't. I thought— I won't tell you what I thought."

She smiled through her tears.

"Of course you think I'm awfully weak. But I haven't gone out much, I never knew many people. And you're so clever, I've heard a lot about you, and—and do you think I'm weak to talk like this?"

"I think you are the sweetest thing I've ever seen," said Temple Rawson clumsily.

"Hush! You mustn't!"

"And I won't ever try to make love to you again—never!"

"Was that what is called 'making love'?"

"But don't you know?" Rawson demanded helplessly. His memory flashed back to Starke. The man was undoubtedly a cold fish, and unknown circumstances had given him this lonely girl for a wife. She was certainly not stupid, yet she was ingenuous as a child.

Had she been less pretty, her naïvete would perhaps have been not quite so appealing. It came to Temple Rawson that the best thing he could do was to leave Arbor Island as promptly as possible, and then shelve this memory away in the pigeonhole labeled, "Mistakes."

"I'm going," he said. "I'll say good-by. I won't trouble you again."

"But you'll come back?" she asked almost eagerly. "Soon? I'm all alone here, and there's no one to talk to, and I do get lonely."

"Aren't you frightened that I—that I might go on 'making love' to you?"

"Oh, no! I trust you now!" Her clear voice was full of delicate music.

Temple Rawson was astonished to hear himself say:

"I will come back, and by George, you'll be able to trust me!"

He was enormously moved. He had not had faith in any woman since he was nineteen, yet the experience of this casual afternoon had brought to the surface in him that latent idealism which is the dark secret of all skeptics and unbelievers.

As he stood there his attention went over her shoulders and through

the interspaces of the trees. He made out the figure of a man stepping out of a canoe.

"Arthur Morrow!" he ejaculated.

"Where? Is he coming here? Who is he?"

"He's a narrow-minded little—he's a prig. He's been everywhere this week, raising funds for some new social work or other. If you don't mind, I'll slip out of your forest by the back door, and make my way around to the landing. I'd get rid of him for you if I could."

"Good-by. You will come to see me soon? I do get so lonely. And we're going to be splendid friends, aren't we?"

As he slipped down a side-path, Temple Rawson wondered why the things she said did not seem mawkish. At one bound he had thrown aside all his carefully cultivated egoism, his irony, and mocking humor.

"Charity? To help the down-trodden? On the contrary, I'm very much interested in charity. I'm always asking for it."

Arthur Morrow bit his lip. He tried to cover his evident disapproval of Mrs. Starke's flippancy with a forced smile.

He was a young man with a round head, intolerant, dark eyes, and very full lips. He was, in fact, a sensualist twisted by denial into an ascetic.

Temptation was for him no empty symbol but a vivid and personal foe. Under the whip of his own fanaticism

he had dedicated himself to the sentimental ideal of Service, and he was prepared for rebuffs, for abuse, for martyrdom, for anything provided it were only grim or dramatic.

It was the first time he had met Vera Starke, and he had come to Arbor Island only because it was his laborious intention to canvass every home in the colony.

"I wonder," he began again in a harsher voice, "if you know what it means to be starving."

"I wonder," said Mrs. Starke with an agreeable laugh, "if you know what it means to be without a butler."

"You choose to be flippant," Morrow said, frowning. He was ready to meet scorn or temper with meekness, but this woman's worldly, gentle amusement, annoyed him amazingly.

"It is only lack of imagination," he went on, "which prevents you from sympathizing with all this suffering. The smallest donation—"

"But I have plenty of imagination," she declared, interrupting him. "Only I prefer to use it about delightful things."

"And you care nothing for the misery of others? You are completely selfish?"

"Of course. Aren't you?"

"I have tried not to be," said Arthur Morrow solemnly.

She laughed delightedly, clapped her hands together, and leaned forward.

"You funny boy!" she said. "You *do* take things seriously, don't you?

And you're not bad looking. In fact you're rather handsome. Oh, dear, and I suppose you waste everything! Or are you devoted to some nice, young woman with spectacles and a Purpose?"

Morrow started.

"Are you—are you aware of what you are saying?" he stammered. A dull flush crept into his face, and then he got upon his feet. "I'll stay here no longer," he said in a sudden and furious voice. "You are beyond good. I pity you with all my heart."

Before he could turn, Vera Starke was in front of him with her wide, pleading eyes lifted to his.

"Please forgive me," she begged. "I didn't mean to say those things, I really didn't. Perhaps—perhaps I'm unhappy."

"Unhappy?" He caught at the word like a sword.

"Yes. And—and women are funny people. I knew you'd be sympathetic, and I wanted you to be, and yet I tried to hurt you. Oh, it's wrong of me to talk like this. I don't even know you. Do you think it's wrong?"

He looked down at the frail, alluring figure, once more the conquering male. With soft fingers she touched the sleeve of his coat. Her hand rose and fell caressingly, lighted at last delicately upon his wrist. A little tremor went through the man.

"Do you?" she repeated, her violet eyes upon him full of somber and mysterious lights, her lips parted, lifted, too.

"Unhappy? Why are you unhappy?" said Arthur Morrow in a voice which he did not recognize as his own.

She moved imperceptibly closer. She was in the circle of his arms, and then—and then they were around her, and he had bent back her head, laid his mouth upon hers, kissed her fiercely, while she, with shut eyes, yielded to his strength like a whipped thing.

"Oh, my God!" said Arthur Morrow suddenly. He pushed her away, and put up his hand in a tremulous gesture. "Oh, my God!"

Vera Starke laughed gently.

"Silly boy!" she said. "You're not going to have remorse for a kiss!"

"You're shameful. You tempted me. I—I've got to get away."

"Listen," she said swiftly. "I'm all alone here. There's not a soul in the house except one Japanese servant. And I do like you. Don't you think I'm pretty?"

He looked at her with hot eyes. "I—you—" he said stumbly, and with an effort swung away from her.

"You're afraid," she taunted. "Afraid of a woman!"

He paused, then turned again. When he did, his face was distorted by an unpleasant smile.

"Damn you!" he said as if in agony. "Damn you!"

And the second time he said it, he spoke against her lips.

It was a mild and magnificent night some ten days later. Temple

Rawson and Mrs. Starke sauntered out to the long veranda.

"Let's sit here," said Mrs. Starke. "And go on talking. So that was the only time you were ever in love? When you were nineteen, I mean."

"Yes, I've had nothing like that since—until I met you. That is, I've never respected any woman since, or quite trusted any."

"I'm glad we're such friends," she answered simply. "But surely you were wrong in thinking all women so unscrupulous."

"If you were anyone else, Vera, I wouldn't believe you were honest in saying that," Rawson replied. "But I know about your life now. And how sheltered you've been, and protected from things. Of course that's why you think that way, that's why you are what you are."

"But I'm only myself."

"You are the rarest thing I've ever known. I would cut off my right arm rather than hurt you in any way. The one thing I don't understand is how you can stand me."

She laughed.

"You're awfully modest, aren't you? Don't you know what an attractive man you are! You see I'm not half so naïve as you think. I do like things. And I can trust you, too. But there's another, more important reason besides."

"What is it?"

"Will you be angry if I tell you?"

"I could never be angry at anything you said."

"Then I'll say it. I've wanted to

see you so much, because with all the fine things in you, I wanted you—to be—better.”

“Better?”

“You’ll laugh at me. I know you will. But I have heard things. And of course I haven’t believed them. But, Temple, won’t you promise me not to gamble any more? And—and drink?”

“It’s easy to promise the latter,” said Rawson. “I haven’t had an edge for a week.”

“Please don’t drink any more edges or whatever they are, then. Please, Temple! You are so big! I can’t bear to see you spoil yourself. And—the dreadful things that people say about you and—women. They’re not true, tell me they’re not.”

“I won’t lie to you,” said Rawson heavily. “Yes, they’re true enough, I guess. But I’m through. I never believed in anyone before. And now—”

“Yes.”

“And now it’s different.”

“Temple! Temple, you’ve made me so happy.” She glanced at her watch. “Oh, it’s quite late. I wish we could stay here together like this ever so long. And just talk. It was lovely to have you for dinner. Won’t you have a glass of cold milk before you go?”

“No, thanks, Vera. I’ll move along directly. I know your hours. By the way, some one was telling me that that little prig Morrow comes over here all the time. Don’t you find him a bore?”

“I think there’s something fine in everyone. He’s been telling me things about—”

“Yes.”

“You’ll laugh. You’re so wise, and you’ll think me very stupid.”

“I won’t. He’s been telling you things about what?”

“About the reports of the vice commission.

“You’re a sweet thing and a good woman,” said Rawson, reformed rake. “By George you are! I’ll be over in the morning as usual. Good night, Vera.”

“Good night, Temple.”

Silent and picturesque, she stood upon the veranda gazing after him. He turned once or twice to wave, before the path, twisting sharply toward the boat house, drew him out of sight.

Vera Starke went inside swiftly, humming to herself. She lit a cigarette, and left the house by a rear door, inhaling the smoke gratefully. Two minutes maneuvering down a rocky trail brought her to the north shore of the island. A circle of dark trees girdled a small pebbly beach. She peered out across the quiet water. A voice said gruffly in her ear:

“So you’ve come at last have you? Took your time, too!”

She did not answer, but only turned. Then she was in the speaker’s arms, and he was kissing her again and again.

“Arthur!” she protested at last. “Arthur, you’re strangling me!”

“Take me up to the house,” he

said. "Was he there to-night? Was it that that kept you? Making love to you, I suppose!"

"Your jealousy is getting on my nerves," she answered. "Do you think you own me? And don't you think I can take care of myself? I do what I please anyway."

"Do you know this fellow's reputation?" Arthur Morrow asked. "I could tell you things—"

She laughed almost insultingly.

"And what about you? You aren't exactly a saint yourself."

"Well, who made me this way? I think you know. You tempted me deliberately."

"Cut it, Arthur. I can't stand any lectures to-night. It's not very flattering to be called a hell-cat, though it amused me at first."

His grip tightened on her arm.

"Take me up to the house, Vera. Mix me a drink. I didn't sleep last night. I want some of your husband's rye."

"I don't think I shall take you up. Not when you're in this mood."

"Then look here. Maybe this will make you change your mind about my mood."

He pulled a little velvet case out of his pocket and snapped it open. The moonlight fell on a pure, milky pearl set in a beautiful band.

"Arthur! Where did you get this? How could you buy this?"

He laughed in a strained, hoarse way. "I couldn't. But the relief fund could."

She drew away from him though he still grasped her forearm.

"I don't want it," she said earnestly. "I wouldn't touch it for worlds. Arthur, your education is completed. I can't do anything more for you."

"Come here!" He jerked her roughly to his side.

"You're hurting me. Stop!"

"Hurting you, am I?"

He kissed her violently. She ducked her head, broke free from him, and swerved up the path. He plunged after her, tripped over a root, and cursing, picked himself up and limped desperately on up the slope. But she was in the big, old-fashioned house, and had slipped back the bolt, before he had reached the veranda.

"Let me in!" he demanded. "Or I'll break down this door!"

"You fool, you!" she answered. "I never want to see you again or hear of you."

"Vera, what are you saying?" he cried. "Vera, forgive me! Only let me in!"

Though he rained blows upon the oak for a long time, there was no answer. Presently he saw a room in the top of the house gleam with sudden light, and a vague figure move against the drawn shade. He remained watching for ten minutes, and then went slowly away down towards the north shore and his canoe.

The next morning was gray with a hint of sullen rain. Temple Rawson had tied his catboat to a familiar stanchion, and was making his way up to the house on Arbor Island. He

walked with a free stride, at peace with himself and the world.

When he reached the veranda steps, he paused, for a man, disheveled and haggard, came suddenly toward him from behind one of the big syringa bushes.

"Hullo, Morrow," said Rawson, a little taken aback by the apparition.

"I thought it was you. And you were here last night, too, weren't you?"

"What do you mean? What the deuce is wrong with you?"

"There's nothing wrong with me."

"By George!" said Rawson. "You've been drinking! You're a fine sort of uplifter, you are. Damn it, I never hid anything, at any rate."

"No, you're proud of the things you did."

"I didn't know women like Vera Starke. And I didn't sit around explaining reports of reform work. I wasn't a low hypocrite."

"Explaining reports—explaining what?" Morrow almost screamed.

"She told me that you've been doing that."

"She told you that? She told you I'd been—" He broke off helplessly. Then he grinned suddenly in a disagreeable fashion. "She's a liar."

"What did you say?" Rawson asked with a dangerous glint in his eyes. "Were you speaking of my friend, Mrs. Starke?"

"Yes, and I guess you know what I was saying. You know her as well as I do. She's a damned—"

For one instant of indignation and disbelief Rawson had held himself in

check. Thereafter he swung his fist and sent Morrow reeling backward with a blow that skimmed his chin.

Morrow put down his head and drove punches in blindly. Breathing heavily, the two men circled each other, fighting with a furious determination that made up for their lack of skill.

So engrossed were they that neither noticed a shadow behind them, neither saw the tall, gaunt figure that trudged slowly up the path. But in a clinch where Morrow tore with his teeth and Rawson swung short, wicked jabs to the other man's kidneys, both fighters were suddenly parted.

The long fingers of two extraordinarily strong hands caught each of them by the throat, pressed each of them back against the wall like schoolboys.

Grave and silent, John Starke confronted them with shy, blinking eyes. Quite suddenly he released them. Rawson drew a sleeve over his face, wiping away the blood.

"That dirty rat just insulted your wife, Starke. He insulted the finest woman I've ever known. That's the explanation for this."

Morrow's hands were trembling. His voice was cracked and rose in a kind of wail of denunciation.

"I told the truth," he gasped. "I said what she was. You know. Both of you know. I've nothing left. She's ruined me. I—I resigned this morning from—from all my organizations. She—she's a devil!"

His voice, broken and high, was

commingled at the very end with another's. Temple Rawson, carried away by an excitement almost hysterical, shouted out "Angel!" and the word had blended curiously with Morrow's contrasting term. For a moment there was a hush, a sense of suspense, and Rawson turned with expectant eyes to John Starke.

But punishment for Morrow's insult did not follow. Starke's face was inscrutable. His sad eyes flickered from man to man, then wetting his lips, he ejaculated a single phrase in a low and husky tone:

"Poor fellows!"

He went up the steps with careful deliberation, pulled open a screen door, and entered the house. The bang of the door echoed in a profound silence where Arthur Morrow and Temple Rawson stood alone, together, without speech.

Ten minutes later Starke entered the room at the top of the house where he found his wife writing at a little table with a coffee urn and a tumbler of iced orange juice beside her.

"Jack!" she cried, jumping up and putting her arms around him. "You're back three days before I ex-

pected! Oh, I am so glad! And Jack, take me away from here. I've been so lonely. No one except some silly boys . . ."

"Yes," said Starke. "Yes."

"You've heard of them already? People have been talking?"

"No, I—I saw them. On the steps. A minute ago."

"A minute ago? Here? I thought I heard voices! Jack, they didn't say anything about me? Oh, they did, I know they did! What did they say?"

Starke's grave face assumed for the fraction of an instant its odd smile.

"They said," he remarked slowly, "you were a dengel."

"A dengel?" Vera Starke repeated wonderingly. Across her husband's shoulder she glanced through the window that commanded a view of the bay.

Not many yards from the landing a small catboat was tacking toward the opposite shore. A canoe, its bow thrusting out of water, trailed behind it at the end of a painter. In the catboat two men were quietly sitting, two men who had the air of old comrades, or of those who have some great secret, or some unforgettable experience, in common.



Vice is what the other fellow practices.

The Legend of the Too Lawful Spouse

By Robert W. Sneddon

There are advantages to
all things, even the law

MR. JAMES JOSHUA BARNES entered the apartment, hung his hat on the appointed hook and dutifully kissed his wife. Suddenly his eyes distended with horror. He pointed to the window.

Mrs. Barnes smiled happily.

"It's a pretty plant, ain't it? I bought it from a man with a wagon. It certainly looks nice on the window sill. Cheap too—only a quarter."

With a stern expression Mr. Barnes advanced to the window, and lifting the plant, carried it to the table.

"I'm surprised at you," he said. "It's against the law to have plants on the sill. This might fall and kill someone."

"But all the neighbors have plants out. Mrs. Simmons—"

"If they choose to disobey the law, it's up to them, but I don't. The law is the law."

"Oh, you make me sick, James. Seems to me I never hear anything but the law. The law says this—and the law says that—"

"It's our duty to obey the law.

I'm sorry, but that's my way of living," said Mr. Barnes magnificently. "Is the dinner ready?"

"If there was a law against you having your dinner, you'd obey it, now wouldn't you?" retorted his wife bitterly.

"I certainly would. I'm a good citizen, I hope."

"Oh, you're all that," she assured him, and slammed the kitchen door.

Mr. Barnes was pained by this outburst. It was so uncalled for. In fact there was no reason for the increasing number of times when his wife misunderstood his lofty motives.

He sighed wearily.

He was a lawful citizen and a lawful spouse—chock-full of law, in fact.

Mr. James Joshua Barnes was in every respect a citizen of whom any government might be proud. He was one of those rare creatures, a man who meets all his obligations to the State with unfaltering obedience. He voted, he served on juries, he paid his taxes promptly. He said his income was so much, and it was.

He obeyed all laws, written and

unwritten, municipal, state and federal, with scrupulous care. He kept to the beaten path of civilized practice; he kept off the grass. A sign was to him as potent a command as any of the ten commandments.

You must have seen him, somewhere, sometime, stepping lively in the subway, or up front in a street car, a short, fairly sturdy man, with a thin, clean-shaven face, short, mousy hair, pensive eyes, and a small, tight mouth. He was a teller in a bank, and his face behind the bars of the cage was a guarantee of the bank's stability.

His wife, sitting opposite him at the table in their apartment, sometimes marveled at his complacent acceptance of the thousand and one laws which guided his life. Other times she felt like flinging the coffee pot at him.

The day on which Mr. Barnes met the anarchist was an occasion so terrifically devastating to him, that his world turned topsy-turvy.

Mr. Barnes at lunch hour used to sit on a bench in Union Square. You may be sure he avoided any seat marked—"For women and children only."

That fatal day he was roused from his noontide meditations by a hoarse but persuasive voice at his side.

"What do we get out of life anyway? I ask you. What do we get out of life? bed and board, maybe—maybe not. Most of the time, maybe not, if we obey the law. To hell with the law."

A sudden shudder ran through Mr. Barnes' frame as he heard those blasphemous words. He half rose. A heavy hand fell on his arm.

"Sit down!"

Mr. Barnes obeyed.

"Sit down! I know you. You're one of the nine hundred and ninety-nine million suckers who say, 'Yes, sir' and 'No, sir' to anything in uniform. Ain't you now?"

"If you mean, do I obey the law," said Mr. Barnes proudly, "Yes."

"Thought so. Thought so. You poor fish, you. And what do you get out of it? Nothing. You're nothing, you ain't got nothing, you look like nothing. Sit down! I'm talking to you, brother. Now, listen to me, you're a slave. You look like a slave to some woman. Married, ain't you? Answer me, ain't you married?"

"Yes," said Mr. Barnes feebly, "but—"

"Shut up, you've said all I want to know. You don't know the meaning of liberty, you don't. Say, I've taken a fancy to you. I don't waste my breath on no man that don't look as if he might get sense. Now, you're a sketch, you are, but you look's if you had brains under your thatch."

Mr. Barnes smiled faintly under this unusual praise. His wife never even hinted as much. His wife—hum!

"You're awright, pal. You're a good scout. I've taken a fancy to you, and I'll put you wise to what you don't know. A coupla fellahs

like us might do a lot together. Now, listen to me, friend. . . ."

Mr. Barnes could not remove his gaze from the burning eyes of the stranger who spoke with such conviction; he could not remove his arm from the hand which held it with such a masterful grip, nor close his ears to the arguments which were distilling such poison into his brain. There was something in this man's words.

A horrid doubt was taking lodgment in Mr. Barnes' mind. The man was right. The wealth of the world was unequally divided. It was the lawbreaker who profited, not the man who abided by the law. Here was he slaving like a dog from morn to night. What for?

Enough to eat, a roof over his head—a treadmill existence. And having to accept the lectures of his wife. It was all wrong. He had accepted the convictions of one side of society, he had obeyed its rules without question.

And here was this man pointing out the advantages of the other side as convincingly.

Unconsciously Mr. Barnes found his head nodding affirmations. He was in a trance. This fellow was right. He was a fool—he had his life to live, and he was going to live it, only his wife—his wife—now there was an obstacle.

The clock struck one. Mr. Barnes started.

"Sit down!" commanded his tutor. "What's your hurry, pal? Let them wait on you. Show you're a man.

3—S. S.

Now, I've got another earful for you, brother. I see you're a man of sense. Just listen to this; don't let no man nor woman stand in your way—knock 'em down, play the game of the big fellah. . . ."

At three o'clock Mr. Barnes strolled into the bank.

"Really, Mr. Barnes," said the cashier. "This is most unusual. It's never happened before, but then. . . ."

"Oh, shut up," said Mr. Barnes savagely, "I'm no slave."

The cashier fell back aghast. Barnes—of all men. He must have been sitting in the sun.

"Perhaps you'd better take a day off to-morrow, Mr. Barnes," he suggested feebly.

"I mean to," said Mr. Barnes curtly, and gathered his belongings together.

At four o'clock he reached home.

"We're going for a sail," he said to his wife. "Get your hat."

"What's the matter, James?" she asked anxiously. "You look so flushed."

"Don't talk. I need a breath of air. We'll take the Albany boat."

"But—"

"Put your hat on and shut up."

Mrs. Barnes obeyed. James certainly was a trial. At times he was terrifying. She realized this more and more as on the boat Mr. Barnes expounded some of his new theories.

His most daring one he reserved to himself.

Night fell. The moment had come.

Seizing a moment when the deck was deserted for the dining room, he clenched his teeth, put his arm suddenly about his wife and raising her, stricken dumb with panic, carried her over to the rail.

The moment of Mr. Barnes' setting forth on a new life where laws would mean nothing to him was at hand.

He raised her aloft. Suddenly he

gasped, let the fainting woman sink to the floor, then miserably picked her up and set her in a chair. He had failed.

His life-long habit of obedience to the law was too strong.

He had just read, in painted letters on the rail, a command which he could not disobey:

"Do not drop anything over the rail!"



Plaint

By A. B. B.

I want to be free. I want to live my own life. I want my friends to let me alone in it.

I want to be free not to smoke. Tobacco stings my tongue.

I want to be free not to eat caviare, no matter how much it costs. It tastes like varnish.

I want to be free not to leave off all my clothes at a winter masquerade. I get the rheumatism.

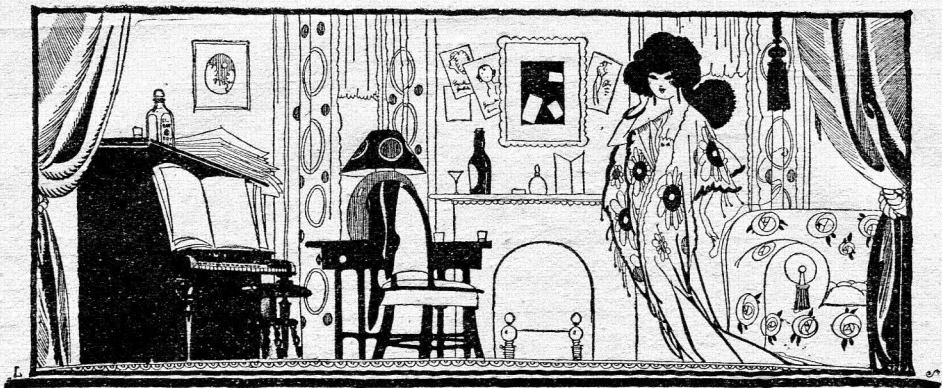
I want to be free not to drink boot-legger alcohol. It gives me a stomach ache.

I want to be free not to bob my hair. It's pretty hair, and I like it.

I want to be free not to read naughty-naughty books. They bore me. I like fairy-tales.

I want to be free to live my own life, but my friends won't let me.

Oh, God, some day let me meet a crowd of people broad enough to stand for my being narrow!



Broadway Bait

By C. S. Montanye

CHARACTERS

YVONNE

VERNA

CORTLEDGE, the Married Simp.

JERRY, the Unmarried Wise Guy

TIME—*respectable people were in bed.*

SCENE: *The living room of Yvonne and Verna's joint apartment, somewhere in the uproarious Fifties. The room is a typical habitat chorus-girlus.*

As the curtain rises Yvonne and Verna, two show girls of the belladonna-peroxide variety, in evening gowns purchased from the wardrobe of some defunct production, are lounging with their cigarettes. It is a toss up as to which is the better looking of the two. One is quite as hard as the other.

Off stage right is the subdued sound of hilarity which would indicate some sort of nocturnal festivities. Laughter blends with the clink of glasses and the drift of maudlin melody.

YVONNE (*lazily*)

Them home brew hounds gimme an awful pain. Do you hear the way they are hitting it up?

VERNA

Am I deaf?

YVONNE

I hope they get that Married Simp flooded to the gums. I don't know why it is but every time I see him I long for a weapon of some kind. A case of hate at first sight.

VERNA

He ain't so worse at that. Most married men I know haven't got a nickel they can call their own. But this baby packs a roll of yellow smackers a trained greyhound couldn't jump over. Don't knock him, Vonnie. All he needs is a little education. Most married men do.

YVONNE

You make me laugh!

VERNA

If you didn't hate him so much you could see that he was fish for some wise rib. I'd like to take him to the cleaners.

YVONNE

Swell chance. That guy's as tight as a union suit during the middle of August. You're welcome to all you can dig out of him.

VERNA

The closer they are the more they have to kick in with when you make 'em moult. (*Candidly.*) How are we gonna get out to Hollywood to have a fling at the movies if some sucker don't come through with car-fare?

YVONNE

Search me. I gave up that idea a couple of weeks ago. What's the use of thinking of Hollywood with just enough jack in the house to pay one month's rent? Forget it!

VERNA

I wish I could. The trouble is I can't. There's good jobs waiting for us in the fillums. Didn't Betty write? I'm going if I have to vamp a bank paying teller!

YVONNE

I'd love to join you but conditions are against me.

(*As she finishes speaking the door at left opens and the Unmarried Wise Guy comes briskly in. His name is Jerry and is what Broadway terms a "sharpshooter" or "patent leather pinkie." His Tux fits him like the paper on the wall and his blond hair lies so flat and sleek on his head that one suspects glue.*)

JERRY

What are you two frails waitin' for—Christmas?

YVONNE

No, for that bunch of bootleggers to air out. I'd like to pound the pad some time to-night.

JERRY

They'll be goin' soon now.

VERNA

Is our married friend still on deck?

JERRY

Right with the rest of them. Say, that last batch of brew was just elegant. Cortledge went to it like a hop hound on the trail of a yeast cake.

VERNA

I was just telling Vonnie we ought to get together and put that bird over the jumps.

JERRY (*giving her a sharp look*)

Say that's funny.

YVONNE

What's funny?

JERRY

I've been trying to roll Cortledge for his bundle for the last month.

Just this morning I got a peach of an idea. I even brung up the materials with me when I come to-night.

VERNA (*excitedly*)

Then you're set to take a shot at him?

JERRY

All ready. It's funny because I just broke away to slide in here and ask for a little help from you girls.

YVONNE (*languidly*)

Advertise in the Help Wanted columns. I wouldn't waste time trying to file the chains on Cortledge's pocketbook.

VERNA

I'd give my right eye for a chance at him. We're trying to wave up enough gold to take us out to the Coast, Jerry. What's the idea?

JERRY

C'mon inside and I'll sing it to you.

(*Jerry and Verna exit together. The hilarity off stage has dwindled to a monotone. Someone calls, "Good night, Vonnice." Yvonne drags herself from the divan and goes to the door at right. She opens it and stands on the threshold.*)

YVONNE (*calling in*)

So long, Chick. Night, Eddie. Don't forget to tell Mae I and she have a date for lunch at the Automat some day next week!

(*She returns to the divan, yawning prodigiously. As she throws herself down on it Cortledge, the Married Simp, enters from right. He is a rather well set up, good looking man, in the middle thirties. He is in full dress and carries silk hat and top-*

coat. His face is rather flushed but his steps are perfectly steady and his voice free from any suggestion of thickness.)

CORTLEDGE (*spying Yvonne*)

Excuse me. I'm looking for Jerry.

YVONNE

He'll be in in a minute. Pardon me if I don't imitate baking powder and rise.

CORTLEDGE (*sitting down*)

With your permission I'll wait. I want to see Jerry before I go.

YVONNE

Not to be curious nor nothing like that but don't your wife mind when you stay out all night?

CORTLEDGE (*with a faint smile*)

No. She has her friends and I have mine. She does what she pleases and I do what I like.

YVONNE

That's what I call a grand idea.
(*Jerry enters right.*)

JERRY

Waitin' for me, Cortledge?

CORTLEDGE

I thought I'd give you a lift in the car as far as Seventy-second Street.

JERRY

Fine. I'll be with you in a few minutes. Verna wants to see you before you go. I understand it's a personal matter.

YVONNE (*climbing to her feet*)

I suppose that's a cue to exit.

(*She yawns and totters to door at right. Jerry follows her.*)

JERRY (*to Cortledge*)

Let me know when you're ready. I'll cap a few bottles for the gals while I'm waitin'.

(He exits with Yvonne. Cortledge places his coat and silk hat on a chair. At the piano he pauses and taps out the refrain of "All By Myself" with one finger. He is halfway through the tune when Verna appears in the doorway. She has relinquished her evening gown in favor of a purple kimono and has her hair in heavy braids. Smiling enigmatically she waits a minute or two.

VERNA

That tune ain't strictly true now I'm here, Mr. Cartridge.

CORTLEDGE (*wheeling*)

Miss Verna.

VERNA

The kid herself! Pardon my appearance. I was just about to flop in the feathers when I heard you were still here.

CORTLEDGE (*crossing to her*)

Jerry told me you had something you wanted to talk to me about.

VERNA

That's the truth. (*She seats herself on the divan. Cortledge drops down beside her. Verna crosses her legs and links her hands about her knees.*) I don't know how to begin.

CORTLEDGE

What does it concern?

VERNA (*disregarding the question*)

How long have you known me?

CORTLEDGE

Not half long enough. Two months or so, isn't it?

VERNA

Yes, about two months. I hope you won't think I am forward or not a lady if I tell you what I've been trying to get up the nerve to.

CORTLEDGE

Do you want to — ah — borrow money?

VERNA

I should say not! It's something very different. I—I hope you'll understand.

CORTLEDGE

Try me and see. (*Facetiously*) I can understand most anything except why women dress the way they do in winter.

(Jerry enters right. Sighting the two on the divan he halts abruptly.)

JERRY

Pardon me for crashing in on the chatter fest. Did you see anything of my cigarette case, Verna?

VERNA

I didn't know you owned one.

(Jerry catches her eye and significantly displays his watch. He nods toward the Married Simp and makes signs with his fingers. Verna nods hastily.)

JERRY (*pretending to search on the table*)

Guess I left it in the other room. Pardon me twice more.

(He exits.)

VERNA

Where were we, honey?

CORTLEDGE (*standing*)

It's rather warm in here. Do you mind if I remove my coat?

VERNA

Go right ahead.

(Cortledge takes off his dress coat and throws it over a convenient chair. He unbuttons his waistcoat and touches his face with a large silk handkerchief. Sitting down again

on the divan he puts his arm around Verna.)

CORTLEDGE

You were saying that you didn't think I would understand. I said to give me a try-out.

VERNA

Oh, yes. But first let me ask you this: Do you like me or don't you?

CORTLEDGE

Do!

VERNA

Much?

CORTLEDGE

Lots. You're a nice little girl. You're pretty and intelligent and you have a way with you that's very taking.

VERNA

Umm—

CORTLEDGE (*holding her closer*)

Pretty girls are a hobby of mine. There's more music for me in the rustle of a skirt than in all the pianos that were ever made. I like them young and innocent. I like them when they are—

(*Yvonne enters right.*)

YVONNE

Listen, did I leave *Variety* in here? Honest, if that paper was a diamond ring it couldn't disappear more!

(*She makes a show of looking on and under the table.*)

VERNA

I didn't see it. Maybe you left it in the kitchen.

YVONNE

I'll look there. (*She turns to the door, managing to attract Verna's attention. Touching the dial of her wrist-watch, she exits.*)

VERNA

Where were we?

CORTLEDGE (*standing*)

This room is very close. And this collar I have on feels like a vise. Do you mind if I remove it?

VERNA

Go as far as you like. We've got a couple of empty barrels in the storeroom. (*Cortledge takes off his collar and tie. For good measure he removes his waistcoat, revealing bright pink suspenders.*) What passionate suspenders you wear!

CORTLEDGE (*sitting down with a long breath*)

I feel better now. (*He embraces Verna.*) Why do you ask me if I like you?

VERNA (*dramatically*)

Because I like you! That's what I was afraid you wouldn't understand. I'm—I'm just crazy about you!

CORTLEDGE

Do you mean it?

VERNA

Mean it!

CORTLEDGE

But you've never given me any indication of it before.

VERNA

I've never had the chance. Affection is like a rubber plant. You've got to give it attention if you want it to grow!

CORTLEDGE (*softly*)

And you really and truly care?

VERNA

Ever since that night we was up to the Roof. I'll never forget how you looked that night in your dinner

jacket—like one of these here derby hats or whatever you call 'em—them guys what wear ribbons across their shirt fronts.

CORTLEDGE

Diplomats.

VERNA

I knew it was something like that. You looked so handsome and classy that my girlish heart just went bump—bump—bump. Then, a couple of days later, I found out you was married. Oh, I felt terrible—perfectly awful.

CORTLEDGE (*softly*)

I never dreamed that you cared that way. I never imagined that—

(*He is interrupted by the appearance of Jerry. The young man with the glued-down hair is plainly out of temper.*)

JERRY

Pardon me three times, but did I leave a box of safety matches in here? (*He goes to the table and pretends to search.*)

CORTLEDGE

I have some matches in my overcoat pocket.

VERNA (*getting up*)

I'll see if I can find them, Jerry. (*She crosses to the table. Jerry steps to her side and nudges her.*)

JERRY (*in a low but sibilant voice*)

Everything's set! For the love of Gawd, get busy!

VERNA (*under her breath*)

I'll get him in a minute or two!

JERRY

Use the old signal! And make it snappy! (*Louder, for Cortledge's benefit.*) Never mind, kid. I guess

I left them in the kitchen. What's a box of matches between friends, anyway? (*He exits.*)

VERNA (*returning to the divan*)

Do you wonder why girls go crazy? (*She sits down and snuggles close to Cortledge, determined to get it over and done with.*) Haven't you any more feelings than a fish? I tell you that I'm crazy about you, and you sit there like a stone man! I'm human if you're not!

CORTLEDGE

You mean—

VERNA (*wildly*)

Take me in your arms! Hold me tight! Love me! Hate me! Beat me up! Put my glims in mourning! Do anything, only do something!

CORTLEDGE

I—I—

VERNA

Like this! (*She urges herself forward. With one deft movement of her slim hand she disarranges his hair. The next minute she is on his lap with both hands linked tightly about his neck. So unexpected is her strategem that Cortledge is completely bowled over. Verna unleashes a long peal of silvery laughter, which of course, is Jerry's signal. In a watch-tick things begin to happen. First, the lights are abruptly blotted out, leaving the stage in stark darkness. Next there is a vivid explosion. This is followed by Verna's scream, a chuckle of laughter and a distinct sneeze. The lights come up almost immediately. Jerry and Yvonne are disclosed standing*)

close to the right doorway. Jerry has one hand on the wall light-switch and the other about the rubber bulb of a camera that is mounted on a tripod. Yvonne holds the tin tray on which the flashlight powder exploded.)

YVONNE

The damn stuff almost blew my eyebrows off!

VERNA

What in 'ell does this mean? (The Married Simp stands, plainly bewildered. Verna registers indignation perfectly.)

JERRY (coldly)

Take a guess what it means.

YVONNE

It means we've got you both with the goods! It means that the two of you are both on a fillum! It means that the picture, when it's printed, will make pretty darn good evidence at any divorce trial!

CORTLEDGE (blinking)

Eh?

JERRY

Sure. One kimono is worth a dozen letters any day!

YVONNE

It also means, Mr. Cortledge, that this here camera is for sale just as it stands. The price is five thousand berries cash. If it isn't sold within the next ten minutes, photographs will be printed up from the negatives and sent to your wife. What's the answer? (There is a pregnant silence. During it, Cortledge, the target for three pair of eyes, puts on his waistcoat, knots his tie, slips on his dresscoat and topcoat and

fits his silk hat to his head. He lights a cigarette and, producing a long wallet made of green Morocco leather, crosses to Jerry. Opening the wallet he takes a bill from a fat wad of money and slips the wallet back in his pocket.)

CORTLEDGE

Here's the hundred I promised you, Jerry. Get on your things and let's be going.

JERRY (giving a good home to the bill)

Much obliged. I'll be with you as soon as I get my lid. (He picks up the camera and takes a step toward the door.)

VERNA (hoarsely)

Wait! What does this mean!

JERRY (halting)

It means, gals, I had to double cross you. Cortledge, the good-looking man on my left, is going to get a divorce from his wiff. They got it all framed up between them. This here picture I took, and my testimony, will be part of the necessary evidence. I'm sorry I had to hand you both a dirty deal like this, but every man for himself when there's a century in sight! (There is a moment's stunned silence. It is broken by Verna's despairing wail.)

VERNA (throwing herself on Cortledge)

And I loved you! I thought you were white! (In a frenzy she puts her arms about his neck and embraces him tightly. There is a little struggle before Jerry intervenes, pushing her away so roughly that she falls in a little heap.)

JERRY

These broads make me sick!
C'mon, skipper. Let's bend outta
here before somebody tries to start
something more! *(He exits with
Cortledge, who blows a kiss to
Yvonne. She makes a face at him.
The door closes behind the Married
Simp and the Unmarried Wise Guy.
Verna gets up, her right hand held
behind her back, an enigmatic smile
on her lips.)*

YVONNE *(viciously)*

I'll get that big Jerry tramp if it
takes a hundred years! And me—
the tin-head—helping him along like
a perfect dumb-bell. I ought to be

in a gymnasium! *(She turns to
Verna.)* Didn't I tell you that you
couldn't blast a nickel away from
that guy?

VERNA

You told me, but did I believe
you? *(Gayly)* Sweetheart, we ride
the cushions to Hollywood to-mor-
row! *(She moves her right arm
from behind her back. The fingers
of her hand are about Cortledge's
long green Morocco wallet.)* Got it
about two seconds before Jerry give
me the push!

*(Both girls rush to the divan and
drag dusty suitcases from under it
as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.



The Mean Things!

By William Drayham

SOME girls rebuke us with a word,
Some with a flashing eye,
And there are others, I have heard,
Who kiss and cry.

Anger and tears, the lip that curls—
I know them all too well;
But oh, the vain, ungrateful girls
Who kiss and tell!

All Else Is Fake

By Thomas Edgelow

Disillusioned by love, she sought to bend
the passions of men to her will and found—

I WISH this story could be told on the screen, because it concerns the boy and the girl at the same time, so that, were it pictured on the silvered screen, it would be given in quick flashes, first showing that dear little soul, Pauline Sydney, and then leaving her for a close-up of the boy, Matthew S. Ledyard.

You see, their positions were so similar—but let's leave the boy, for a moment, and go on about that delectable little extravaganza of soft delightfulness, Pauline Sydney.

Of course she was pretty, but not half as pretty as she ultimately became after she attained—clothes! That does not mean, dear Mr. Censor and Mrs. Grundy, that Pauline had nothing on, for, on the contrary, she had much too much on.

Maud Sydney, Pauline's severely maiden aunt, saw to that. Why, at the beginning of these happenings, Pauline's beautiful limbs were actually covered up with petticoats as well as a hideous skirt.

Yes, because if you didn't wear petticoats and wollen underwear and horrors like those in East Portage, Vermont, well, you were not a nice girl, and there was no good arguing about it.

Therefore, all those delectable curves and youthful roundnesses and lithe exquisite lines, that partly made up little Pauline Sydney, were well hidden away under petticoats and similar small-town atrocities.

They couldn't hide a pretty, demure little face, that, somehow, subtly suggested a pansy; they could not altogether cloak the silky beauty of her dark brown hair; they could not cover those eyes of deepest blue, surmounted by arched brows so delicately etched.

Nor could they take away from the dewy freshness of her red mouth, a mouth so obviously designed for kisses. And while they could seal her lips from the spoken word of rebellion, they could not stop the working of her mind, which ran along entirely different lines from those of most of the inhabitants of the small town.

Pauline, from the moment that a visiting artist, God forgive him, had praised some of her water colors, was determined upon an artistic career. Worse, the girl desired—Greenwich Village, of which she had read in magazines. She thought that Greenwich Village must be wonderful—so thrilling—so wicked and everything.

She would have bobbed her hair if Aunt Maud would have stood for it, and all her soul cried out for freedom. She wanted freedom for Art, freedom of life, and even free love, which seemed to exist only south of Fourteenth Street.

Meanwhile, she had not even been in New York, and had rarely left East Portage, where her orphaned state had caused her to be brought up by Aunt Maud, a snuffy old woman, who liked black silk dresses that buttoned up the front, with yellow lace ruffs around her ancient, withered neck.

The time went by, then, and Pauline was almost twenty and it seemed as though she would never attain freedom, which meant Art and Greenwich Village.

Then there was the boy, Matthew S. Ledyard, whose circumstances were so very similar. Matthew, now twenty-two, had unwillingly been dragged up by his uncle, a widower, and childless, the Reverend Philip Ledyard, who had a nasty little house, painted a dirty brown, with a red roof, in the center of North Jessups, Massachusetts.

Matthew was not a bad-looking boy, well set up, with very fair, untidy hair, blue eyes and a firm chin.

And Matthew secretly longed for a literary career, and freedom and all the rest of it—in Greenwich Village. He had never been to New York, but he knew that Greenwich Village was the Mecca of all successful authors.

When he had been twenty, a small magazine, published in the far and wooly west, had accepted one of Matthew's short stories, for which they had forwarded the boy a check, value ten dollars, and twenty copies of the publication.

Of course, after that, Matthew knew that he was bound to make the late O. Henry and the present Thomas Grant Springer look like thirty cents.

Unfortunately, the Reverend Philip Ledyard, whose chief interest, outside shop, was the raising of white Leghorns, insisted upon Matthew's learning how to drug, for if a painter paints, why shouldn't a druggist drug?

Anyway, Matthew had to work in the drug store of the Reverend Ledyard's lifelong friend, Joshua B. Newman. The boy loathed this from the bottom of his heart, but found some consolation in writing at night some of the worst stories ever produced on fair white paper.

Voilà, then, the situation! Here were two young people, Pauline Sydney, in East Portage, Vermont, and Matthew S. Ledyard, in North Jessups, Massachusetts, each unknown to the other, each bitterly discontented, and each secretly longing for Life, Love, Art and Greenwich Village.

When that impossible person, Fate, smiled a kind of Spanish smile, for by means of Spanish influenza, both Pauline's Aunt Maud,

and Matthew's Uncle Philip were carried away.

Pauline was as free from hypocrisy as it is possible for a female thing to be. Therefore, she pretended no great grief when Maud Sydney was gathered to her long sleep.

Particularly was she comforted when she discovered that her whole inheritance came to just over fifteen hundred dollars in cash, for the house, being mortgaged, rendered little.

As her aunt had died two days before Pauline's twenty-first birthday, there was no bother with a guardian, so that almost at once Pauline came up to New York, and after a night at a hotel, started to look for rooms within the magic boundaries of Greenwich Village.

She found a furnished room on West Fourth Street, with a bath to be shared with her next door neighbor, only Tessie Hoy did not share the bath—much.

Tessie Hoy, who pretended to draw and lived on a meager allowance from a mother out in Idaho, was willing to share Pauline's food, money, telephone, gloves, stockings, silk—well-you-know, but she was very generous as to her share of that tin bathtub.

Tessie Hoy, who was twenty-eight and gave out that she was shortly coming of age, was of the bobbed hair, unwashed type. She never wasted any money with a manicurist, and she was fat, freckly, and generally dressed in a shapeless

smock, which had once been batiked.

Still, Pauline delighted in her, and it was into Tessie Hoy's unsoaped ears that Pauline poured her girlish ambitions, hopes and fears.

"I wish I could have my hair done like yours," Pauline said, as they boiled some coffee over a gas ring, after Pauline had unpacked her few clothes.

"Well, you can!" Tessie Hoy agreed promptly. "Here we are free. Don't suffer from any suppressed desire, child, or you'll get a complex."

Pauline didn't know what a complex was, only she didn't like to say so. It sounded so free and wild! She followed Tessie Hoy down the stairs, and together they walked across Washington Square on their way to a hotel which, in the bad old days, before Mr. Volstead's uplifting movement purified all, was halfway amusing.

There, in the hotel barber shop, a gentleman with a beautiful, long beard, cut Pauline's dark brown tresses, but as Pauline's head was prettily shaped, and as the gods were kind to her, it proved that Pauline was one of the few girls whose appearance is really benefited by bobbed hair.

Anyway, vain little Pauline, as she surveyed her own reflection with her eyes of deepest blue, gave a little wriggle of delight in the barber's chair, and exclaimed aloud to Tessie Hoy:

"Now I feel like a regular Villager!"

There was still time for some shopping, before the Village store-keepers went to their table d'hôte dinners, so that Tessie Hoy piloted Pauline to a place where the latter purchased a silken smock, the same color as her eyes, which vastly became her.

Having changed in her room, Pauline felt that she really looked like a Villager. She didn't, because she was much too fresh, perfumed and pretty—a quaint little figure with those delectable curves hidden beneath the blue silk smock, with her shapely feet, encased in black silk stocking and thrust into black suède sandals—little feet probably fashioned to tread on the hearts of men!

"Now let's see things!" said Pauline enthusiastically. "Show me around, Tessie."

"I haven't any money," replied Tessie, but Pauline had plenty, so that was all right, and to make it yet more comfortable, Pauline lent Tessie fifty dollars so that she should have no sense of dependence. This was at Tessie's suggestion.

They toured, then, the Village. They dined in a cellar, where the walls and the tables were painted—vigorously—the color of scrambled eggs. They noticed all the wicked Bohemians, who, for the most part, served behind counters, during business hours, over in the huge department store not far from Astor Place.

Later in the evening, most of the gay Bohemians descended from the Bronx and Riverside Drive, while the Upper West Side, whose tele-

phone exchange is "Schuyler," were there in their cultured hundreds.

"I don't see anything—anything very wicked!" sighed Pauline. "I thought—oh, I don't know what I thought."

"What you want," said Tessie Hoy a little tersely, "is to be kissed. Tell me of your experiences."

Pauline, who had practically no love experiences to relate, was forced to draw upon her imagination. As Tessie Hoy was not listening to her, it didn't matter very much.

So, yearning for love and life and laughter, late that night, Pauline was conducted by Tessie to a quiet little place, where the tables were bare and unpainted, a place kept by extraordinary characters, Gipsy Jane and Leander, her husband.

At one table sat a pretty girl with a red mouth, perusing a magazine noted for its satire, in which her first novelette appeared. At another, a very tall man, thin and haggard, sat hunched up with rounded shoulders, as he talked and talked, chiefly about himself, to another man, who looked like a spectacled owl, under whose coat bulged a ukulele.

"Who are they?" whispered Pauline, as Gipsy Jane served them with Turkish coffee.

"Oh, nobodies, pretending to somebodies," replied Tessie sharply. "The girl over there with the magazine thinks she can write. So does that elongated streak of misery who is shouting about himself all the time."

"You ought to see the junk he turns out—but his conceit is so awful, you can't speak to him. The other man with the horn-rimmed spectacles is a kind of professional cynic, and if we are not careful, he may sing. Let's have a cheese sandwich."

So was Pauline's first night in the Village, and the next day, she started furiously to work.

Three weeks later, Pauline went up in the elevator of a huge building, entirely devoted to the editing and printing of magazines, to be shown into a vast reception room, that somehow suggested a cathedral, in its dim, religious light.

The furniture, which came from Grand Rapids, was strictly Jacobean, while on a monk's long, narrow table was spread out the current issues of the month. Pauline felt excited; her heart was beating vigorously, as some days before, she had left some sketches.

A tall woman, a she-editor, entered, treading the carpet noiselessly.

"Oh, Miss Sydney? Mrs. Billings asked me to give you back these sketches. They are not available for our present needs." The tall woman tiptoed away into the dim distance, while Pauline's foolish eyes misted with sudden tears of disappointment.

But as, furtively, the silly little girl wiped those tears away, she saw, at the other end of the room, another editor handing a good-look-

ing boy a manuscript, while a voice said:

"Oh, Mr. Ledyard, Mrs. Billings asked me to return you this story. It is not quite, quite what we are looking for, and is not available for our present needs."

Both Pauline and Matthew S. Ledyard stepped into the elevator together, and were slowly taken down to the ground floor. Pauline looked at Matthew appreciatively. She liked his fair, untidy hair, his blue eyes and the firm chin. She also liked him for having had a story refused, for a refusal makes brothers of many!

And Matthew was staring with unstinted admiration at the pretty little girl, with the bobbed hair, who wore no hat—at the little girl whose entrancing curves were hidden beneath a blue silk smock, and whose delicious feet were encased in silk and in suède sandals.

"I wish," said the boy earnestly, "that I had a snapshot of Mrs. Billings. Of Mrs. Billings being kissed by somebody who wasn't Mr. Billings! Then I would make my stories available for their present needs! I'd blackmail them into it, and I would see my stuff printed every month. I can't tell you what I could do to that Billings woman!"

Pauline's laughter was musical. "I—I felt just the same, only I didn't know how to put it!" she encouraged him.

So a friendship began, and the boy from North Jessups, Massachusetts, was brought by Fate presently to

have tea in Greenwich Village with the girl from East Portage, Vermont.

At tea, which they supplemented with huge waffles in a cellar in Greenwich Avenue, the boy told the girl all about himself; of how his uncle, having died, Matthew had inherited a few hundred dollars, and of how he had come to take a room on Washington Place, in which he was going to turn out the most wonderful short stories ever written.

Then Pauline told all about herself, and the two of them marveled at the extraordinary similarity of their short life histories and ambitions.

They sat over their waffles, and when they were hungry again—and youth seems to possess an elastic tummy, in that it is always ready for more—the boy took the girl to dinner, and before dessert was served them, Matthew was greatly desiring—kisses.

"And what do you think about free love, Pauline?"

She looked at him, and then lowered her eyelashes. "I—I don't know. I—I haven't been here in the Village long enough yet for—well, you know."

"I think," he said gravely, with all the seriousness of his extreme youth, "that sex matters should be discussed frankly, and freely."

"So do I," she managed, so that nothing whatever was said.

"Let me see where you live," he begged, so she took him around to her room, which she had arranged

prettily, so that draperies cloaked much ugliness.

They lounged together on the couch, which, at night, became a bed. And they talked for awhile of how they would surprise the artistic world. But not for long.

Of course the boy's arms were hungry for the feel of her lissom youth; his lips for the dewy freshness of her mouth. Then, youth is youth, and will not easily be denied.

So that he kissed her, so that delightful little thrills permeated her whole being. She shivered, a happy little shiver, and then lay relaxed, with her head resting against his shoulder, while he kissed and fondled her.

Yet, when the boy's ardor grew too tense, when his caresses became too intimate, she grew a little frightened, and so, rising from the couch, moved away from him. He followed her, where she stood by the window, and his arms went about her waist.

"No, no! You mustn't—mustn't!" she said, although secretly she yearned for his bold hands that held her so wantonly.

"I—I love you, Pauline," he managed with difficulty, for now it was as though the perfume and the sweetness of her rendered him inarticulate. "I—I want you."

But she would not relent. She was still a little frightened, so that presently she sent him, grumbling, away.

Time went on, and time costs

money. The tiny capital of each began to dwindle, although they were reasonably sane, considering their youth, and hoarded their pennies. Meanwhile, there were only kisses.

The boy thumped his Underwood all day, while the girl painted her smudgy water colors, attempting black and white illustrations now and then. And neither sold, so that they encouraged each other, as they sat in the evening at Gipsy Jane's, sipping Turkish coffee.

Then one evening, Jerry Minter gave a party at his studio apartment on Waverly Place. Jerry Minter's father was Minter's Mints—Take One After Meals—so that Jerry Minter could well afford parties. More, he could afford drinks, and the party was a merry one.

Pauline, after three cocktails, began to feel that it did not matter how boldly Matthew kissed her, and as for the boy, the liquor only made the girl more and more desirable in his eyes.

At three o'clock Matthew said:

"I think the party is going to get rough. Let me take you back."

She smiled at him, and got up immediately from where she was sitting. Despite their host's protest that they were leaving much, much too early, they persisted, and so Matthew saw Pauline to her door.

"Let me come up," he begged. "I haven't kissed you—not properly—the whole evening!"

He followed her up the stairs, and as soon as her door was closed upon

them, he took her in his arms, and his hungry young lips were feasting upon her white loveliness, upon the scarlet bow that was her mouth. And so together they forgot all—all save love.

Nor, the next morning, were there any regrets. At least, Pauline easily quelled any that arose within her gentle breast.

As a matter of fact, Pauline was very happy in the weeks that followed. Worry, ordinary money worry, presently spoiled a great deal of the beauty of their love, however. Matthew was broke, or nearly so. Soon he would reach the borrowing stage. And he had sold nothing. Neither had Pauline, although Pauline still had some money left.

The thing that acted as a knife, cutting those two apart, was—Prohibition liquor, for with that under one's belt, no one can know how it will affect the brain.

Matthew had five or six drinks of bad Prohibition rye, so that Pauline missed him that evening at Gipsy Jane's. She sat there by the fire, for the evenings were now cold, and an overpowering desire came upon her for the boy's kisses.

She sat, her pretty face cupped in a white hand (for the Village had not yet influenced Pauline away from soap and water, so that she was always the daintiest thing possible!), seeing pictures in the fire. She realized more than she had ever done before her love for Matthew! He was hers! Fiercely she felt her possession over him.

Quite suddenly she got up to hurry to Matthew's room on Washington Place. She had been there before and knew her way. She knocked sharply on his door, when she had ascended the stairs, and it was Tessie Hoy who opened, and, to put it politely, Tessie Hoy was distinctly *en déshabillé*. Even at that moment, Pauline reflected how freckled and fat was Tessie Hoy.

She glanced in the room, and there was Matthew, who had drunk of Prohibition liquor. . . .

Youth is ever unforgiving. Something seemed to snap within Pauline at this, her bitter disillusionment. Prohibition liquor was no excuse. Nothing could be an excuse for infidelity. And she had loved him so!

"I never want to see you or speak to you again," Pauline flashed at Matthew.

As Pauline went down the stairs, she shuddered. How could he—Matthew, her own boy—stoop to such as Tessie Hoy who was so, so *undainty*!

Then bitterness. Nothing was left. Only bitterness. There was no beauty—and such like blasphemy. . . . And it was all a fake! Everything was a fake and a sham and a pretense. The Village, and free love, and everything!

That night, Pauline, dreading to see Tessie Hoy, slept in a hotel. Slept? Rather, she lay awake, tossing feverishly from one side of the bed to the other.

With morning came resolution, and it must be remembered that she was very young and inexperienced.

Resolved, then, that Pauline Sydney would in future be a bad girl, and would lead a life of scarlet splendor! She would be like those women, notorious in history, who had wrecked thrones!

Laughable? Rather was it pathetic. The poor little disillusioned girl, who knew that no beauty existed! It was rather to weep than to laugh!

Defiantly, she returned to her own place. She entered Tessie Hoy's room, where the big, fat girl sat combing her hair.

"I wanted to tell you, Tessie," the other said distinctly, "that I don't care about last night. I was a fool—that's all."

For some time Pauline had contemplated sketching for some big firm of advertising agents, and Jerry Minter had given her a letter of introduction to Ladenberg, Delafield & Kirkman, who had spacious offices on Forty-second Street.

Feeling that she must make money, as expensive clothes would be a necessity before she could start the awful life which she was determined on that morning, Pauline went to call upon Mr. Delafield.

Ushered into the private office, for the excellent reason that the firm handled the advertising of Minter's Mints, Pauline was asked to sit down and found herself regarding a good-looking man, at least a distinguished-looking man, in the late thirties.

Pembroke Delafield glanced with a smile at his little visitor. Then

he looked down at the sketches which she had brought him. One look was sufficient to tell him that Pauline had no idea of drawing, and he was about to refuse, when he realized how pretty she was.

"I don't know," Delafield said in a sympathetic way, "if we can use these or not. Supposing that we go out to lunch and talk it over?"

Pauline sensed that he was rich. Here at her hand, was what she was looking for! He exactly fitted her mood, for had not her bitterness decided her to prey upon men such as Pembroke Delafield?

"I should like to lunch very much," she smiled, so that Delafield was vastly intrigued by a dimple.

He took her to one of those expensively quiet restaurants which lie just east of Fifth Avenue, and the man did all that he could to try to fascinate Pauline. Had he known what was going on in her mind, he might have saved himself a great deal of trouble, but then how could Delafield know that the little girl had determined on a life of scarlet wickedness!

Delafield was pretty white as men go, and from the very beginning he let Pauline know that no wedding ring would be included in any offer that he might make to her.

"Whenever I get to know anyone," he smiled at her during lunch—"anybody like you, I always tell them the truth. I'm a married man, although I do not live with my wife, who is an invalid. We ceased to care for each other a long while

ago—but she likes still to pretend—you know.

"Anything might upset her and make her worse—so I dare not suggest a divorce, even if I wanted one. About twice a year I go and see her—and pretend a little. It's the least a man can do—if his wife suffers from her heart."

"But why are you telling me all this?" she asked.

His reply hardly seemed to fit the question. "I have to tell you something else, Pauline. You don't mind me calling you Pauline, do you? But you can't draw! You haven't got an idea of it, and it would only be cruel to kid you along about it."

Had he said that twenty-four hours earlier, Pauline would have been greatly upset. She would have been angry and humiliated; more, she would not have believed him.

But now that she had turned bitter, now that everything was a fake and a pretense, she did not care. What did it matter that she could not draw?

"I don't care!" she forced herself to smile.

"You are rather adorable—do you know that?" he answered. "What are you doing to-morrow night? Would you like to come and have dinner with me?"

She accepted, for this was just what she wanted.

Dining with Pembroke Delafield the next evening, she listened while he told her that he wanted her, told her he would give her everything,

would be at least half-civilized. She listened, but she gave no answer that night.

Instead, she allowed him to put her into a taxi and to send her home early. As the cab turned into Washington Square a man and a girl passed under the lamplight. Pauline sat back a little farther in the cab as she saw that it was Matthew with Tessie Hoy. Then he cared for Tessie—even in his sober moments!

Perhaps this hastened her decision, for within two weeks Pauline found herself established in a comfortably appointed apartment not far from Park Avenue.

She had rather enjoyed shopping, ordering the furniture. She still more enjoyed buying herself quantities of pretty clothes, although none of this had yet been paid for. That was for this evening. . .

Pembroke Delafield called for her after dinner, and took her to a play.

"What beautiful shoulders," he remarked as he put her opera cloak about her, just before going out.

He stooped and kissed one of those perfumed white shoulders. Nor did Pauline find his kiss horrible! She accepted it quite calmly, and if it had not been for the memory of Matthew—(would she ever forget the kisses of Matthew?) she might even have liked it!

He made love to her quite beautifully that evening, finding a hundred different ways to tell her how enchanting he found her. Then supper in Pauline's apartment, and after

supper, when Pembroke took her in his arms and kissed her passionately, she did not attempt to repel him.

After all, was not everything a fake and a pretense? Was there anything worth while and genuine? Was not the whole of life just another repetition of the fake of Greenwich Village?

After a time Pauline found that she might have been really fond of Delafield, had it not been for the memory of Matthew which haunted her always.

As for Delafield, he found himself moved by strange and unusual feelings toward this girl.

"You are such a darling," he whispered to Pauline one night, as together they sat before an open fire. Pauline was white and beautiful in a negligee of chiffon velvet. "You are such a darling, that I grow more and more in love with you."

She permitted him to trace with his lips a little line of kisses from her wrist to her dimpled elbow. "You don't really love me," she pouted. "There is no such thing—as real love."

"Little cynic! Beautiful little cynic," he returned softly.

In January, Delafield took her abroad for several months. And during all those weeks of travel, Pembroke was always devoted, always tender, always charming.

"Don't you think you are beginning to care for me a little bit?" he asked her one evening as they drove down the Bois in Paris.

"You are very good to me, Pembroke," she answered him.

"'Good to me'! What does that mean? Nothing!" His voice was cross.

"What are you in a temper about?" she asked, her eyes wide open.

"Temper? I'm not in one," he replied more calmly, but Pauline knew that he was not pleased.

But how could she love him, when all the time everything was spoiled by memories of the past, by that terrible "might-have-been"?

Again and again, she would so analyze herself. She wished that she could be cured of any longing for Matthew. Meanwhile, she considered she was playing fairly with Delafield, for was she not beautiful and charming?

It was in the afternoon of the day following their return to New York that Pauline was walking along Madison Avenue. Recollecting a purchase that she had to make in a drug store, Pauline entered one at the corner of the street.

But she came out without buying anything. She had seen the soda clerk, who was laughing with two girls—a youth who looked as though he had been intended by fate to be nothing else but a soda clerk.

He had seemed, after the polished Pembroke, to be so frightfully common, and Pauline had heard one or two words which the clerk had addressed to the girls, and the voice had been so ill-educated!

Of course the clerk had been none other than Matthew Ledyard, who,

having fallen by the wayside that led to literary success, had naturally gone back to a drug store; and now Pauline was wondering how she could ever have built about him the magic of her girlish dreams.

What then remained? No longer was there bitterness, so she no longer had excuse to be any man's mistress, unless she loved that man. Loved—Pembroke? Suddenly it was borne upon her, that of course she loved him. She had loved him all the time without knowing it!

Then Pembroke, himself, changed the situation that evening. He came rushing into the apartment, his eyes shining. He pulled Pauline almost roughly to him, and then kissed her.

"News, darling!" he said gleefully. "Lots of news! My wife is much better! So much better that she has fallen in love! I found a letter waiting for me! She begs me to make a divorce easy, and don't you see what it means to me?"

"Now you and I can end all this damned unconventionality and get sanely married, for you know we both of us really hate it—lack of conventionality. Neither of us, thank God, is really a Bohemian, so tell me, my Pauline, that the first second I am free, you will marry me!"

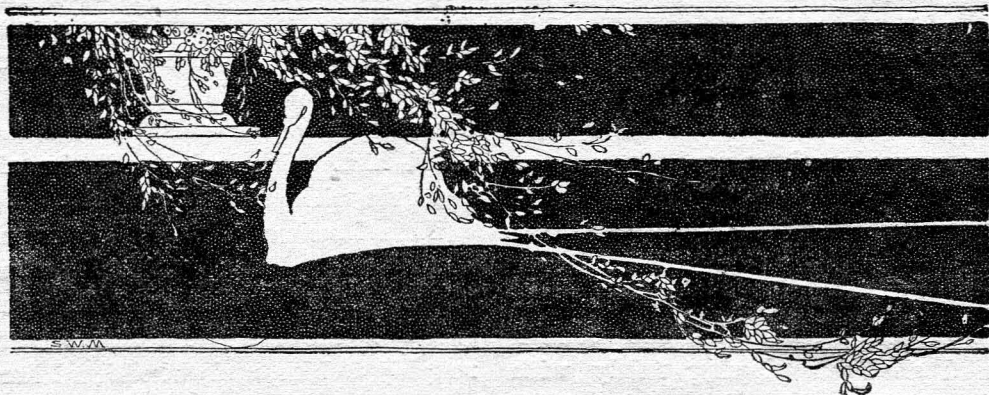
So that's how it ended—in a perfectly conventional marriage, and a marriage that also included love. The little girl who had longed for an artistic career and free love and all the rest of the nonsense, found her real happiness in a perfectly ordinary marriage to a rich man.

"And you now tell me that you loved me all the time," insisted Pembroke on the night after they were married.

"I loved you all the time," she repeated obediently. Then she added, as though she meant it:

"You know, Pembroke, dear, after Greenwich Village and everything, I think the only real thing—the only thing worth while in life is love. All else is fake!"

"All else is fake," he re-echoed her, as his hands went out to her . . .



Silver, Silver

By Mary Carolyn Davies

SILVER flashes of silver fishes
In a mountain pool,
Little trout twisting, turning, leaping
Shining and cool;

Silver moonlight on silver sagebrush
Low on the plain;
Gray when the moon hides under her clouds,
Then silver again!

Silver, silver, slippers of silver,
And in your hair
A silver ribbon that is no ribbon!
The moon is there;

The moon, and the soul of the silver fishes;
And the sagebrush sea!
All I have seen of silver beauty,
You are, to me.

A Jest Across the Wire

By Helen Hersch

What was the mysterious telephone message that drove this charming girl to a desperate act?

LOVELY!" applauded, Mrs. Bradly as Doris dropped her white hands from the piano keys and the last high note of "Pale Hands I Loved" went quivering into silence. "Quite appropriate to play when one is waiting for one's fiancé."

"Waiting indeed—" laughed Doris Sanford. "I've never known him to be so late. We were to dine at seven thirty and it's now—" she looked at the grandfather clock in the corner. "Why, it's nearly eight."

"Starving, aren't you, Doris," said her sister's husband from his comfortable chair by the fire. "Only take my advice and don't scold him for being late when he does come—save that until you're married." He glanced accusingly at Ethel.

Mrs. Bradly smiled sweetly, and patted her younger sister on a soft rounded shoulder. "Don't let him tease you—"

"Of course I won't," replied Doris, letting her fingers stray over the keys again. "Only I do wish Jimmy would come. You two are so exasperatingly well fed that it's irritating." She plunged into *Across the Desert Sands*. "How do you like this?"

Ethel interrupted her by holding

up one finger warningly. "Listen, I believe that's the telephone."

"I'll go," said Doris rising. "It's probably Jimmy."

Ethel watched her proudly as she went from the room. Doris was a young sister to be pleased with. . . . Masses of almost orange hair piled high on her head, brown eyes which seemed at times to catch tiny points of reflection from this glistening crown, neck and shoulders and figure that her present gown framed in soft lines of jade velvet, revealed in clinging curving lines of breast and hip, and left abruptly at a length that would have been foolish on any one who did not have the perfectly formed legs and tiny feet of a Doris Sanford.

It was a satisfaction to know she was engaged to marry a rich, eligible, attractive young man like Jimmy Stewart.

Ethel heard her voice at the telephone. "Oh—good evening—haven't heard from you all week."

"It isn't Jimmy," said Bradly. "I wonder what can have happened to him—"

"Do you know," answered his wife, "I believe that is Wallis Danby again. I do wish Doris wouldn't see anything of him."

"He is somewhat of a rotter," replied Philip Bradly. "But he seems to go everywhere—the women like him. I didn't know Doris knew him."

"Met him about two weeks ago," said Ethel. "I rather think she was quite smitten with him at first, much to Jimmy's disgust. . . . Oh, I don't mean seriously . . . but he gave her sort of a rush. She hasn't seen him this week, though. I told her he wasn't in any too good standing . . . what did he do to make people look askance?"

"I'm sure I can't remember." Then dryly with a nod toward the next room, "He's making up for lost time now, I guess."

The conversation was still going on—light, bantering talk.

"I told you I had an engagement with Jimmy," said Doris. . . . "What do you mean? . . . What do you know? . . . Yes? . . . Yes?" She laughed with a high-pitched trill. "Don't believe you." There followed more chatter, more merriment. In the midst of it the clock rang out eight silvery strokes. As if this had had some effect on Doris at the telephone, she ended the conversation and hung up abruptly. She came back into the living room.

"Jimmy come yet?"

Ethel was sympathetic. "You poor child. You must be dreadfully hungry. He's probably gotten delayed in a traffic jam . . . ring for Walters and have him fix you up a sandwich or something while you're waiting."

"Thank you, dear, no. I'll—be—in my room—when Jimmy comes."

Ethel looked up quickly, but Doris had vanished. "Phil," she questioned, "what's the matter with that child? Was she weeping?"

"Don't think so," replied Philip. "She's worried about Jim, I guess. Wonder what's keeping him anyway . . . ?"

"I believe I'll go after her." Ethel rose and started toward the door. And then—

With a reverberation that echoed like thunder through the apartment, there came the crash of a revolver.

Bradly leaped to his feet. "Good God!"

For a moment Ethel stood swaying, white-faced, then her tense lips framed a name, "*Doris*. . . ."

An instant later they were in the softly-lighted room where a girl in jade velvet lay across the bed, a smoking automatic clutched in one nerveless hand, a crimson stain spreading across the lacey counterpane.

And now the story is best told by going back two weeks in the delirious re-visions of a wounded girl who lay all night long between life and death, while nurses came and went silently, doctors held consultation, and a distracted fiancé paced the floor of the living room feeling certain that he was responsible for the entire tragedy.

It had all begun two weeks before in the Ormsbee ballroom when Jimmy had brought the tall, fair-

haired man, with an Apollo Belvedere smile, up to Doris, and said smilingly, "This is Wallis Danby; he wants to meet the only woman in the room who is wearing the color most suited to her to-night."

As Danby bowed over her hand with his rather foreign manner he said, "And Jimmy tells me, the only woman clever enough to know how lovely she is in the gown that suits her best."

Doris blushed becomingly. She had often heard of Wallis Danby, but Ethel had always refused to let her meet him on the grounds that he was not the proper associate for the *jeune fille*.

She gave her fiancé a grateful glance; it was nice to have him assume that she was woman-of-the-world enough to meet the man whom all the young married matrons found so fascinating.

She laughed lightly. "I always wear green," she said. "There are a thousand different variations of shade . . . only it isn't I that decide the color of my gowns, you see, but my ridiculous hair that won't let me put on anything that clashes with it."

Danby looked at her gravely. "But it is your eyes that see that truth, your voice that orders from your dressmaker."

The music had begun and Jimmy fidgeted first on one foot, then on the other. "Got to go," he said. "Told Ethel I'd be around for this one." He glanced at Doris and Danby with a grin. "Don't know

whether I'd better leave her with you or not, Danby—you say such devilishly nice things to women. . . ."

"Your confidence in me, Jimmy, is sublime," teased Doris.

Danby took her in his arms, as the slow waltz fell into perfect cadence. "Don't worry, Jim," he called over his shoulder, "I never talk when I dance."

As they swung toward the less crowded end of the ballroom, it seemed to Doris that she had never before in her life danced with such perfection.

She felt as if she and Danby danced alone somewhere beyond all thought of people, and cities, and worlds. The rhythm of the violins came soft and low, faster, slower, like the beating of silver waves on some moonlit beach—and she and Danby danced.

Near the conservatory door she was conscious that he was pausing. There was a cool fragrance of jasmine and lilies.

"Don't you want to come in here for a few moments," he asked. "It's cooler—I sometimes believe Mrs. Ormsby has the windows hermetically sealed in her ballroom. And anyway I want to show you a glorious new Indian lily just the color of your hair."

Doris followed him obediently into the palm foliaged place, though she would rather have danced, regardless of the warmth of Mrs. Ormsby's room. She had thought the other men she knew danced well,

but no one had ever done so as divinely as Wallis Danby.

She rather hoped that Jimmy and Ethel did not see her leave the floor. There was doubt in her mind as to what their sentiments on the subject would have been.

"Here it is," said Danby, examining a flower in a ray of light that strayed in; "but it isn't as beautiful, now that I can compare it."

"Why," exclaimed Doris, "is my my hair really that color?"

She bent her head to the flower for a moment for Danby to judge, then raised it swiftly. In the faint light her hair seemed to be a halo, her lips were parted eagerly, still a bit breathlessly from the waltz.

It would be unfair to blame Danby too harshly for his next action.

He kissed her.

"Oh!" whispered Doris, like a schoolgirl. "You mustn't do that!"

"And why not?" queried Danby, taking her in his arms. "You are exquisite. Made to be loved quite as much as that Indian lily is made to be admired. I'm sure Jimmy doesn't kiss you half enough."

"Oh," said Doris. "Oh . . ."

The last was smothered in another kiss. And Doris made her first mistake. She kissed back.

"It's quite all right," Danby assured her, "as long as Jimmy doesn't know."

Doris agreed with him, though somewhere in her heart there was a little pain at this unwonted treachery on the part of Doris Sanford.

In the ballroom Jimmy was undoubtedly still dancing with Ethel, he would not look for her until the music which still echoed through the conservatory stopped.

Somewhere there was a fountain trickling in harmony with it. From time to time, some tropical bird caged among the palm fronds burst into a few notes of song. Everything seemed to be music, quivering, sobbing, laughing melodies. Doris caught her breath.

"Isn't it all beautiful?" she murmured.

"It is you that makes it so," Danby pressed his lips to her hand. "Doris, will you come to my apartment, and take tea with me to-morrow?"

Doris looked at him frightened. It seemed suddenly to her as if he were hypnotizing her with some unknown magic. She thought of a cobra that held terrified little animals by its jewel-like eyes until it destroyed them utterly.

She wanted to hurry back to Jimmy, and the lighted ballroom. And yet she wanted to stay, to say yes. She answered like a naïve débutante: "I'd love to come—but—but I oughtn't. . . . If I come, will you promise not to—even kiss me?"

Danby smiled. "You shall come just for the adventure of coming. I promise not to kiss even your hand, unless you say I may . . ."

"Then," said Doris in a low voice, "I'll come." The orchestra had stopped playing.

"To-morrow at five. Only let's get back to the ballroom before Jimmy wonders where I am."

Not only had Doris gone to tea the day after the Ormsby dance, which was Tuesday, but she had motored with Wallis Danby on Wednesday, had lunched with Danby on Thursday, had motored again on Friday afternoon.

Saturday and Sunday Jimmy had monopolized her time, so telephone calls had to suffice, but on the following Tuesday at five Doris was hurrying across Fifty-fifth Street, glancing quickly from side to side to make sure that no one saw her entering the house where Danby lived.

Danby had been so nice the first afternoon she had adventured in to tea that Doris thought it perfectly all right to go again. It was true that he had kissed her before she left, but she had told him he might. Doris was too warmhearted to deny a beggar alms just once.

Now, it must not be supposed that Doris was unaware of what sort of adventure she had embarked on. It would no doubt justify her actions very plausibly to say that she was a little convent-bred girl who did not understand how an age-old game was played in modern New York.

But Doris was the product of a fashionable school that had included in its education more things than those taught by teachers. And she was fully cognizant of the fact that she was playing with fire.

What she did not entirely grasp was the full values of characterization that were to be gained from the tones of people who said about Wallis Danby, "He seems to go everywhere"—and those who said about Jimmy Stewart, "Everyone likes to have Jimmy at parties."

Which brings us to what Doris was thinking about Jimmy when she crossed Fifty-fifth Street. What was in her mind had already been said by Danby, "I'm sure Jimmy doesn't kiss you half enough." That was exactly what was permitting Doris to walk up the softly carpeted stairs toward Wallis Danby's apartment.

It was quite true, Jimmy kissed her too perfunctorily. He was too entirely and always the young American business man who puts over another big deal, and sits back complacently enjoying his success. Jimmy had won Doris with dinners, and dances, and flowers, and candy, and one moment of high sentiment in last September's moonlight.

But once won, he made no more effort. Doris had, no doubt, read too many novels about the charms of continental love affairs. But there was nothing remarkable about this. So had all of Doris' friends.

She was quite certain that her wits were a match for those of a certain person with a mephistophilian mustache. . . . But Doris, in her inexperience, underestimated Wallis Danby's power for evil.

He opened the door in answer to her two swift rings.

Taking her hand he drew her inside and pressed his lips to her fingers. "So good to have you here again, Doris . . ."

Doris slipped her fingers away gently. While she did not object to the foreign form of salutation, she did not care to have it too like a caress.

"I hope," she said, "we are going to have tea made in that fascinating old samovar again."

"Indeed we are. I remembered how it pleased you." Danby led the way into a room that seemed to Doris to be like one out of a book. You could not tell where the soft light came from, whether it was daylight or the glow of a lamp; there were rugs on the floor that deadened every footfall and it was like walking through snow when one stepped on their Persian silkiness.

High backed Florentine chairs, and a long carved table, seemed indistinct against the walls that were hung with russet hangings. Though to-day one of the chairs was brought into prominence by a piece of scarlet silk flung over it, which stood out in the dim room like a splotch of blood. A fire flickered on the hearth, and Doris went over to it gladly, for it was cold outside in the early November gloom.

A smiling Jap brought in the samovar, and left silently.

"It is good to be here," Doris said half to herself. "I'm glad I came."

Danby gave her a cup of tea. "No gladder than I am. I was lonely here in the twilight—speculating as

to whether you really were coming."

"But why speculating—didn't I come before?"

"That was a week ago. Time had passed—the current of the river has quickened since then. . . ."

"Yes. But I still have faith in the helmsman steering a true course."

It seemed to Doris that she caught something sinister in his smile—or was it only the firelight flaring. "There are sometimes reefs and rocks that the helmsman cannot steer clear of . . ."

Doris set her cup down. "Not the man in whose hands I put my security. He foresees every hidden danger. But please, will you tell me what that beautiful red thing is thrown over the back of your chair?"

Danby rose and picked up the piece of silk. "It is an East Indian robe, dyed scarlet. It has occurred to me that a woman with red-orange hair could wear that color . . . I believe that it would lend her a fascinating worldliness that green cannot give." He came over to where Doris sat close to the blazing logs. "Would you like to try it on?" He laid it across her shoulder, and stood back as if to gage the effect.

Doris flung off the draperies. "Oh, no," she said with a short laugh. "I don't think I ought to. Anyway it's so red that I feel as if it were burning me to touch it."

Danby stepped forward and caught her to him almost roughly.

"Doris do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Then why hesitate . . ."

"What do you mean?" Doris was suddenly cold, trembling.

"What a question to ask . . .!"

Doris pushed him away as he tried to kiss her. "Oh—how can you suggest such things to me—Oh, Wally, Wally how can you—I've trusted you—I—" She covered her face with her hands.

The whole truth of what sort of a situation her indiscreet venturing had led her into, rushed over her. She lifted her head, looked about wildly, and fled to the door.

But Danby was there before her. He held the knob and stood looking at her silently, suave, smiling.

"Doris, you are acting like a child. Go sit down."

"Certainly not. Let me by, I want to go home."

"Don't be a little idiot."

Doris eyed him steadily. "You promised you wouldn't even try to kiss me . . ."

"But, my dear child, that was a week ago Monday."

"Have I ever given you reason to believe I would want things to be otherwise to-day?"

Danby caught her wrists. A slow wave of anger was mounting to his cheeks. "What sort of a game are you trying to play with me, Doris Sanford? You knew as well as I where it was all leading. Though I gave you credit for more sophistication than you obviously have . . . Why take up my challenge if you were such a poor sport?"

Doris tried to wrench her hand away. "Let go, please . . ."

Danby's only answer was to sweep her off her feet and carry her back to the Florentine chair before the fire. He set her down gently. "Now Doris, do be sensible."

Strangely enough his words seemed to have the effect on Doris he had hoped for. She leaned back quietly. "I suppose I haven't been quite fair . . ." She stared at the flames for a few minutes of silence while Danby watched her with an amused smile curling the corners of his mouth. "I wonder if I might have a glass of water?—silly of me to let myself get upset that way over what you said."

"Why certainly." Danby vanished through a door at the end of the room.

Scarcely had he disappeared before Doris sprang to her feet and flew to the door.

For a moment of sickening fear, she thought he had locked it and taken the key, but she found a catch, swung the door open, and was out in the hall. As the door banged shut behind her she heard an exclamation from Danby. Winged swiftness carried her down the stairs.

Out in the street Doris wondered if she were going to faint, but the evening air revived her. Her first thought was entirely devoted to the miracle of how she, the once vanity-misled Doris Sanford, had been able to outwit a supremely clever man like Wallis Danby. Her second thought was that she wanted Jimmy Stewart right now, more than anyone else in the world.

That was Tuesday. When Doris answered the telephone on Friday evening, her heart had stopped beating for a moment when she realized the man at the other end of the wire was not Jimmy but Wallis Danby.

While she said the conventional greetings she wondered what possible reason he could have for calling her up. She had a panicky idea that she had left her gloves, or handkerchief at his apartment—a mistake that Danby might take advantage of to relieve his injured feelings.

She knew only too well that her future lay in his hands to break if he so wanted to. Even the Jap servant had seen her in the apartment twice. But she believed sufficiently in the honor of Wallis Danby to reassure herself that he would do nothing to hurt her reputation. All week she had suffered from a guilty conscience; especially when Jimmy, charmed with her more fervent declarations of love for him, had proved that he could furnish a goodly share of the romantic atmosphere she had sought elsewhere. But she had not been really afraid. . . .

"Hello Doris," said Danby's voice. "Doing anything especial to-night?"

Doris was rather surprised at the tone he was taking, as if nothing had ever occurred to spoil their companionship. "Why yes, I'm dining out."

"Too bad. I wondered if you wouldn't have dinner with me. I know it's the eleventh hour—but say you will."

"Wonders will never cease," said Doris flippantly. She was at her ease

now. There seemed to be no doubt that Danby meant to ignore the affair of Tuesday tea. It was brazen of him to call her, as if nothing had happened, but it was amusing.

"There will always be wonders in the life of a woman who is so beautiful that men cannot forget her. . . ."

Was it possible, Doris thought, that the veteran Wallis Danby could really have fallen in love with a young girl like herself? She laughed. "Very prettily said—but I can't accept your invitation this evening. You see Jimmy is coming to take me to dinner. Though he is late . . . he wants to go to the Century Roof and dance later."

The voice at the other end of the wire seemed icily cool. "You'd better let me take you out . . . I don't think Jim is coming."

"Of course he is," Doris was loyal.

"He often is late, but I can't imagine what's keeping him so long to-night."

"I can," said Danby drily.

Doris' voice was sharp. "What?"

"Oh, nothing. Say you'll let me come get you in—well—a half hour."

"I told you I have an engagement with Jimmy."

"And I told you I don't think he is coming."

"What do you mean . . . ?" There was an edge of exasperation in Doris' voice, it turned into a little quiver of fear. "*What do you know?*"

"Does your memory go back to last Tuesday?"

"Yes?" So he wasn't going to let that go by.

"Do you know that I often see Jim at the club?"

"Yes?" Doris was trembling now.

"I told him, a little while ago, about a very charming girl who had tea with me *every* Tuesday."

Doris was sure she detected cruel banter in the tone. "I don't believe you . . ."

He laughed. "Perhaps I am joking. But has Jimmy come?"

"Wally, you are teasing . . ."

"Believe me or not—only wait and see if Jim turns up; but if he doesn't come in fifteen minutes more, will you run downstairs and jump into my taxi? I'll be waiting for you outside."

"Ridiculous. What a silly jest. Of course I won't."

"I don't see why you continue to accuse me of making fun of you. Do I sound as if I weren't serious?"

"I—I don't know." Doris said weakly.

Somehow she managed to end the conversation intelligently. She wasn't going to give Wallis Danby the satisfaction of knowing that she put credence in his revenge.

Then she had told Ethel she was going to her room.

Fifteen minutes after the revolver shot had reverberated through the calm of the apartment, Jimmy Stewart, arrived breathless.

"My watch was wrong," he exclaimed as he dashed into the living room where Philip was standing before the fireplace glaring at the pattern on the rug as if it were some-

thing of vital interest. "Where's Doris?" Then he realized that something serious was amiss. "What's the matter—anyone ill?"

With masculine directness Philip told him. . . .

"Have you any idea," he concluded, "why she could have done it?"

Jimmy shook his head. Speech was utterly beyond him at this moment. "You say she was talking to Danby?"

"Yes. Perfectly harmless, silly conversation as far as we heard."

"And to think," moaned Jimmy, "that I introduced him to her! Phil, is there—is there any hope did you say?"

"We don't know yet."

"Is she conscious? Can I see her?"

"She's been delirious ever since she came to. I don't think you'd better go in."

Jimmy paced back and forth. "I wonder if my being so late had anything to do with it. Was she worrying about my not coming?"

Phil patted his shoulder kindly. "I'm afraid so, Jim. Only it wasn't your fault, I'm sure. Any more than I believe it was Danby's. We are at a loss . . . Do you know of anything that could have made her . . . Had anything been worrying her . . .?"

Jimmy resumed his walking up and down. "I disagree with you about Danby . . . I believe he knows something—My God, could she have thought I wasn't coming at all? She's so sensitive—it may have been all my fault."

A white-capped nurse appeared in

the doorway. For all her cool starchiness of uniform, she seemed flustered. She looked inquiringly from one to the other of the two men.

"Mr. Stewart?"

Jimmy turned ghostly pale. "Yes. I'm Mr. Stewart."

"She—she's calling for you—the Doctor thinks—if you'll come, it may do some good. . . ."

Jimmy could never remember afterwards how he had gotten down the corridor and on his knees beside the white bed on which Doris lay with her marvelous hair spreading over the pillow. She looked so fragile and drawn that for a moment it nearly unnerved him, but he took her hand tenderly.

"Doris, it's Jimmy."

She looked at him vacantly. "Jimmy isn't coming. . . ."

"Yes, dear, I am here."

"Jimmy won't come—" There was unutterable weariness in her tones. "Jimmy won't . . . Oh, Wally, Wally, how can you . . ."

Jimmy's eyes narrowed. They met the troubled glance of Ethel from across the bed. Words would have been superfluous, each knew what the other was thinking: So Danby did have something to do with the tragedy.

A doctor whispered something to Ethel. She turned to Jimmy. "Jimmy dear, I think you'd better go now," she said in a low voice. "She doesn't know you . . . we'll call you if she asks again."

Back in the living room Jimmy struggled into his overcoat which

still lay where he had thrown it in his hasty entrance.

"I begin to understand . . ." he flung at Philip.

"Where are you going, Jim?" Bradly was frightened by the expression on the young man's face.

Jimmy wheeled on him. "Going? I'm going to kill that cur Danby. . . ."

Before Philip realized the full significance of his words Jimmy was gone . . . the outer door snapped shut.

Danby actually had waited in a taxi outside the apartment house where the Bradlys lived for some half hour. It being a large building where there was a continual buzz of coming and going, he failed to notice any unusual excitement. He lolled back in a corner of the taxi with the smoke from his cigarette making pleasant dream-wraiths before his eyes.

Finally, however, his patience had given out, and he had, in none too good humor, ordered the driver to take him to Fifty-fifth Street. It rankled that a mere débutante should be able to outplay him this way—he had long ago learned what cards the young matrons would lead, but he was forced to admit that he could not foresee the next move of a young Doris.

He entered the russet-hung room, dismissed his Jap, and settled down to make a book compensate for a wasted evening.

He had, however, barely turned ten pages before the door bell rang.

He jumped to his feet. . . . Doris? It was not only possible, but probable. He smiled.

He opened the door gallantly.

Before he could even take a step back Jimmy Stewart had grabbed him by the coat lapels and was shaking him as a terrier shakes a rat.

Danby for a moment was more afraid of his neighbors than for his life and looks. "For God's sake, Stewart," he managed to gasp. "Let me shut the door."

But Jimmy was like a maniac. "What did you say to her over the phone?" he raged. "*What did you say to her?*"

"Come into the other room," said Danby quietly. His face had an ashy look, but his voice was steady. "Now," as they faced each other in front of the fireplace, "what's the matter?"

Jimmy spoke through set teeth. "Did you know that Doris shot herself an hour ago?"

Danby went deathly white. He managed to breathe a word, "Dead?"

"Not yet—" said Jimmy grimly. "But they—don't know—whether she'll live—"

Danby stared into the fire. "I was talking to her only a half hour or so ago. She seemed well and cheerful."

Jimmy turned on him fiercely. "That's why I'm here. *What did you say to her?*"

"I can't remember—just what I did . . ."

"You can. . . . She went from the

phone to her room and shot . . ."

"It was only the usual sort of telephone talk. I asked her to dine with me, and she said she was waiting for you."

"Was that all?"

"All I seem to remember."

"Danby, that wasn't all. You've been up to some hellish trick. You saw me leave the club to go home and dress . . . a good half hour late already, which I didn't know. I didn't find out my watch was wrong until I got in a traffic jam on my way to her house, and happened to notice a clock on the sidewalk.

"You heard me say to the fellow I was with that I was going to get Doris. . . . Then you called her up, invited her to dinner—and told her some damnable lie that broke her heart. . . ."

He waited for Danby to reply, but there was only silence as Danby continued to stare into the flames—a cynical expression of triumph and dismay around his mouth.

"*What did you say to her?*"

And then Jimmy was at his throat.

What ensued was not pleasant for Danby. Jimmy being far more athletic and lithe, pommelled his adversary unmercifully.

Wallis Danby finally arose from the fray with battered eyes, a bleeding nose, what he considered a broken wrist, and fear in his soul—and related his end of the conversation with Doris to Jimmy. Further, he related the story of the previous Tuesday afternoon, and of how

Doris had outwitted him. There was nothing, given with strict adherence to truth, that Jimmy Stewart could not have known about Wallis Danby's past life in this hour of Danby's self-abasement.

"Poor little girl," said Jimmy softly. "Poor frightened, foolish Doris. What she must have suffered in the past week. . . ."

Danby raised his head which he had been drooping like a whipped dog. "Believe me or not Stewart, I never meant to hurt her. I thought she knew the game she was playing. . . . When I told her what I did over the phone, I meant it in jest. I don't yet understand how she took me seriously. . . . Her last words were, 'What a silly joke.'"

Jimmy looked at him with relentless hatred. "I'm rather inclined to believe you on that score . . . but you are accustomed to jest with women who are a good deal more hardened than little Doris."

"I'll admit I hoped I could get her out to dinner with me before you got there."

"Your plans were quite laudable, I assure you," answered Jimmy caustically. "Only they didn't work the way you expected. If you open your mouth about how you got beaten up, or mention Doris' name to one single soul, worse things than a black eye will come your way. . . . Good night."

All the way back to the Bradlys Jimmy Stewart blamed himself for the tragedy even more than he had earlier in the evening. His crime

was worse than a deliberate one, it was the crime of carelessness when he should have been protecting . . . in this moment was a realization born to Jimmy of how frail, and how precious was the soul of the girl whom love had given into his keeping.

Dawn had crawled wanly into the room where the battle for Doris Sanford's life had been fought all night. And with the coming of the new day, life and youth won.

Ethel was sent to her room for a few hours' rest, the doctors put away their instruments and medicines and prepared to go home. But Jimmy Stewart still sat at the bedside.

Once during the past hour Doris had opened her eyes, looked at him and said "Jimmy. . . ." Since then he had refused to leave.

He was wondering now if it were only the false light that made her eyelids seem to flutter. . . .

Suddenly Doris turned her head. Jimmy realized that her eyes were fixed on him as if trying to decide whether he were still part of a feverish dream, or reality.

"Jimmy . . . you *are* here. . . ."

"My darling . . ."

"Jimmy, you still love me?" The question was so low that he wondered if she had really said it.

"Always," said Jimmy. "Always, darling." He stroked one white hand reverently. "But now you must rest . . . so that I can—take you out to dinner—I've been waiting since last night."

Her Fur Coat

By Alicia Ramsey

Can a lover of the fleshpots buy back the romance of his poverty-stricken youth?

HE was tall. He was rich. He was bald. He was inclined to be fat—he puffed considerably if he lost his temper or when he hoisted himself in and out of his limousine. Likewise, he had deep pouches of wrinkled flesh under his weary eyes.

Ominous things, puffings and pouches—so the doctor had said at their interview that morning. Nothing to be alarmed about, but it meant cutting down on good dinners and walking at least two miles a day.

Clever fellow that doctor! Any man who could sit in his chair and charge you fifty dollars a touch for telling you what you knew already and get away with it—was a man worth listening to.

He'd listened all right. He'd phoned his wife to change the menu and he'd made up his mind to do his couple of miles a day.

That's why he was walking now. Dragging himself wearily along the frozen street with his Rolls-Royce tagging along behind him in case he got tired.

As he walked—he hated walking—he thought about his dinner that night. It soothed his irritation and helped pass the time a bit to guess

what he was going to get to eat.

Not vegetable puree, he hoped; he hated vegetables. Tomato bisque now, with little crisp croutons floating about in the fragile two-handled cups—that was something like soup. He loved tomato bisque.

What was that again the doctor had said about tomatoes? He pulled the printed list of prohibited things out of his pocket and gave it a surreptitious glance. Tomatoes headed the list! In Heaven's name, why not tomatoes? Tomatoes were vegetables, weren't they? *Too acid?* He shrugged his great shoulders impatiently. All right, then. *Not tomato bisque.*

Then what? What about creme d'artichauts? Artichokes were in season just now. Right! Creme d'artichauts and filleted sole to follow and a delicately browned chicken as roast. Poor stuff, chicken! He much preferred duck. However, it couldn't be helped.

And for salad—what was it the doctor had said about salad? He pulled out the list again and took another surreptitious look. What! No salads! Hang it all, a dinner wasn't a dinner without a salad. It was the thing he loved best of all.

What did the old fool propose one

should eat instead of salad? Stewed prunes and rice. A baked apple without sugar and cream. Good God! One might be back in the nursery again. His wife would have to do better than that.

At the thought of his wife—tall and thin, with her marcelled hair and her manicured hands—with her mouth like a trap and her eyes as hard as the diamonds round her carefully massaged neck—at that thought his face went grim.

Twenty-two years of it come next March. Twenty-two years of it, by Heck, and no sign of a let up yet! Lord! How he hated his wife!

Dashed fine housekeeper all the same, give the Devil his due! She'd manage a good dinner somehow. She'd wangel the doctor. She always wangled everybody—even him!

How about iced apricots and vanilla cream instead of apples and rice? Instead of that God forsaken chicken, what about a young turkey with chestnut stuffing?

Cheered by the thought of the chestnut stuffing, he walked on.

One block; two blocks; three blocks; four. . . .

Good Lord! He felt as if he'd been walking for hours, and he hadn't walked half a mile yet. Another fifteen blocks to go before he could even turn back, and he was worn out already. It wasn't the walking that tired one so much—it was his fur coat.

Idiotic things, fur coats, when you came to think of it. Yet, if you hadn't one, with these infernal

winds blowing the breath out of your body and all this snow about, you'd catch your death of cold.

What was that the doctor had said: "Can't afford to monkey with yourself with a high blood pressure like that. Above all things, don't catch cold."

At this rate, one might as well be dead and done with it. Why not? What was life anyway? Telephones. Conferences. Chauffeurs. *Wives*. And now—cut out all salads and walk two miles every day. . . .

Puffing, panting; slipping, sliding; cursing the doctor; thinking of food, he walked on.

Five blocks; six blocks; seven blocks; eight. . . . If he walked another step he'd lie down on the sidewalk and pass out. Eight blocks saw him all right. . . .

He was just turning round when his eye caught sight of the great placards outside the theater he was passing, and he stopped short.

"FLORODORA!"

GREAT REVIVAL OF WORLD-FAMOUS
PLAY.

RAVISHING BEAUTIES.

DELICIOUS MELODIES.

GORGEOUS COSTUMES.

CELEBRATED SEXTETTE.

EVERYTHING AS IN THE ORIGINAL
PRODUCTION.

N.B. (Those of you who never saw it before come in and see what musical comedy really means!)
Those of you who saw it before
step in and

RENEW YOUR YOUTH.

Renew your youth!

He stood outside in the biting wind and read the placard over and over again. The people pushed him and shoved him as they streamed down the street, but he didn't notice the people.

The snow came whiffing and whuffling round the corner up from the river, catching his breath, stinging his face with thousands of little splinters like sharp glass, but he didn't notice the snow.

His great, overfed body, in its sumptuous sables stood by Central Park, but his spirit was far away, standing outside the shabby old theater in Boston looking with eager, ardent young eyes at the dirty old placard of "Florodora," wondering if he skimped on lunches and went short on teas, if he would be able to scrape up enough to go in and see the show again!

"Now then!" boomed the big commissioner in his long green coat and his big brass buttons, "now then, you're blocking up the sidewalk, there! Pass on, please. Pass on!"

But he didn't even hear the nigger's plaintive bellowing. He was looking at the colored pictures of the Celebrated Sextette, with their slim legs and their rosy hats, standing with linked arms in a semicircle of youthful beauty and joy.

The little one at the end—the sixth one—had got her arms full of roses. The sixth one! Good God! The *sixth* one! It seemed to him, she smiled. . . .

With a swift, sharp movement, he turned back to the sidewalk and held up his hand. The car drew up at the curb. The big commissioner scenting tips from the sables, left off his bellowing and rushed forward to open the door.

"Going in!" he scowled at the commissioner.

"Wait!" he told the chauffeur.

He left them standing aghast in the snow and disappeared through the swinging doors.

It was matinee day at popular prices and the vestibule was thronged, but that made no difference to him. He shoved and pushed his way through the crowd as he had shoved and pushed his way through life.

Even the arrogant young New Yorkers gave way instinctively before that forbidding jowl and the sable coat.

"Gimme a box," said he.

Unhappily, the last box had just been sold.

"Then gimme a stall."

Alas! there wasn't a stall to be had.

"Then gimme a seat."

"Standing room only, sir," said the smart young man in the box office.

"Aw, Hell!" said he, and threw down a ten dollar bill. "Gimme a pass and keep the change. Standing room's good enough for me!"

He snatched up the little metal disc and disappeared.

The young man in the box office, who knew his New York, had recog-

nized the heavy jowl and the weary eyes at first glance. He rushed round to the back to tell the particular girl he'd got his own eye on, who was in front.

"Now's your chance, Girlie!" he whispered excitedly drawing the leader of the Sextette aside. "Now's your chance! If you can get *him* going you can eat pearls for porridge if you're as ugly as sin or sing Marguerite at the Metropolitan if you've a voice like a crow!"

The leader of the Sextette, a sumptuous young Jewess with lustrous eyes and a henna head, snapped her fingers, covered with enormous diamond and pearl rings, in the excited young man's face. "I should worry," said she. "Where is the old bird?"

"Left-hand side. Way down front. As high as the Woolworth Building and a face like a lemon gone wrong! You can't miss him, Girlie! Play up for all you're worth!"

He left her standing with her nose glued to the peep hole and rushed back to the front to glue *his* eye on the man at whose coming the great gods of Wall Street got down off their golden pedestals and bowed the knee as he passed by.

He stood, as he had stood thirty-three years before, first on one foot, then on the other, leaning his great bulk against the wall. He could hardly contain himself until the show began.

Bang, bang, bang! went the drums. Tetum, tetumtetum! went the violins! The lights went down. The curtain went up. He was so en-

thralled he forgot all about his feet. He wasn't puffing at all. His heart began to beat.

He who snored peacefully through the tumult of Wagner and the passion of Puccini in the shadow of the velvet curtains of his wife's box in the Diamond Horseshoe. . . .

He who cursed as he lay back in his stall and watched the genius of John Barrymore unfold itself in scarlet and gold before his bored and blasé eyes. . . .

He who sat through his wife's receptions in his palace on Fifth Avenue and counted the hours in anguish till he was free to return to his cigar and his drink and his game of Bridge. . . .

He stood there in that barn of an uptown theater, clapping his fat hands at the silly dances; shaking his great body at the silly jokes; drinking in the silly sensuous melodies with ardent thirsty ears.

The magic of enchantment was on him. He was a boy again—a happy stripling, long of leg, strong of arm; with the digestion of an ox and the physique of a coal heaver, and passion running riot in his veins for a Florodora girl.

She had been a beauty, that girl of his. Her dark eyes and delicate grace were the pass words that had opened for him the gates into another world. The other boys had fancied the other five with their sparkling smiles and their flashing teeth and their robustly beckoning charms.

But it was always the Sixth for

him. The sight of her slender limbs moving to and fro in the dance had set him crazy. He recalled with a shiver of joy the fact that he had been able to span her slender instep between his strong forefinger and his big square thumb. . . .

The drums banged and the trumpets blared. In their pink tulle skirts and their rose laden hats, the Sex-tette came prancing on.

Instantly, as if a bell had set them ringing, the audience broke out into frantic applause.

Handsome girls, the whole six of them: short, tall, dark, fair; but the five didn't exist for him. He had eyes only for the little one at the end of the row,—the *Sixth*.

She was short and sweet with a pale face and dark eyes that shone like black stars from under the soft clouds of her raven hair. The grace of her slim silk legs flashing under her pink tulle frock set the blood thrumming and drumming in those old arteries of his that the doctor had said were hardening too fast for safety if he didn't take care.

Hardening? Why, the very lips of him were pulsing with youth and joy. His great hand throbbed with excitement at the sight of that slim young ankle. He swore by all his gods in Wall Street he could span the arch of *her* instep with his gouty old forefinger and his great square thumb.

As they burst into song, he burst into laughter. The people near him turned their heads at the sound of that gurgling joy. They laughed,

too, out of sheer pleasure to see the fat old boy in the sable coat having such a glorious time.

One little cutie, indeed, divined such possibilities of a sporty spender lurking behind that huge body and those weary, ardent eyes, that she ruffled up her bobbed hair with her hat pin and gave him the glad eye while she pretended to be looking at herself in the little mirror in the top of her little bag.

She needn't have troubled herself. He wasn't wasting his time on cuties and their tragic little charms. He was looking at the little gold bangle that slipped up and down the soft white arm of Number Six.

Strange how these silly little coincidences sometimes happen in real life!

He had given *her* a gold bangle in those far-away days. Pawned his grandfather's fat, old gold watch to buy it, what's more.

He had wanted to give her a little gold ring set with a turquoise but she had set her heart on a bracelet. "A little gold bangle, Bobsikins, with a little gold pig dangling at the end of a little gold chain for luck."

She had screamed for joy when she had seen it lying in its nest of pink cotton wool in the little cardboard box. When he told her that it was eighteen carat gold and the little pig's eyes were real rubies, her dark eyes had filled with tears. Never, never, never had there been such a Bobsikins before!

In the shadow of the old stage door, under the flickering old gas

lamp, she had flung her arms round his neck and kissed him for it. The snow had come whirling down on them in great white flurries.

The wind had come tearing up from the river cutting through and through his thin overcoat like a knife. But he hadn't even known it was snowing. *He* hadn't felt cold. with the touch of her soft lips on his, she had lighted the fire that knows no quenching. He burned with the eternal fires of desire.

That had been the beginning of it.

That night they had come to an understanding and the company had accepted the fact that he and she "belonged."

The other five passing her on their way out, waiting for him in the little passage, shivering and coughing in the draught, had laughed at her for a fool wasting her time on a great gawk of a boy who had to work like a horse from morning till night to make nine dollars a week.

Number One, indeed, who stood at the other end of the row—a fair, fat thing with a dazzling skin and a scarlet mouth, who drove away every night in a smart little brougham and pair, went so far as to say, that "sumpin oughtta be done about it. She was a disgrace to the glorious Sextette."

Much they cared for the glorious Sextette!

He used to go back with her to supper every night after the show. The grim old landlady with her

black wig always askew, made no objections to that. She had been let into the great secret. She had been shown the little golden hoop that hung on a blue ribbon round the fair white neck. She knew that they belonged for keeps—those two. They were to be married all right as soon as he made good.

Even then he was ambitious. Hour after hour, night after night, he would sit on the old rag rug at her feet, with his head in her lap and her thin fingers going softly through his black mop of hair, and tell her of all the wonderful things he was going to do.

Get out of Boston; get to New York; get into Wall Street. Work; slave; starve; save. They were to have rooms; a cottage; a house; a mansion. A maid; a butler; a carriage of their very own. She was to have a silk dress; a pearl ring; a gold chain; a diamond star for her hair. . . .

But first and foremost, she was to have a fur coat.

He had set his heart on that as she had set her heart on the little gold pig. One of those great big sealskin things he had seen the Canadian women wear. Down to her heels. Up to her ears. "No more shiverings and shakings, then, my Pretty. No matter how it snows or how the wind blows. You'll be so warm in your great fur coat, you'll forget you ever had a cough."

And she, she would lie curled up at the end of the old red rep sofa

whose back leg wobbled so that you had to prop it upright with an old biscuit tin or else you'd slide off—she'd lie there, her dark eyes shining; her red lips burning; trying to keep back her cough so as not to interrupt him; trying to make herself believe all these wonders might come true; praying that God would let the show go on just one more week.

She would lean forward to kiss him and bless him and stir the cocoa over his shoulder on the hob to make sure it wouldn't burn. When he'd finished talking he always wanted "winding up" as he called it. Even in those days he was fond of his food.

On Sunday she would pack a little basket with apples and sausage rolls and they would go to the park and spend the whole day in the open air. She loved the air. It did her cough good, she said.

He was all for the city—the flaring lights; the hurrying crowds; the great buildings; the pushing and shoving of people on their way to Money and Power.

But she was all for the country—the great spaces; the unutterable silences; the little wild things that ran and flew about. She taught him the names of all the flowers. She made him listen to the different notes of the singing birds. She opened his eyes to the beauty of the great trees rearing their great heads up into the gay blue sky.

She would throw her arms round their old trunks and press her deli-

cate face against their rough bark and kiss it with something of the same wild passion with which she sometimes kissed him. He would have to pull her away by sheer force.

She said she could feel their life entering into hers. "So strong; so sure; so kind! Like you!" she said.

Many a time he had remembered that saying of hers driving in his great limousine through Central Park, sitting by that silent vinegar-faced wife of his. He had never realized before that trees were alive the same as men.

Once, on his birthday, he had taken her out to the real country. Sat up half the night for over a week addressing envelopes at two dollars a thousand in order to pay their fares.

There had been a funny two-wheeled trap and a fat gray pony; and real woods and a lake and funny gray rabbits scuttling about. There was a great, gold sun like a warming pan up in the bright blue sky.

The snow had flashed like diamonds, as it lay inches deep on the ground. The trees had glittered like fairy trees made of silver, set in a sea of glass. They had laughed and shouted like children as they ran hand in hand, crunch, crunch, crunch, up the funny little path.

In a little, quiet dell in a clearing they had come on a little white snowdrop standing all by itself under the shadow of the great tall

trees. When she had seen it, she had flung herself down onto her knees in the snow and burst out crying. "Oh, Bobsikins! The little thing! So small; so white; so brave!"

"Like *you*!" he'd said.

He wanted to pick it and bring it away but she wouldn't let him. So they had come away and left it standing, the little white thing, all by itself, in the snow.

Somehow, after that, things had been different between them. They hadn't laughed and talked as they generally did—just walked soberly along hand in hand through the woods like people whose hearts were too full for speech.

When they came out into the open she stopped and held out her arms. "I'm saying good-by to the happiest day in my life," she told him.

There was a little silver moon up in the frosty blue sky and a great gold star in the flush of the sunset just above their heads. The star of Venus she had called it. The star of Love. She was like that. She knew all about everything—even stars.

When they got back, she was so tired he had carried her upstairs like a little child. He waited outside the door and peeped through the crack while she put on her funny blue cotton dressing gown and let down her hair.

Such hair! Long past her waist and such masses, it lay spread out behind her head on the old rep pillow like a great black cloud.

She lay there and watched him boiling the eggs and making the tea. There was a pot of quince jelly and a homemade cake from the landlady who had been called away to spend the night with a sick friend. He had drawn the table up to the sofa and buttered her toast and cracked her egg.

They had played at being married. He had taken her ring off the blue ribbon and put it on her finger. Mr. and Mrs. Bobsikins at home, she called it.

Afterwards, when he had cleared up and taken the tray downstairs and brushed up the hearth, he had knelt down and laid his face on the red rep pillow next to hers. She had taken her hair and wrapped it round him—to hide him away from the world, she said.

Sweet hair! When he shut his eyes he could feel it still, so soft and fragrant lying over his face like a fairy veil.

That night he had made up his mind he wouldn't wait any longer to make good. He would take a chance and marry her at once. It couldn't take much more to keep two than one.

He would go in his lunch hour to the City Hall and get a license and they would be married that night. He'd have done it, too, but next morning, out of the blue, had come his great chance. When he got down to breakfast there, beside his plate, lay a letter from his cousin in New York.

Business was picking up. He

wanted more help. It was the chance of a lifetime for a chap that had his head screwed on right. "I've had my eye on you ever since you left school," wrote the Wall Street cousin. "Cut out the girls and keep off the drink and I'll take you in with me as junior partner inside of two years. Is it a go?"

It was a go all right. Even in those days, he wasn't one of those who need calling twice when Opportunity knocks at the door. Within an hour he had paid his bill; packed his bag; and was off by the next train.

When he saw her standing there on the platform, waving to him and smiling and coughing like mad, the little frail thing, so white; so lonely; so brave; he had felt like jumping out of the train and rushing her off to the City Hall and marrying her at once.

But he didn't. He sat tight and went to New York; saw the cousin; got the job and held it down for the two years. Slaved; saved; scraped; starved—sinkers for supper; porridge for lunch;—it's not so easy a job as it sounds to sit tight and go short for two whole years, but he did it.

Yes, by Heck, he did it all right and the dollars in the old tin biscuit box in the old tin trunk under his bed mounted slowly up and up. . . .

The only luxury he allowed himself during that ghastly time was his weekly letter to her. Even that he sometimes cut down to a post card in order to save the extra

stamp. But he thought of her, longed for her, prayed for her morning and night.

In his lunch hour, when he wasn't running errands in order to make a few extra cents, he would glue his nose to the great plate glass windows in the great stores and calculate the price of fur coats.

He often thought he couldn't have carried it through if it hadn't been for *her* letters to him, gay little letters full of the wonderful things she had seen and how kind people were.

When the show touched at Boston the grim old landlady would add a line outside the envelope in her illiterate scrawl to say the traveling seemed to tire her unduly and she still had that nasty cough. . . .

The little girl at the end—Number Six—capering so gayly about in her little pink satin shoes—she had a nasty cough, too. A little tissicky sound that she only let out when the drums banged extra loud but he heard it all right. She could do with a fur coat, too.

Those starry eyes of hers would light up like black fires if he walked in one day and gave her a few yards of sable. Why not? Why shouldn't he if he wanted to? Where was the harm?

She'd look and stare and give him both her hands. . . . Perhaps she'd throw her thin arms round his neck and give him a kiss with those burning red lips of hers. . . .

His old heart thrilled at the thought.

*"Oh, Florodora! Florodora! our
hearts ring true!
We've come back again to keep faith
with you. . . ."*

New words, but that was the old tune all right—the old tune *she* had sung. . . .

On the day he was twenty-one, the Wall Street cousin had called him into the inner office and made him a junior partner just as he'd said. He'd poured him out a glass of his own sacred port.

"I've no son of my own but I've a daughter. She's no looker but she'll have a million dollars cold cash when I book in. I want to find her a husband who'll turn that million into two. You're the man I've picked for the job. How does it look to you?"

"Gimme a minute," he'd said.

He'd gone to the window and looked out at New York, the city of laughter and light.

There was a great gold sun like a warming pan up in the frosty blue sky. The snow had sparkled like diamonds inches deep on the ground. The trees in the little square below glittered like fairy trees made of silver set in a sea of glass. The great river flowed like a golden stream through the golden city. The roar of the life below had come up to him calling to him of Might. Money. Power. . . .

But all he could see was a little, frail girl standing on a platform and coughing like mad. All he could hear was a soft voice mur-

muring "*Bobsikins*" as he lay hidden away from the world under a veil of cloudy black hair. . . .

"Well," said the cousin. "How about it? Is it a go?"

Then suddenly something had gone snap in his head and he knew what he wanted to do most in the world. "No, by God! It's *not* a go!" he'd shouted. "I gotta girl of my own that's worth all the money in the world to me. You can give that daughter of yours to somebody else."

He hadn't waited to take the elevator. He had run down all the hundred and fifty-odd stairs. He hadn't waited to take a car. He'd run all the way home.

He'd taken the dollars—there were six hundred and twelve of them—out of the old tin biscuit box; packed his bag and gone. As luck would have it, she was "resting" in Boston that week.

On his way to the station, he stopped at the great store and bought a fur coat.

In those two years he'd changed his mind about the sable. It was to be ermine, spotless white as the little creature itself who died if it couldn't keep itself clean. "White fur for my white snowdrop?" he thought to himself. The woman in the shop had smiled at his eagerness as she displayed the lining and packed the coat.

"Not another one in the city to match it, sir! The latest thing in New York. Four hundred dollars, please."

Four hundred dollars! A pretty big slice out of six hundred and twelve! But he didn't care. He'd seized the coat and paid the bill. He sat with the great cumbersome parcel in his arms hugging it all the way.

When he got to Boston, there was no dainty little figure shivering and coughing on the platform. There were no gay little feet running down the stairs when he got to the house: The old landlady, her grim face stained with crying and her black wig over her ear showing the gray beneath, opened the door to him.

He was so happy he gave her a smacking good kiss on both cheeks. "Here I am at last!" he'd shouted. He waved the great box in her face. "And here's the fur coat."

"You're two years late," the grim old woman told him. "You and your fur coat! She's upstairs waiting for you. Go on up and see."

He remembered he laughed and shouted like a boy let out from school as he raced up the stairs.

In the little sitting room where they had played at being married it was very quiet. The sun came through the windows and turned everything to gold.

She lay on the old red rep sofa white and still. The blue ribbon with the little gold hoop hung round her fair white neck. Her hair lay all spread out on the pillow behind her head like a great black cloud. In her hand there was one little snowdrop. . . .

"I wanted to buy her a wreath," the old landlady burst out sobbing, "but she wouldn't have it. 'Just one snowdrop,' she said. 'If he comes he'll understand. . . .'"

He understood all right. She hadn't picked her snowdrop. And he hadn't picked his. . . .

He'd put the ring on her wedding finger and wrapped her fair body in her ermine coat. He had knelt down beside her with his head on the old rep pillow and her hair shutting him out from the world and cried himself blind.

They were the last tears he had ever shed.

Next day, after the funeral, he went back to New York and married the cousin's daughter. She was ten years older than he was. Her mouth like a trap and eyes as hard as stones.

Lord! How he'd hated her! She'd nothing to complain of anyway. He hadn't turned her million dollars into two as he'd promised her father. He'd turned them into ten.

The drums banged. The trumpets blared. The curtain went down. The lights went up. He suddenly felt very old and very weary. He was panting a bit as if he'd been raging at one of his clerks.

His feet were horribly tired. He pushed and shoved his way through the crowd, thinking about his dinner. The door of Fairyland had been shut in his face and he was left standing outside alone in the wind and the snow.

The car drew up at the curb. The nigger in his green coat and brass buttons rushed forward to open the door. As the car whirled into Broadway he caught sight of a fur coat in the window of a corner shop.

It was one of those smart little uptown stores which have one gorgeous garment to attract passing eyes to their cheaper wares.

"Stop, wait!" he told the chauffeur.

He went into the little shop and bought the ermine coat.

It was very long and very smart—down to your heels; up to your ears; the kind that rich Canadian women wear.

"How much?" said he.

"Three thousand dollars," said the woman trembling in her shoes.

He scrawled his name with his gouty old hand on a check and threw it on the counter. "Gimme the coat," he said.

When the woman saw the signature she nearly passed out. Never, to her dying day would she forgive herself. She might just as easily have asked five thousand dollars as three.

As she packed the beautiful thing, she displayed the gay lining. "The very latest thing in New York, sir."

"Aw, Hell!" said he. "Shut your mouth and pack the coat."

When it was all ready in its great cardboard box, he looked round for someone to take it away. A little lad with a fat red face was eating an orange at the back of the store. "Is he honest?" he asked the woman.

"As God!" said she.

He took the boy by the ear and gave him his instructions and a five dollar bill. "At the end of the row—on the right." Panting and puffing, he hoisted himself into his car and rolled away into the night.

In the dirty little waiting room by the stage door, the smart young man from the box office was talking to the sumptuous young Jewess. She hadn't made good with the great "angel" in front who had visited them unawares, but her bright eyes and her red mouth had got him going. He was asking her to dine.

"Where?" said she.

He looked at the enormous diamond rings on her dirty fingers and took a chance of their being paste. "What price Childs?" said he.

"I gotta date," said the sumptuous young Jewess. She didn't approve of Childs.

At that moment, Fate in the guise of a red faced boy with a cardboard box, intervened.

"What you got there?" demanded the smart young man.

"Fur coat," said the boy.

"Who for?" said the smart young man.

"The dark one that stands at the end of the row on the right of the Sextette," said the boy.

"That's *me*!" said the sumptuous young Jewess and her black eyes began to roll.

The boy looked at her doubtfully with his shrewd young gaze. "He said you were short and thin and the pick of the bunch," said he.

"I'm the one that stands at the end of the row on the right," said she.

"Is she?" said the boy to the smart young man.

"She certainly is," replied he.

"Sign here, please," said the boy. Strong in the sense of duty fulfilled, he surrendered the box and departed in search of ice cream.

The young man and the girl stared at each other trembling across the white cardboard box.

"Good God, Girlie, it's from *him*. You musta got him going after all!"

Trembling with excitement they opened the cardboard box.

When she saw the coat, the sumptuous young Jewess screamed so loud that little Number Six, passing through at the moment on her way out, stopped to ask if she was hurt.

When *she* saw the coat, her delicate face flushed rosy red. "Oh," she whispered. "It's *ermine*!" She put her cheeks down and kissed the soft white fur. She put out her hand and smoothed it tenderly. It lay like a little snowdrop on the spotless white fur.

Something in the sight of that hand—so white, so fine, upset the sumptuous young Jewess. She snatched the coat away. "That'll do. That'll do! No offense, dearie, but I do so hate having my best things pawed about."

When Number Six had gone, she took off her own fifty-dollar wrap, trimmed with cat skin and put on the ermine coat.

"You sure do look swell, Girlie!"

murmured the smart young man. He slipped his arm round her shapely shoulders and held her tight. "Be a sport. Break your date and come on out and dine?"

"Where?" said she.

"A swell-looker like you? The Ritz of course," said he. He bent down and down till his face touched hers. "I know where there's an ermine toque with a black Paradise, enough to make you sick!" he whispered. "Say the word, Girlie, and it's yours!"

"Real?" asked she.

"Real," said he.

As they kissed beneath the flickering old gas lamp in the shadow of the dirty stage door, her black eyes filled with tears.

* * * *

In the dining room of the Ritz-Carlton that night at a small table decorated with red roses, set a little apart from the rest and the head waiter hovering near, sat a woman and a man.

The man was tall and fat with a red face and a bald head and pouches of wrinkled flesh under his weary eyes. The woman was tall and thin with a mouth like a trap and eyes as hard as stone.

A collar of great diamonds set on black velvet encircled her throat like a band of fire. A diamond star blazed and burned in the prim coils of her faded hair.

Over the backs of their two chairs, spread out behind them like two fans, lay two magnificent sable coats.

The woman, erect as a dart, the rouge standing out on her thin cheeks like two spots of flame, sat coldly appraising the other women's clothes.

The man, his white shirt front, puffed out like the breast of a pouter pigeon, sat slumped over his plate, gobbling the last remaining drops of his mock turtle soup. Suddenly he ceased gobbling, beckoned to the hovering head waiter and darted a gouty forefinger at his empty plate. "Gimme some more soup," said he.

"What do we eat to-night?" he grunted across to his wife.

The head waiter removed the plate with his own sacred hands. His wife raised her gold lorgnette on its pearl-studded chain and languidly consulted the menu.

She dropped the card and turned her glass on the young couple advancing down the room.

The young man was tall and well set up in his smart new clothes.

The girl was a sumptuous young Jewess with henna hair and lustrous eyes that flashed and flamed under the black Paradise in her ermine toque. Every head was turned to look after her as she passed along through the labyrinth of tables in her magnificent ermine coat.

A strangely eager look came into the hard eyes of the woman with the diamond star in her hair. She leaned forward whispering to her husband behind her ostrich fan.

"Look at that creature at the table next ours, John. Did you

ever see such a coat! It's ermine. *Real* ermine! I like ermine! I want an ermine coat!"

"Aw, Hell, you and your fur coats!" he grunted. He turned his great head and flashed a quick look at the table next theirs. "Go buy one!" said he.

"He's seen you, Girlie. He's seen you!" whispered the smart young man behind his hand. "You got the old bird going O. K."

"I should worry!" said the sumptuous young Jewess. She laid her soiled hand on her ermine coat with a meaning glance and her black eyes began to roll.

The hard eyes watching her like a cat watching a mouse fastened themselves on the soiled hand. "What's that creature rolling her eyes at you for?" she snapped to her husband busily gobbling salmon and cucumber with mayonnaise sauce.

"Aw, Hell! You and your rolling!" said he. "You make me tired."

Suddenly he smiled.

"He's smiling at her," thought his wife and her heart went cold.

"He's smiling at you!" whispered the smart young man.

They were both wrong. He was smiling at the thought of a little snowdrop of a girl wrapped in a white coat all comfy and warm.

She won't cough to-night with that on her back, thought he.

He smiled again as through an opening door he scented the first appetizing whiff of the approaching duck with sage stuffing and green peas.

Bon Voyage

By Joel Townsley Rogers

It's always easy to find a lover
but a good maid is priceless

MONEY, of course, is the root of all evil, as it is likewise the blossom of all pleasure.

Mr. Walton had applied himself as earnestly to the digging up of this root as a hog snuffling out truffles with his snout. The world, therefore, was his; and when it wasn't, he always flashed his check book, which was better than the bank itself. Mr. Walton was quite convinced of his ability to handle any situation. His wife, however, was hardly a situation.

Mr. Walton had purchased her on open market at the top of the market price. It may be that the price was a little high, as the demand for Titian reds, common or preferred, has dropped since, and they are quoted down full seven points. But he had bought her as an investment, and not a speculation, and (although a new stock) he trusted that she would still yield sufficient dividends. The Van Yonkers-in-law, her family, were rather well pleased with themselves, considering that they had put one over on the colossal Mr. Walton. Old Mrs. Van Yonkers purchased a new diamond hawser rope with her share of the vending price, and old Mr. Van Yonkers a new toupee. Mr. Walton, however, pocketed his loss,

and waited for the market to rise. A sudden stoppage of the Alhenna supply would no doubt produce an artificial scarcity and send Titian reds again scooting skyward. Even if she was worth only seven hundred thousand by ticker quotation, surely the scarlet-haired Mrs. Walton looked like a million dollars.

So said the many cow-eyed poets, frog-eyed artists, and basilisk-eyed gentlemen of no work whom she gathered about her. So said they; and many other kind things they said.

In reward for which they were fed crumpets and tea, and occasionally her hand to kiss. Mrs. Walton, however, was fairly circumspect, not from any unjust sense of overweening morality, but from wisdom, and an eternal grain of that common sense which never fails women.

Never fails them in affairs of the heart, however much it may be lacking in less important hours. Mr. Walton represented limousines, pearls, and snuggy coats from the fur of the chinchilla rat, not to mention three square meals a day; all much more than any cow-eyed poet might be presumed ready to offer upon the altar of love.

Of course when one of the tea-hounds drew too close upon the

quarry, when the others gnashed their teeth at him and refused to speak to him, when he began to be seen fluttering about the Walton mansion at other hours, ungodly hours, when Mrs. Walton would awake in the night and weep well-selected tears upon a poem To the Crimson-locked Circe, then Mr. Walton would bestir himself, and his famed ability to meet any situation would come into play.

Out would flash his ready check book, he would scribble forth a few hundreds, and Mrs. Walton and New York would know a certain poet no more. It is fortunate that the Higher Art found such a Maecenas as Mr. Walton, otherwise it might have been forced to prostitute itself to intelligibility; or, in lack of the ability to do that, to steal or starve.

Seven years dwindled into Limbo; and dwindled with them Mrs. Walton's beauty. A woman is as young as her love affairs, a man as young as his purse. The erstwhile pride of the Van Yonkers began to have vague fears that Death would snip off her poppy head before she had drunk the sweet lees of a genuine romance. In seven years she had saved enough in jewels and pin money to be reasonably sure she could support a romance for the rest of her natural life. She cast her green eyes about. Ill betided it for Mr. Walton.

Into the scene at what the novelists call the psychological moment came Shorty Martin, broke, hungry, out of work and out of luck. In the

old Pursuit Squadron in France we used to call Shorty the Pinwheel as he hung himself on a sky hook three miles up and twirled himself about it. I think he had the record of twenty-seven consecutive loops, and one Hun for each loop. That, however, was in the old days, which are now quite as dead as the 'Odsbodkins days of the gallant Chevalier Bayard.

War had done Shorty no wrong; but peace had. There was no longer any insatiable demand for corsairs of the sky, guaranteed to kill their men at a man a minute. Civilization has cast soldiers, like poets, into the garbage can. The gold leaves came off Shorty's shoulders, the strapping big belt off his waist, the soles off his shoes. The Committee for the Welcome of our Valiant Heroes had held its last dance and closed up shop, and there was no place for Shorty to lay his hungry stomach.

His eyes fell on an advertisement of Mrs. Walton for a chauffeur. Her previous one had off and married, entering thereby into a state which for a chauffeur was to Mrs. Walton's eyes worse than that of the dead. Shorty answered the appeal.

"Mais, voila!" said Celeste, as she admitted Shorty to the Walton mansion. "How you do look ragged like a professor, mon vieux."

Mrs. Walton was skimming through some Contes Drolatiques. She was lying on a chaise longue whose cushions offered a cool green bank of leaves for the rose redness of her hair. She looked up langor-

ously with eyes as green as the cushions. At a flick of her head Celeste departed. Shorty looked pretty ragged, but Mrs. Walton could see the sterling manhood beneath; a feat, as Celeste had observed, not impossible.

"I can drive any kind of car with three wheels and one cylinder," said Shorty. "I can make a Ford engine turn up eighteen hundred R. P. M., and get two hundred and twelve horsepower out of a crank shaft the size of a flea's hind leg. I can give you the best references on the market as to my character and respectability."

"I don't give a toot in Tasmania about respectability," sighed Mrs. Walton. "And don't think I ask a chauffeur whether he can drive a car. There are plenty of truck drivers perfectly able to do that. The question is, are you married?"

Shorty shook his hungry head. There was regret in the negation. If he had been provided with a wife there is strong ground for belief that in the present state of his stomach he would have been tempted to eat her.

"You might look nice in a uniform," mused Mrs. Walton, "with your hair parted in the middle, and a black visored cap over your eyes. You have such charming eyes. What is your name?"

"Jiggs Martin, otherwise known as Shorty, and sometimes as the Pinwheel among the fly-by-day-and-nights in France."

"You were in France?"

"An aviator."

"How amusing," said Mrs. Walton. "I love aviators. I adore them. You will fit well in uniform. What is your name again?"

"Shorty Martin."

"I shall call you Cecil," decided Mrs. Walton. "You have such wicked eyes." The connection was not patent. Mrs. Walton smiled as one who cherishes sweet dreams. She half closed her green eyes and ran her slim fingers through her poppy hair. "The pay," she said, "is a matter of no importance."

"No, ma'm," said Shorty; "not of the least."

"Be careful of Mr. Walton," said the lady. "Be very careful."

"Why?" asked Shorty Martin.

"He is jealous," said Mrs. Walton. She closed her green eyes completely, and let her fingers lie idle in the flame brands of her hair, one white arm curled up and rounded like the white spume on a winding wave of the sea.

Mrs. Walton opened her eyes. Shorty Martin was still standing there. He had not kissed her. Perhaps he had not known that she wanted him to. Perhaps he had not wanted to.

"Celeste!"

Celeste appeared.

"Help Cecil into the uniform of Thoron," commanded Mrs. Walton. "He is going to be my new chauffeur."

"Mais, madame!"

"Go no further than your Gallic modesty dictates," said Mrs. Wal-

ton wearily. "And stop those unhealthy blushes this instant!"

Thus Major Martin became Cecil, the chauffeur. And although there were no shiny silver wings upon his breast, the cherry-colored uniform he wore was much lovelier than olive drab. And although there were no whiskered old generals to huzzah him and pin medals on his coat and kiss him on either cheek, nevertheless Mrs. Walton appeared, like Barkis, willing.

Shorty drove her through the city by sunlight, and along the river by twilight, and by moonlight in Westchester and on Long Island and wherever else there is joy and gin to be had for a price. He helped her on and off with her coat, and let her fall in his arms when she stumbled on steps, and held the door open for her, and tucked the limousine robes about her ankles. In spare moments (they were brief moments which Mrs. Walton spared him) he talked French with Celeste and chow with the cook.

Further than this Shorty Martin did not go. It may have been because he was timorous; yet almost anyone would laugh to think of Shorty as timorous. It may be because he was a gentleman. It may be because he had a constitutional aversion to scarlet hair. It may be because of any of ten thousand and thirteen reasons which cause men to be what they are, and women to be what they aren't.

But Mr. Walton, that astute

financier, began to open his pudgy eyes. It had been six months that Shorty had been wearing the cherry-colored livery of the Waltons, wearing out the roads about New York, wearing out the Walton corded tires, wearing out the heart of Mrs. Walton. Fully twelve months had parted since the last lean sculptor had been exiled, at a price of five hundred dollars, to Tierra del Fuego.

Mr. Walton decided it was getting to be high time that someone else was banished. The cook and the second maid were beginning to talk, and Celeste compressed her lips when she thought of Shorty Martin.

Shorty Martin was not an artist nor a poet. He was a chauffeur and a gentleman, and could not be bought, for a price paid down, to wean himself from Mrs. Walton's affectionate presence. The thing must be done gently, and with finesse. Mr. Walton tossed a hundred thousand into the Stock Market and bought a French aviation company of his own.

"I have a proposition to make you, Martin," he said. "I'm interested in an airplane concern in France. Go over there as my manager, at ten thousand a year for ten years, and expenses. But you'll have to sign a ten year contract in advance, and if you show your face east of the Bay of Biscay your name will be William Jennings Bryan. France, I am convinced, has need of your adept talents."

He flicked his check book.

"When do I begin?" asked Shorty.

"There's a boat leaving for Cherbourg Thursday, and one for Bordeaux Wednesday. The sooner the better," said Mr. Walton, "for the aviation company and all other high flying enterprises. Sign on the dotted line, please."

"Wednesday it is, and the boat to Bordeaux," said Shorty. "Here is Jiggs Martin, his mark."

Mrs. Walton was wrapped in furs, in satin and samite as she came out of the Walton mansion, Shorty waiting to take her downtown. She tripped on her furs, or she tripped on her rhinestone heels, or she tripped on the height of her own vexation as Shorty opened the limousine door and stood at attention while she should enter. He caught her in his arms. It was either that, or let her fall; and the pavement was hard and icy.

"Tell me, Cecil," she whispered in his ear during those three seconds he held her to his undisturbed heart. "Tell me, is it true *he* is going to send you to France next Wednesday?"

"To-morrow night," assented Shorty. "Truer words were never spoken."

"He always does that," said Mrs. Walton bitterly, not specifying just what it was he did. "He always does. I'm through. It's the last time it will happen."

"That's the right spirit," said Shorty.

"Don't you think, Cecil," whispered Mrs. Walton, as she lifted

her burning copper head from his shoulder, "that I am very beautiful?"

"What do you want me to say?" asked Shorty Martin. There was a little huskiness in his throat.

Mrs. Walton smiled happily. She stepped into the limousine. From the windows of the Walton mansion Mr. Walton, Celeste, the cook, and the seven other breeds of beings watched her, and watched Shorty.

"Cecil," said Mrs. Walton, when they were downtown, "what kind of accommodations have you made for the trip?"

"Second class," said Shorty Martin, "is good enough for me."

"Get the royal suite, for two. Don't be a little fool, Cecil," she told him. She laid her hand upon his arm, and bent her lustrous head so that it might dazzle his eyes. "And charge it to Mr. Walton, Cecil. It will be the last thing I will ever get from him."

"That is a good suggestion," admitted Shorty.

The day rolled round. The night rolled round. The morning and the noon came of that day on which Shorty was to sail for sunny, winy France.

"I will meet you on the piers to-night, just before the ship sails, Cecil," Mrs. Walton whispered to her chauffeur. Shorty nodded. There was no time for more words, since Mr. Walton, who seemed to be obsessed with a prurient mental itch that day, was wandering

around, apparently sensing some trouble which money couldn't buy away.

"There are so many things I shall have to give up," sighed Mrs. Walton as the day grew late, and little doubts began to dance like little imps within the depths of her well-fed soul. "Celeste. She is a polished jewel of a maid. I shall miss her. A woman gets to depending on little things like that."

"Do you think that would influence a lover?" demanded Shorty warmly.

Mrs. Walton blushed and was silent. She began to wonder if she were really as romantic as he, if any woman is ever as romantic as a man, or really romantic at all.

"Perhaps," she pondered, "I might still keep her with me."

"Nonsense," denied Shorty in his most military manner. "When we sail there is going to be nothing to keep us back here. It will be good-by, Broadway; hello, France. The right hand and the left hand of a church-going profiteer will be no farther apart than the Walton menage and the establishment of Major Martin, U. S. A. My wife—"

"Your wife?"

"Well," said Shorty defiantly. "Why not?"

And why not? Yet Mrs. Walton had never thought of possible divorce and a second marriage. Marriage seems so deadening to the higher soul.

"Good night, Martin, and good-by," said Mr. Walton that evening.

"You'll be breezing off in the night, I suppose. Make a howling big success of that company; I need the money. And remember your contract. I'll see you at the end of ten years, maybe."

"Sure," said Shorty. "I'll keep to the contract, period, comma, T, and I."

"A woman is only a woman, but a good job is an opportunity. Eh, Martin?" smiled Mr. Walton, with sudden quizzical eyebrows bent down on Shorty. "Well, my boy, you made the wise choice."

"Perhaps I chose both," said Shorty.

But Mr. Walton was thinking of the stock ticker at that particular instant of fate, and didn't even pretend to hear him. He recalled himself in an instant.

"Well, Martin; enjoyed knowing you. And watch out for the French women," he cautioned, waving a waggish finger.

"One woman is enough for me," said Shorty.

"Bon voyage," said Mr. Walton. "Write me off and on how you progress."

He went upstairs to his chambers. He noticed in passing that his wife was not in her room.

Eleven o'clock, and the boat shoved off from her pier at midnight. A taxicab panted outside in the chilly ice and wind. Mr. Walton stepped to the window and peered. A vague uneasiness made his puffing heart wobble. It was no doubt only Martin getting off at the last

minute for his boat. Two men were piling luggage in the taxi. One, no doubt, was the hired hacker; the other Mr. Walton recognized as Martin. Mr. Walton stuck his bald head far out into the night, thereby causing the little pneumococci, as they drifted by with tenacles outspread on the frozen winter wind, to dance with fiendish joy. He took a deep breath of air, and swallowed a whole army corps of them in his throat.

The taxicab engine made a louder roaring in its vitals. Shorty Martin, en route to France, came down from the Walton home with the last bundle. After him, her hand on his arm, her head always drooping on his shoulder (the hour was late, gentle readers, and the woman may have been sleepy) came someone whom Mr. Walton's fear and anger made him only too ready to recognize.

As he stood there, frozen literally and spiritually, holding forth his bald head as a skating rink for the demons of the flu, the taxicab received its two passengers, spat thick gasoline smoke backwards in the frosty night, and fled southward towards the transatlantic piers.

"Hi, you!" shrieked Mr. Walton. But nobody hied.

Piedro, the garage man, was off that evening to see his fourth best girl. 'Awker, the butler, was dead in sleep; and Mr. Walton was no Gabriel to awaken that trumpeting lethality. Half an hour later Mr. Walton was flying southward at the

wheel of his own imported limousine, warming the winter air with dead gasoline and curses.

A policeman stood in his way, sleepily waving his nightstick. A policeman (the same policeman) sprawled on the sidewalk a mile behind him, now no longer sleepy, holding fast to a lamp-post and wondering what it was he had seen, if anything. Mr. Walton stayed not for stick and stopped not for stone. He bent over the driving wheel like a fat question mark. He only hoped that his nose would soon be entirely frozen, so he would cease to feel it.

The ferry gates were closed. As Mr. Walton waited, panting no less fiercely than his motor engine, and cursing much more fluently, he heard a weirdish wailing through the darkness, and over the river sparkled the lights on the Bordeaux boat. Last shore call, its ghostly whistles sounded. Last call. He could hear the rattling of the gang-plank chains, and the squeaking of her hawsers.

The ferry came. It traversed as in a dream dark drifting waters, black and greasy and slowly stirring as thick treacle. The lights sparkled on it like little electrons made visible in one vast iron atom. The ship's whistle moaned again. The ferry came into her slip after the passage of ten thousand years, as time is counted. A black yawning gulf separated the outward boat's sheer sides from her high pier, Mr. Walton could see as he raced down towards it.

An iron gate, a horde of watchmen

and a dog tried to stop his progress. He brushed them all aside as though they had been minority shareholders in a directors' meeting. His heavy feet raced down sounding plankings beneath a covering shed.

He halted on the far edge of the pier. The big boat stood already outward towards the middle stream. On her very stern, on her topmost deck, two figures, faintly outlined against a white moon of snow and ice, leaned over. It seemed to Mr. Walton that they waved to him. Could it be that they saw him?

"Bon voyage!" their departing cry was blown sweetly backward to him.

Mr. Walton stood outlined in the light of the long pier shed. He waved his fists; he swelled his lungs and puffed. Neither threat brought back the mighty boat from her eastward heading, nor narrowed the chasm of the dark river.

"Bon voyage!" her whistles tooted.

The couple in the stern turned, and arm in arm they departed to unknown cabins.

Out of the darkness of the pier head Mrs. Walton stepped. Her spouse regarded her. "Is it you?" he asked, in simple, but heroic, language.

"Yes," she said.

The boat was now a shadow in the farther stream. The deep tides were foaming about its strakes. The pier beneath his feet was solid as anything of wood may be. Yet for a moment he did not know whereon he stood.

"What are you doing?" he said.

"I?" asked Mrs. Walton. "I? Oh, I? I . . . I came down to wish them bon voyage."

"Wish who bon voyage?"

"Cecil and Celeste."

Mr. Walton thought for long minutes. His wisdom was not deepened. "So did I," he declared. "I am glad to hear it of them. I am glad. . . . Did you have a chance to speak to them before they left?"

"No," said the lady of the Titian hair. "They seemed so happy . . . I hated to intrude. . . . He was such a silly little man, but Celeste was an incomparable maid."

The voice of Mrs. Walton trailed off into the vast, abysmal silence. Mr. Walton put his arms about her.

"You are a good girl," he said, for no reason at all.

Mrs. Walton wept. Over her shoulder, as her poppy head lay shaking on his breast, Mr. Walton looked forth at the boat long out of reach of word or shout. "Bon voyage!" he cried after it, nevertheless.

So the story ended happily. For all, except perhaps, Mr. Walton. He does not know that the reason his wife bought ten thousand dollars' worth of gowns the next week was because her whole wardrobe was in the royal suite with Cecil and Celeste.

The market in Titian reds is still dropping, and Mr. Walton would be lucky if he could cash in his million dollar beauty at ten cents on the dollar. But I doubt if he even considers such a thing.

At the Mouth of the Shaft

By F. H. Herbert

THE waiting woman dared not inquire what had happened to her man. One of a large crowd who also waited, she hovered round the mouth of the shaft, from which ominous rumblings that came from far below and shook the ground still emanated.

They were coming up now. Anxiously she scanned the faces as they passed up from their long imprisonment in the bowels of the earth. But the well-loved face was not among them. She bit her lip to keep back the tears. Perhaps he would be in the next batch to come up?

She knew that it was no use to ask for news of the harassed officials of the company. She knew that down there hundreds of men were fighting foot by foot to work their way out. Everything possible was being done. Great arc lamps erected on huge posts cast their relentless glare on the faces of the waiting crowds. A man staggered past her to be greeted by a loved one. "It's horrible!" she heard him say; "the air down there is terrible!"

What had happened to her husband? Would he *ever* come up? A movement in the crowd showed where the earth was giving up another little group of sorely battered humanity. She pushed her way forward—and saw him, pale as death from his long confinement down there.

"Sorry to be late, Kid," he muttered; "this subway crush gets worse every day at Times Square."



Many an old maid who looks under the bed each night to see if a man is there has a resigned fear in her heart that he isn't!

A Rectangular Affair

By Fred B. Mann

A bird in the cage is
worth two in the hand

MRS. VAN TWILLY side-stepped with her eyes the passionate look in those of Gerald Detour and allowed her gaze to wander about her drawing room. She felt it was naught but a gilded cage and she a helpless bird beating its wings against the cruel bars. A shiver passed over her beautiful body.

Detour noted the shimmering of her tea gown as the shiver went on its way. He glanced at the log fire pleasantly crackling in the fireplace; he inspected his feet from which he had removed his spats on arrival because of the heat of the room. It was evident to him that the lady had no reason to shiver unless—

A look of triumph came for a moment to veil like a shutter the passionate gleam in his eyes. He leaned forward and took the fair, jeweled hand resting helplessly upon the edge of the tea table. Feverishly he raised the hand and planted a hot kiss upon it.

The planting gave forth fruit at once. Detour reached out and gathered Laura Van Twilly into his arms. When he left an hour later, just before her husband was due home for dinner, she had promised to elope with him.

Detour and Mrs. Van Twilly had met first at a studio tea. He had started at once upon one of those campaigns in the conduct of which he was so adept—the winning of another man's wife.

The result had been a certainty from the beginning. Not only had Detour brought all of the killing graces for which he was so distinguished to aid him, but the lady had only crumbling defenses to present to his attack.

Her husband was a busy man. The business conference was his favorite indoor sport, and the arranging of a merger the best thing he did.

Even upon those few nights when he was home, he was a typical specimen of the tired business man who requires the gleam of pink tights in a theater to arouse his interest, so few wives having been trained for the stage.

Van Twilly was fairly generous with the charge accounts he allowed his wife, but he was not a prodigal when it came to checks drawn to her order. Only as to the amount of time he gave her was he more miserly.

And so Laura, grown desperate because of his neglect, had turned

to Detour. It was the regulation triangle on which nine-tenths of the plots are laid out.

The gallant also had a wife, but she presented no new angle. Laura had met the colorless little woman at a soireé one afternoon, then moved hastily out of range as Mrs. Detour began to probe for her method of composing a pumpkin pie.

The evening of the planned elopement was at hand. Down the staircase of her home tripped Mrs. Van Twilly garbed in an attractive going-away costume.

In her hand was a traveling bag containing the proceeds of the surreptitious sale of her jewels, and such lingerie and other articles as would be needed for the nonce. Her trunks had been sent to the pier, the intention being to have this a sea elopement to a southern isle.

Ronald Van Twilly had departed that morning with a hastily flung back remark that he wouldn't be home until the next day because of a big deal on. The coast was clear for the getaway.

Laura walked into the drawing room to wait for Detour. He arrived shortly, attired in several languishing glances, some new gray spats, a pair of yellow gloves, and the stylish essentials between.

"Sweetheart," he murmured, as he reached for Mrs. Van Twilly, "the hour for which we have been longing is here. By morning we will be on our way to the isle of our dreams. Let us go."

But Laura eluded his grasp, and

not only because she didn't want to be mussed while in street costume. She held up a letter that had come by special messenger just before Detour arrived.

"It's from my husband," she said, her manner coy. "He has eloped. As soon as I can get a divorce we can marry and live here."

"Eloped?" gasped Detour.

Laura nodded, a smile upon her beautiful face.

"But how can I marry you?" he asked. "You forget my wife."

The lady's smile grew more brilliant than ever. "It is your wife he has eloped with," she answered. "You also can secure a divorce."

• Detour turned as yellow as his gloves. The bird of gay plumage in the gilded cage had lost its lure now that he saw it was a domestic fowl easily obtained.

"By Jove!" he ejaculated, using the polite oath so popular in the fast set, and glancing at his watch, "I have forgotten an important conference! I'll call you up to-morrow."

He moved off inside his new spats and departed.

Laura should have taken her cue from his action and his line of talk. She should have uttered a low cry and sunk heartbroken upon a palatial divan, to lie there shaken by sobs at the perfidy of this man who had claimed to understand her so well and to want her so much.

But she did not cast herself down. She didn't even seem cast down. Instead her lovely upper lip curled

to express her scorn for the poor worm that had just crawled away and the early bird that had flown off too soon.

"I'll get large alimony along with my freedom," she breathed softly, as she unlimbered the telephone on the

nearest table from its fancy ambuscade.

When at last she had attracted the nonchalant attention of Central her voice, in well-modulated tones, sent over the wire the number of a famous divorce lawyer.



Scandal in Movieland

By James Clyde Bailey

THE vampire went her deadly way,
And wrecks of men lay all about her,
Until it seemed so firm her sway
That none could ever hope to rout her.

Although the vamp thought her a "hick,"
One day the news was loudly shouted,
The ingenue had turned the trick
By which the vamp was justly flouted.

The people laughed and wildly ran
To tell the news that rumor carried;
The ingenue had stole a man—
The man the wicked vamp had married.



Live, Love and Learn

(An Uncritical Review)

By Thomas Grant Springer

IF variety is the spice of life then the sum and substance of man's existence, alliteratively expressed, should be, live, love and learn.

Taking this as a premise and shrouding it with the mantle of matrimony, Alfred Savoir transfers his gay French farce, "Bluebeard's Eighth Wife," into an acceptable American morsel with the assistance of Charlton Andrews' adaptation. In this he is aided and abetted by Ina Claire, whose name appears in larger type than anyone else's on the program, though one wonders why, after seeing Edmund Breese's excellent performance as her husband.

But then I suppose husbands are also-rans as far as wives are concerned, on the stage or off. For once we are glad that the adapter has left the play in its original setting and atmosphere. It is of the French Frenchy, and we forgive the husband being American from the fact that he is a billionaire.

We are asked to step into a hotel at Biarritz along toward the end of the season. There we meet the Marquis de Briac, an ignobleman with two daughters, a lot of bills and a shaky credit.

His one remaining asset seems to be Monna, the eldest and unmarried

girl, now on the market for the sake of the tottering family fortune. The Marquis has gotten rid of everything else, including Lucienne, the youngest daughter, and now he is in a tight hole, being virtually a prisoner in the hotel and having to work out his credit by remaining on as a social magnet to attract others of the fashionable set at the end of the season.

If Monna would only marry it would settle everything, that is if her marriage settlement were large enough; but unfortunately Monna, for all she is a French girl, has ideas of marriage other than the accepted market ones; in fact she even has ideals, which are hardly in keeping with her, or her father's, position.

At present, she is engaged in a mild flirtation with a penniless, social butterfly who must marry too, for the same reason as herself, so it is obvious that they cannot marry each other.

Now into the hotel, and the situation, strides John Brandon, American billionaire, self-made, financially and morally, a person who always gets what he wants, and, having seen Monna, has decided that she is it.

Finding her dancing in the lounge with Albert de Marceu, the butterfly, he sends that unworthy gentle-

man about his business, which happens to be that of bank clerking, in one of Brandon's own Paris branches, and then he comes straight to the point with Monna. He tells her that he has seen her, he loves her and he is going to marry her.

He is what he himself terms a "fast worker," and doesn't believe in wasting time about anything, not even a proposal. Time is money and he is a money-maker, not a love-maker. Monna needs money, he needs love, therefore they ought to get together.

The frankness of his proposition, which is hardly a proposal, attracts Monna. She is not at all averse to the idea or the man. Woman-like, she rather likes to be bullied, only the men of her own set never discovered that.

She tells John she will think about it, and rather shows him that she will think more or less kindly. He graciously accords her that privilege. She has just left him when her father enters with Lucienne.

MARQUIS: Mr. Brandon, I—I haven't been able to locate my daughter.

BRANDON: That's all right. I have. We met each other.

MARQUIS: Pardon, my dear, Mr. Brandon, my younger daughter, the Baronne de Charmere.

BRANDON (*shaking hands*): My future sister-in-law. I'm going to marry your sister.

MARQUIS: You—you've asked her?

BRANDON: I've told her.

LUCIENNE: Is that how Americans propose?

BRANDON: Oh, no. Monsieur le Marquis, I have the honor to ask for your daughter's hand.

MARQUIS: Your request takes me by surprise. However, I see no objection, considering your personality, do you, my dear?

LUCIENNE: I'm still considering his personality. There is a slight difference in your ages—

BRANDON: I'm in the prime of life.

LUCIENNE: But, being in the prime of life, do you think you could adapt yourself to the discipline of marriage? When a man has contracted the habit of being a bachelor—

BRANDON: But I've contracted the habit of being a husband. I might almost say it's my worst habit.

MARQUIS: You are a widower? Divorced—?

BRANDON: Both. I've been married several times. Seven times; this will be my eighth.

LUCIENNE: You've had seven legitimate wives?

BRANDON: That's the only kind I ever have. They're still living. I don't kill them, I just divorce them; but in the marriage contract I always give the lady an income of two hundred thousand francs.

LUCIENNE: This is outrageous. A man with such ideas—with such habits—to ask for my sister's hand. You don't want a wife; what you want is a concubine.

BRANDON: A legitimate one. There's nothing wrong in that.

And come to think of it, is there? Just a case of "the law giveth and the law taketh away." A little expensive, but then when a man can pay for his little whims, why not have them, yes, and his little hers too.

I couldn't be nearly as shocked as sister, and so we waited to see what Monna would say as she entered. Her father tells her that Mr. Brandon has just asked for her hand. She rather likes the fact that he wastes no time but goes right after

her. In fact she tells him she likes that and him too.

MARQUIS: But Monna, I must tell you, Mr. Brandon isn't an ordinary husband.

BRANDON: No, I confess I'm not.

MARQUIS: He's already been married seven times.

BRANDON: I began young.

LUCIENNE: And he isn't through yet. He's making it a serial. No sooner does he marry one wife than he's looking for another.

BRANDON: Don't misunderstand me. I've done what I've done because I'm an honest man. When I love a woman I consider it immoral not to marry her. And when I cease to love a woman I consider it immoral to go on living with her, so I divorce her. I'm too sincere to do an immoral thing. A busy man can't be forever lying and deceiving. Infidelity is only for the idle and disingenuous. It's an advantage to be rich.

LUCIENNE: Well, have you heard enough?

MARQUIS: Before you decide you ought to know something else. Mr. Brandon is in the habit of settling on his wife an income of two hundred thousand francs.

MONNA: Oh, now I understand everything. Marriage is merely a trivial business deal to a billionaire. Tomorrow or the next day you'll find another woman—

BRANDON: Don't misunderstand me—

MONNA: Oh, I understand perfectly. And don't let me dishearten you. You see it isn't exactly the sort of marriage I was contemplating, but I'll consider it and give you my answer. I've thought it over.

LUCIENNE: You refuse?

MONNA: Certainly. I refuse two hundred thousand francs. I want four hundred thousand on the best security. And please don't misunderstand me. I'm not a mercenary woman, but my price is just double that of your other ladies.

BRANDON: It's a bargain. I like your way of doing business.

MONNA: You ought to, it's your own. Four hundred thousand francs assured in the marriage contract, and I, Mrs. John Brandon. You can leave me whenever you wish.

BRANDON: I sincerely hope that will never be.

MONNA: You're very gallant.

BRANDON: Well, when do we get married. The sooner the better.

MONNA: You're paying the money.

BRANDON: Make it to-morrow.

So Brandon goes right out to make the arrangements. Next we find Miss George, a singer, who has come to Biarritz for the same purpose that Monna has just contracted for, is on the scene.

Monna tells her it's all right, she is just a little bit late, but she can be next. And by a talk Monna has with Albert we rather think she has other plans too. Anyway she shows as much speed as her prospective husband, and as much business tact, for as Brandon comes in she is not in the least embarrassed at being found with his other fiancée.

MONNA: I suppose I needn't present you?

BRANDON: You'll think it unpardonable, Miss George, but things have been happening so fast lately I haven't had time to tell you of circumstances which upset our plans.

MONNA: Oh, no, it doesn't upset them, it only postpones them. She's going to marry you next. I mean when you and I are divorced.

BRANDON: You have the most extraordinary ideas about marriage. By jove, you're an intelligent woman.

MONNA: Yes, and I'm a fast worker. I want to talk to you. Bye-bye, Miss George. See you later, Albert.

And she takes his arm in a proprietary manner as the curtain falls, and, "so," as the story books say, "they were married."

Now to go on with the quotation "they lived—ever after," and the second act six months later shows their drawing room, and how they lived. The Marquis, Albert and Lucienne are seated with Miss George listening to a grand young family row off stage.

High voices are punctuated with smashing bric-a-brac, and we learn from the trembling, waiting friends and relatives, present and prospective, that this has been going on ever since the day they stepped into—I mean John put on the ring.

Then into the midst of the assembled guests jumps Brandon, followed by a sweetly smiling and apparently perfectly happy Monna. It is quite evident that the lady has the gentleman going.

Any man of Brandon's experience ought to have known better, but apparently he didn't, and we can see that the divorce is looming near, at least we gather from Monna she is hopeful that such is the case; in fact she is doing all she can to make a case out of it.

The immediate cause of the present ruction it appears is the matter of a missing telegram. He has accused her of hiding it, she retorts that she isn't in the habit of rummaging in his papers, but he is in hers, and besides that he has had her followed owing to anonymous letters that he has been receiving.

Infuriated, he wants to know how she knew that, and she in turn retorts that she too has police. Oh, it is a fine airing of the family linen, and both Miss George and Albert should have congratulated themselves on their escape and have fled the place, but who does from sweet danger? Brandon, seeing his ex-fiancée, rushes down to her for consolation.

BRANDON: Edith, my dear Edith. It's such a pleasure to see you. Your friendly face—

MISS GEORGE: I'm glad to see you, John, but I'd hoped to find you in a happier frame of mind.

BRANDON: Happy? It's been hell on earth. I can't begin to tell you how much so. And it makes me angrier when I realize that it was you, Edith, that I could have married, that I ought to have married.

MONNA: Absolutely. Why didn't you?

BRANDON: And I will marry her, I will marry her.

MONNA: May heaven hear you. Bless you, my children.

BRANDON: If I took you at your word, if I went to my lawyer for a divorce, what would you say?

MONNA: Oh, you wouldn't catch me napping. I have a fiancé too, haven't I, Albert? By the way, John, you might be polite and say good morning to the Crown Prince.

BRANDON: I forbid you—I forbid you to call this man your fiancé.

MONNA: Then I'll just think it. I have that right, haven't I?

BRANDON: If I stay here I'll do something desperate. I'm going away.

And with that he flounces out, for he has a business trip to make to Brest. But Monna has made up her mind to drive him further than

Brest. She informs her remonstrating family that she is taking care of her own end of it and they are to go, but not until she tells Albert to hold himself in readiness for the evening with her; then, having herded them out, she turns to the remaining Miss George and informs her that it is her turn next.

She is passing over a perfectly good, undamaged, unused husband to her, for in three days the Brandons will be divorced, and John can hang nine instead of eight on the bedroom door.

When the ladies have settled this to their satisfaction Brandon comes in, cooled off by a cold shower, to try and settle his matrimonial differences himself.

He tells Monna that if she wants a divorce—and she insists that she does—she has gone about it in the wrong way. In the first place, his dominating trait is tenacity. He never gives up until he gets a thing, and the whole thing this time is that he has gotten nothing.

He points out to her that she is dishonest, she has taken money without a return. She retorts that that is just what she intended to do. He has made a bad bargain and got the worst of it, but he insists that he will hang on till he gets the best.

She tells him the only one who will get that is the *next* husband she marries, so he had better hurry on to the next wife and wipe off his losses as he would any other bad business deal.

But Brandon tells her he is never beaten. If she won't be his wife he won't give her the chance of being anyone else's, so that's that. It looks like a deadlock, which is broken by the arrival of a Mr. Kay to see Mr. Brandon.

Now as soon as Monna goes out we find that Kay is a detective who has been looking up the anonymous letters for Brandon. He tells him that there is nothing to them; he has followed Madam Brandon, and at all times her conduct has been above reproach—outside of her own house. She is pure and good—in fact too pure, and therefore a little too good for her husband.

And last and most important, Mr. Kay has discovered that the writer of the letters is none other than Madam herself; in fact, to prove it, he produces an undelivered one that he has snatched from the post office and hands it to Brandon. He compares the handwriting, the stationery, and discovers that the detective is right.

Then they read the letter, which is the worst of all. It informs the husband that that night when he is in Brest, Madam will deceive a lover in his very house.

This amuses Brandon and Kay. Monna is having a game with him. She is trying to make him jealous. Well, she won't do it. He will not divorce her till he is tired of her, and he can't be tired until he has a chance.

The letter is absurd, and so is her scheme. He will hold on as long as

she can, longer in fact, for before he lets her go he will have his money's worth; so he gets ready for the Brest trip, planning to come back and surprise her in her innocence, which is the worst thing he could do under the circumstances.

While he is packing Monna comes out and meets Kay. Immediately she tells him she recognizes him as the man who has been following her. He tells her only as an admirer, but she says she knows he is a detective.

MONNA: You live at 10 Rue de Regard. Mrs. Kay is a plump little blonde, very agreeable, although violent. You deceive her with a salesgirl in a department store, who, by the way, deceives you. . . .

KAY: With whom. . . ?

MONNA: That's a professional secret. Present my compliments to the charming Mrs. Kay, the legitimate one, and tell her I'm coming to call on her. I feel it my duty to enlighten her about your conduct. You've been spying on me, Mr. Kay.

KAY: I—I'm a detective by vocation.

MONNA: And I'm a detective by avocation. You've shadowed me for my husband. I've shadowed you for your wife. Haven't you told my husband everything you could find out about me?

KAY: I'll make a bargain with you, Madam. If you'll promise not to tell my wife I'll give you some valuable information, only you mustn't let your husband know I told you. Mr. Brandon is coming back here to-night unexpectedly.

MONNA: Oh, to surprise me?

KAY: To laugh at you.

MONNA: Oh! Very well. Good afternoon, Mr. Kay. Who are you going to spy on next?

KAY: Can't you guess? That little salesgirl.

And with that he is off, and so, too, apparently is Brandon, who comes in all packed and loudly proclaiming the fact that he won't be home till the next day.

And so he bids Monna a fond farewell, begging her not to be lonely till he returns, and as the curtain falls she informs him that she will manage to kill the time.

And now comes the big scene, for Monna is there, Albert is there, the little supper for two is there, and back behind the curtains we know the bed is there; in fact, we are all there waiting!

Albert is drunk. Of course they are going to be married—eventually. But the hour is late, and he must go—when Monna makes the amazing proposal that he go to bed. It amazed him, it amazed all of us.

But Monna doesn't stop there. She insists that he undress. In fact she superintends it and sees that he does. It was a pleasing novelty.

Well, finally Monna gets Albert to bed. But of course it is all innocent. He is to lie there and read—and smoke, but not burn. She retires to the dressing room.

Albert insists that it is a dream, that he will wake up. We know he will, and feel that the dream will be a nightmare, for we know that Brandon is coming back, just as Monna knows it.

So she sits by the side of the bed to read—and wait. We hear the door slam. Albert hears the door slam. He knows that trouble is

coming; so do we, but we don't think that Brandon does. The joke is on him, who thinks he has the joke on her.

So, simulating the outraged husband, Brandon and the detective enter. They search the room. Then Monna suggests that they search the bed, as, where should her lover be if not there?

This is too much for Brandon. There *is* someone there. Ha, ha, her maid. He tickles the toes of the trembling and covered figure; finally he pulls back the clothes. Well, this is the surprise, this is the evidence for the divorce. This is where Bluebeard has his whiskers pulled.

He tells Albert to get up and dress and go. Albert goes, still in a dream and still drunk. Brandon stays, thoroughly awake and as thoroughly crushed. What he did not believe *is*. He breaks down and weeps. She has insisted on divorce. She shall have it. So, as the curtain falls, he staggers from the room that was never his, leaving it to his successor, in every way.

The last act is the same room six months later. Brandon has kept it, used it, so that it will make him realize his folly. He is done with women since one of them has done him. He is going to take the room with him and have it set up wherever he goes, for, he tells his secretary, here he is safe from the sex, and to-day he is free, for the divorce is granted, the last divorce he will ever get, for now he knows that he has had enough.

All the time during the separation Monna has been writing to him, but he has never opened her letters. He will not hear of her, he will not hear from her. He will never see her. He wants to be alone, alone forever, and just now, learning that the divorce papers are on the way, he wants to be alone in this very room.

But is he? Behind the drawn curtains is the bed, and as soon as the secretary leaves the room the curtains are drawn back and there sits Monna, his ex-wife. He won't see her, he won't listen to her, but what can he do, there she is?

She has bribed the servants to let her in, sort of in at the death, as it were, now that she has no right to be in this place of all places. But there is a certain kindness about her now, a certain tenderness she never before displayed to Brandon when she was his wife. He is afraid of it, and tells her to go.

MONNA: And I came here to offer myself.

BRANDON: You have no further need of me. You've got all you expected. You wouldn't be my wife when you ought to have been.

MONNA: I wouldn't be your wife *because* I ought to have been. That's what I want you to understand.

BRANDON: What are you driving at?

MONNA: I'm free, I'm independent, I'm rich; now I don't need you any more. Whatever I do now you can't suspect me of any sordid motives. You can be sure that I'm not selling myself. And so there's no longer anything to keep me from letting myself love you.

BRANDON: I don't trust you. You're playing the same old game.

MONNA: No, John, the game is over.

I love you. Remember the first time we met? You know then I was drawn to you irresistibly. But you humiliated me. When I'm offended I'm capable of the worst kind of things. But that evening when you wept. . . .

BRANDON: I didn't weep.

MONNA: *When you wept* I felt all anger slipping from me. Finally to-day I came to you.

BRANDON: You want to arouse a hope in me, then you'll smash it. I was your husband, and you gave me nothing. If I become your husband again you'll give me nothing. You'll never let me be your lover.

MONNA: After tea.

BRANDON: You mean you'll actually be my wife?

MONNA: I'll be your wife.

BRANDON: It can't be true, you're

joking. If you ever loved me, why did you do this terrible thing?

MONNA: I did nothing terrible.

BRANDON: Nothing, you call it, when you took a lover?

MONNA: I never took a lover.

BRANDON: But I saw. Didn't I find Albert here—

MONNA: Didn't I know you were coming back?

And so, of course, it all ends happily, for he takes her back and she takes him in, and all is as logically illogical as possible, and everyone is happy, especially the audience, for after all it is a pure little play, and no matter what Monna did she did it because she loved him so.



Clearing Her Cupboard

SHE wondered how much of her past he knew. She wondered what would happen if he should find out after they were married. She turned the matter over and over in her mind. Should she tell him before the fateful step was taken?

Finally she decided, even at the risk of losing him, to reveal the skeletons in her cupboard. "Dearest," she began, "I am going to make a confession. You have a right to know my past. Now I'll start at the very beginning, and tell you truthfully and honestly, as well as I can recollect, the names of all—"

"But, darling," he interrupted gently, "why put this strain on your memory?"



The Harem of the Pasha

A TWO-PART STORY—PART II

By Bob Dexter

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE FIRST PART

Terry Grimshaw, an American painter, has been visiting at the palace of Selon Pasha, just outside El-Ara, for two months. He has been endeavoring to picture on canvas the marvelous beauty of the desert and the river Belik, which flows past the palace. But his efforts have been in vain and the Pasha suggests that, as he seems unable to catch the real spirit of the country he secure a wife, who is to serve merely as a model, and from her learn the secret of the mysterious desert. Grimshaw, during this conversation, realizes that though he has never seen a woman in the house of his host, Selon Pasha undoubtedly possesses a harem. The Pasha, however neither confirms nor denies Grimshaw's suspicion.

The suggestion of a wife-model is something of a shock to him but he sees the wisdom of the Pasha's suggestion and with the intention of following it, goes into El-Ara. Stopping at the coffee house of Kassad, he discovers that it is the first day of Ramadan, during which no food is taken between sunrise and sunset. But what is even more interesting is his discovery of Merrimee, the French Dancing Virgin, who nightly dances for Kassad's patrons.

Interested in the girl's evident beauty and in the stories that Kassad has told him of her he returns that night to ask for her in marriage.

Merrimee sees him and feels that she loves, for the first time in her life. When Kassad brings her an offer of marriage she gives her assent and with a full heart goes out to perform the Dance of Surrender. This has been a nightly performance and for some time she has ended it before Amid Bey, an Arab, in from the desert for bartering purposes. To-night, however, she ignores both Amid Bey standing by a pillar and a Stranger, who stands at the next pillar, clothed in robes fit for a Pasha, and drops before Grimshaw. The Arab, incensed, draws a knife, and he and Terry fight. During the fight a lamp is overturned and the place set on fire.

The next that Terry knows is when he awakens some distance from the smouldering ruins of the coffee house. He discovers that the Stranger dragged both Merrimee and himself from the burning building.

As he looks at Merrimee, who is still unconscious, he realizes that he loves her. But though she shows her love for him, after she returns to consciousness, he finds that there is an unexpected barrier. The Stranger claims that Merrimee has that night accepted an offer of marriage into his house. Grimshaw feeling his indebtedness to this man hesitates to snatch his bride from him and Merrimee misunderstanding his motives, flings herself into the arms of the Stranger.

Grimshaw goes with them to the house of the Stranger where Merrimee disappears and where Terry, after his wounds have been bound up, finds the beginning of an Arabian Nights' tale. For the handsome stranger is not a man, but Rebia, the beautiful *hanum* or favorite wife, of his host. Having fallen in love with Terry whom she has seen about the grounds of the palace, she has seized the opportunity afforded by the first day of Ramadan, when a woman may be out of her husband's house until midnight, to seek the Dancing Virgin and offer her to Selon Pasha as a new wife. When he has taken the new wife as a favorite, she will be free to come to Terry. She has brought Terry here, to the house of Madame Aysee, a cocone, a woman whose husband allows her freedom and has sent Merrimee to the palace with the eunuch. As she explains this to Grimshaw, she slips into his arms and just as she lifts her lips to his the midnight gong sounds and the lights in the palace across the river go out.

READ THIS PART AND SEE HOW A DANCING GIRL ATTAINED HER LOVE AND A HANUM FOUND PEACE.

V

AT first Rebia did not seem to understand. She looked blankly at the agitated *cocone*, whose wail rose insistently.

"Rebia! They've locked you out. You cannot get back now!"

For all her western ideas, that *cocone* could not efface an inborn dread of man; and her fears at last aroused the *hanum*.

Realization came to her as an awakening from a delicious dream to a welter of stark actualities. Gently forcing Grimshaw from her, she looked in the direction of the Pasha's palace for confirmation of the other's alarm. No lights showed there, just a heavy mass whose outline was lost in the night.

Straight into the heart of it she stared, and found it its somberness fears which sent her teetering the full length of the veranda to cling to the railings and rock backward and forward. Grimshaw and the woman, coming behind her, caught the intensity of her appeal.

"Allah! Allah! Had it been but to-morrow night instead of this!"

Eventually she accepted the comfort of the *cocone's* hand and turned to Grimshaw. "Ter-ry, this is Madame Aysce. Stay with her while I try to think."

Again she swung along the veranda, her hands pressed to her temples as though to force a solution from her brain. Failing, she returned to Grimshaw and impulsively seized his arm.

"Had this but happened to-morrow night I would have welcomed it, for then— Oh, Ter-ry, I am afraid, not only for myself, but for you, too. If the Pasha should discover us now!"

She closed her eyes to shut out a fearful picture. She was trembling. "There must be a way. Allah will show us," she declared.

"Allah?" There was something bitterly questioning in Madame Aysce's laugh. "Allah is a man's Allah. He has no pity for poor *hanums*. But there is a way out." She broke off suddenly and looked earnestly at Grimshaw. "Even if the Pasha learns that Rebia is detained here he will never know the name of the man. Rebia has risked everything for you, and you nothing for her—as yet. Would you be willing to take one chance?"

The artist waived all argument as to the extent of his culpability. Sufficient for him was the opportunity of service.

"Rebia can remain here," Madame Aysce continued. "You are permitted to come and go about the palace at whatever hour you please. Therefore, you can carry a note to Desert Bloom—"

"To whom?" Grimshaw interrupted.

"To the eunuch who took Merri-mee away. By your face I see you mock the name, but the eunuchs may choose their own, and they name themselves after the beauty of their tasks—Guardian of Roses, Watcher of Lilies."

Terry felt a desire to chuckle over his discovery in nomenclature, but the business on hand had a side too serious for levity, and he constrained himself to listen to the *cocone's* plan.

"Rebia can remain here while you take a message to Desert Bloom. She will tell you how to find him, and once he receives her call he will come for her. He is her friend, and he will find some way of leading her into the palace unobserved. If you go quickly the Pasha may never know. He may be drinking or asleep ere this."

"But the danger!" The *hanum* voiced her fears again. "If anyone should see you, Ter-ry— No! No! You must not try."

"Please let me." The man was sincere in his request, and the *cocone* answered for Rebia.

"She will! She will! You wait here."

Madame Aysce vanished into the house, leaving the *hanum* drumming her fingers nervously on the veranda rail and Terry standing unhappily by.

He felt himself sinking deeper and deeper into a slough of harem intrigue.

No wonder his mind was a maze of regrets that this adventure ever should have wedged itself into the more or less orderly and entirely masculine sequence of events of his life.

The shadowy palace held forebodings for him, too. Somewhere hidden in one of its rooms was

Merrimee, who had twitted him as a weakling, but whom he refused to regard as lost to him.

Thinking of her drove him to impatience. The mission that would take him into the forbidden harem was only partly for Rebia, and his service to her could be disposed of quickly; but the greater risk he knew would lie in an attempt to find the Dancing Virgin.

But he was going to find her; for, having stumbled upon Romance he would follow it through to an end—or, perhaps, just a beginning. That was for the desert wait to determine.

Madame Aysce's return recalled him abruptly. She brought a slip of paper which she handed to Rebia with a command. "Direct him how he shall find the eunuch."

The *hanum* read the note—a simple request that Desert Bloom should come to her at the *cocone's* house—and nodded her approval.

"You will enter the palace as usual by the main door," she instructed Grimshaw. "The guard there will see you, but will pay no attention to you. Your *suité* is in the *selamlık*.*

"When you come to the corridor that leads to it, turn to the right instead. No one will see you. Go right along until you pass through a curtained passage which has but one red light. There a eunuch will block you, but somehow you must overcome him. Bribe him rather than attack him, for at this first

*Men's side of a Turkish house.

cry the Pasha's guard will answer.

"Desert Bloom has told me this, that danger lies in that passage for one who tries to cross into the harem. It is your danger, Ter-ry, and you must rely upon Allah.

"But having passed it, the rest is easy, for the second guard is Desert Bloom. Give him this note, and tell him to lead you out to the grounds again by passages which are known to him but which are kept a secret from the *hanums*. Then once more you can enter the palace by the main doors."

Rebia uttered her instructions in a feverish whisper, as though she feared even the ears of the night. And lower still was her final appeal. "Ter-ry, can you do it, *will* you do it for me?"

Grimshaw was aware that she watched him cross the grounds towards the river, but he did not look back, and only halted when he knew his figure was lost to her in the blur of night. Then he shook his head distastefully and expressed his own contempt.

"Hell! Can't a woman make a man feel a skunk!"

At the bank he stepped into the flat-bottomed boat on which he had crossed the river several hours before, and paddled to the other side.

A mulatto guard challenged and saluted sleepily as he passed through the outer gates, and then slipped back to easy dreams, lullabied by the soft lapping of the Belik against the walls.

Ramadan festivities bore heavily

on the house guards, too, for, when Grimshaw entered the palace, the sentries at each door snored on and remained alcoholically unconscious of his passage.

Within, the palace was in darkness save for a dim light above the stairs. Terry's steps made no sound upon the heavy carpets, and there was no one to notice when he turned to the right instead of the left at the top of the flight.

His progress along the corridor was swift but cautious, and when his nostrils picked up warning whiffs of oriental perfume from the air he clung to the deeper shadows of the walls and moved forward on tiptoe.

With particular precaution he negotiated an abrupt turning in the passage and stood stock still when through the darkness he saw a red lamp burning as both beacon and danger signal thirty feet ahead.

He had mapped out no plan of campaign; he had no idea of how he was to pass the solitary sentry if bribery failed; and, only half trusting the power of the money in his pocket, he edged along until he brushed against the heavy curtains with which the walls of the narrower passage were hung.

There he waited and listened. It was ticklish business.

He strained his ears for some sound that would indicate the presence of the guard; when he caught it he knew it to be the heavy breathing of a sleeping man.

He almost sighed. Once more

he tiptoed ahead until he stood just beyond the glow of the red lamp. From there he could peer into the circle of light it cast and make out the eunuch slumped in sleep in a little alcove.

It was an old man whose face was seared and whose jowls were like empty pouches from which age and bitterness had stolen the wealth of youth. His tall fez, slipping to one side of his head, made a clown of him.

His abbreviated waistcoat covered his chest like a woman's camisole, and left his wrinkled arms and shoulders as bare as his legs that were disclosed as shrunken and shaky through the transparency of his pantaloons. Surely a mockery of a man!

"I suppose that's Watcher of Lilies or Custodian of Cabbages," Grimshaw murmured. "Poor devil!"

To edge past the sleeping guard was a simple matter, which, once accomplished, provided the invader with a sense of security for the next stage of his journey. There were more lights here, all of a soft blue; and the air was charged with a perfume that Grimshaw could not name.

Progress here was sufficiently easy and uninterrupted to induce him to believe all danger past. Perhaps he grew lax in his watch, for almost before he knew it a eunuch bulked before him.

"You must turn back. Only the Pasha may pass here."

Recognition of the voice rather than of the man allayed the quick pounding of Grimshaw's heart.

"Are you Desert Bloom?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"Then go to the *cocone's* house. Madame Rebia is still there. She cannot get back into the palace without you."

The eunuch "allahed" beneath his breath and grew suddenly suspicious. "Proof!" he demanded. Terry handed him the note with an explanation.

"Madame Rebia told me that you could lead me out into the grounds again so that I can get back to the *selamlık*. Can you do it?"

Without a word Desert Bloom took the other's arm and urged him further along the corridor to where more curtains swung down directly in front of them; but when the artist made to pass through them his guide veered him quickly to the right.

"That is the court of the harem," he warned. "No man other than the Pasha is allowed to enter and no *hanum* to emerge from those curtains."

Expecting to pass through a labyrinth of passages on the journey to the ground Grimshaw was surprised that it was a simple descent of innumerable stairs. To him it seemed such an easy thing for a woman to have used this exit at any time, that he wondered at Rebia's fears.

"Do none of the *hanums* know of this?" he asked.

"Of what use the knowledge, *ef-fendi*? El-Ara is not Constantinople, and there would be no home but the desert if they wished to escape.

"To use it once for another purpose is to use it often, too often, and sooner or later discovery will come. Then—" The shrug of his shoulders was highly expressive. "I fear for Rebia," he added simply.

By a small door the pair at last emerged to the palace grounds, and separated there, the eunuch starting quickly for the river with but one injunction.

"Be careful as you approach the entrance again lest someone see you. Allah willing, I will bring back Rebia."

Grimshaw waited five minutes without making a move; but when he did it was not towards the *selamlık*. Instead he swung right about and hurried through the little door from which he and Desert Bloom had come.

A few moments later he was facing the curtains of the court of the harem. Somewhere beyond was Merrimee. Cautiously he stepped through the heavy drapes—stepped and stood and stared.

A circle of stone pillars loomed before him. Carved and emblazoned they took root in a floor that was deep with rugs and reached up to a gallery of shadows. The expanse of the court was amazing, its furnishings a riot of richness, its canopy, thirty feet above, a dome of iridescent crystals which threw back reflections of shimmering blue.

The barbaric luxury of it all was a sensuous intoxicant.

Not in one generation but in many had the glories of this seraglio been achieved. Pagan pashas had handed down to it their *hanum*-wisdom and their harem secrets, bequeathing it the spirit of conquered beauties as wonderful as Cleopatra or Sheba or Salome or Delilah.

The very wraiths of their conquests seemed to rise on those blue-white pencilings of incense fumes, impulse-quickenings, yet madly, damnably subtle.

Grimshaw's imagination peopled it with the dazzling *hanums* of yesterday and of to-day, with pashas who were gross and bestial, and with one pasha who was slim and civilized.

The broad stairs, which rose like a giant's causeway to the gallery at the far end of the court, he thronged with odalisques surpassing fair against their swarthy slaves; and he followed their imaginary journey to the realms above where curtained arches held doors in discreet and enticing shadow.

Against his will, against all caution, he responded to his fascination which drew him from the cover of the curtains to the very center of the harem.

It was foolish to take that risk, but he had lost all thought of insecurity. He was moved by hypnotic influence which made him forget the possibility of detection.

He was gazing on a forbidden thing, probing secrets bound tightly

by the Mussulman against prying infidel, and feeling his own individuality sink for the moment into the profound composite of many personalities given hushed expression in the silence of the seraglio.

It was a mystery as deep as that of the desert itself.

And suddenly he heard his own name whispered.

Quietly, yet distinctly, carrying a note of terror, it seeped down from the gallery above him.

"Mister Grimshaw!"

VI

THEY were two simple words, but their utterance taxed the courage of the Dancing Virgin to the limit; and, praying that they would reach Grimshaw's ears without carrying to the guards who may have lurked in every shadow, Merrimee peered over the gallery, watching while the intruder swept in a complete circle without seeing her.

She dared not risk another call, nor a movement towards the stairs leading to the court below.

It had been a fearful enough task to creep from the strange room to which the eunuch had led her. Only a few steps, but every one had held a dread of detection which could not be banished even by her relief at the unexpected entrance of Grimshaw.

During seconds which seemed like hours she watched him without daring to make her presence known until she had forced her courage to the two-word pitch.

He had heard but not seen her. Surely he would look again. Waiting for his second survey was fearful.

The Dancing Virgin saw him stare at the distant stairs, and, with those as his starting point, commence a careful scrutiny of the gallery above.

His gaze traveled from pillar to pillar, anxiously ferreting a shadow there, halting here, and moving on again until its orbit neared the girl.

To arrest it Merrimee whipped the scarf from her neck and flung it from the balcony. Surely he could not miss that gauzy parachute which floated down through the air.

Grimshaw didn't.

He didn't even stop to ascertain Merrimee's presence above; he was already sure of it. The thick carpet muffled the sound of his feet in the quick dash up the stairs.

At the top he paused. Innumerable alcoves and doors hidden behind drapes spoke so emphatically of danger there that he had to resumption caution for his journey along the gallery—but not so much caution as to impede progress, however.

In the half light he found the girl.

The charred garments of escape from Kassad's coffee house had given place to the gorgeous garments of the harem.

Her bushy hair was held in check by a bandeau, brilliant studded and scintillating; large circular earrings

dropped almost to her bare shoulders. Her skin, anointed with the jasmine and almond lotions of the harem, was brought to the chalk-whiteness of Rebia's.

Altogether it was an amazing transformation.

The change was noticeable even in her manner. She was no longer the hoyden, wilful, intolerant and supremely self-reliant. All that had been washed away in a tide of fears she had come to know, doubts she could not banish and thoughts impatient for expression.



Sophistication showed itself to be but skin-deep then; beneath it lay revealed a woman who was only a child after all, with the temerity and timidity of one verging on stern discoveries and frightened of them.

Merrimee's first lesson in life had been to bluff; without that knowledge she could not have negotiated the tricky curves of eastern existence. But now her hand had been

called, and instead of the Aces of Wisdom she held only the deuces.

The transformation was reflected in her first greeting to Grimshaw. She took his hand gratefully and clung to it as a scared child.

"You came to look for me?" she asked whisperingly.

"Yes, to get you away from here," he comforted, stroking the head she nestled against his chest and glad that reconciliation had proved so easy.

Regret crept into her eyes when she looked up to him, and into her voice when she spoke again.

"I should not have said of you what I did. But I was angry and did not understand. And—" Hers was a simple admission. "—and when I wanted to give you the love I have stored all my life for but one man and you did not take me from the Turk, I thought—

"No! I should not tell you what I thought. I did not know the ways of you men from the other world as well as I believed. And then when they brought me here I was frightened, but now that you are with me—"

In moments like these speech is generally a sequence of unfinished sentences; silence is far more eloquent of thoughts; and the close contact of man and woman the most exquisite expression of understanding.

From the muscular imprisonment of Grimshaw's arms Merrimee finished her story.

"I was trying to find a way out

when you came. I was afraid because to-night I saw the women in the harem below, and heard them talk of the Pasha, the man to whom I promised myself in marriage.

"Then two slave women came to dress me. I asked them about this man, but they would answer nothing; yet I could tell by their faces what they thought. They took my clothes away and gave me these. Nuptial robes, they said they were, but when they said it they laughed.

"When a great gong boomed they left me, but I heard other women passing outside my door. Some seemed to stand there and joke. But it was bitter joking. At last even those sounds died, and I took this chance because I wanted to return to El-Ara and find you, to stay with you, to tell you of the love you had awakened. Once a man in Cairo—"

"S-s-sh!" Terry's hand was clamped suddenly over her mouth to compel silence. "Look—coming up the stairs!" he whispered.

Two fat figures waddled into view. Their dress was as grotesque as that of the sentry Grimshaw had seen sleeping in the passage.

Each sought the support of a long staff in the task of hauling his flabby, fleshy burden up the stairs; each grunted audibly.

Individually neither would have offered any obstacle to their escape, but collectively these two guards represented danger, for a scream would bring the Pasha's guards—giant mulattos from a partly disciplined, desert horde.

They had reached the head of the stairs before Merrimee, freeing herself from Terry's hold, dragged him towards a door a few feet away. "This is the room to which they brought me. We can wait here until they've gone," she urged.

With his ear to the panels the artist listened for the shuffling feet to approach and pass before turning his attention to the girl, who stood tensely in the center of the room, which might have been a miniature replica of the harem below.



He came towards her with outstretched arms and enveloped her in an embrace which knew no subtleties of long experience, but which suffered not a whit in warmth and passion on that account.

In a vague way he heard more steps shuffle past the door but paid no attention to them. The whole of the Pasha's guard might have massed on the gallery for all Grimshaw knew or cared; and even when

the door opened silently neither man nor woman sensed an intrusion until Selon Pasha felt called upon to announce himself.

"Not bad for a beginner, Grimshaw, but—"

He stepped in serenely despite the amazement of the pair. With hands plunged deeply into the pockets of his long silken *caftan*, he rocked himself to and fro, breathing a curl of cigarette smoke through his nostrils and taking in the girl with concupiscent regard.

"Not a bad start for a harem, either. Where did you get her?"

Terry froze at the calm patronage and cool presumption of the Turk. "Never mind about the start of a harem. Allow me to present Merrimée, my future wife," he challenged, intending that the Pasha should feel the warning in his voice.

"Ah, don't take it so seriously. Marriage in this land is never taken that way—by a man. But why call her your future wife? Is the purchase price so high that you must pay for her on the instalment plan?"

"Anyhow, I'll say this for her, she's just the sort I told you to get as your model. And I'll say this for you, you're a fast worker—as you Americans would put it. In this case too fast even for me." He bowed low to the girl. "I salute Merrimée, the *hanum* of my guest," he murmured.

The Dancing Virgin, bewildered at the turn of events, looked to Grimshaw for guidance and received his signal for silence.

"This is not the sort of wife you told me to get as a model," Terry corrected. "She is to be my wife in the western meaning of the word."

"Delightful! The famous artist finds romance and a bride in dirty Mesopotamia. Rather unique, Grimshaw, and entirely unexpected."

He paused, stroking his chin and turning to his guest with narrowed eyes. "Entirely unexpected—in fact as unexpected as your presence in this part of my house, and in this very room."

The addition was made as a question which elicited an untruthful answer. "Well, I suppose it is, but I figured you'd be asleep when we arrived, and not wishing to disturb you I barged right in and wandered around until I found this place.

"You will recall that your initial suggestion carried an invitation to bring my wife to your house."

"Quite so; but since you have more knowledge of my home than I credited you with, I may inform you that it is not customary for a guest to bring his newest wife into the harem of his host."

"Then I offer my apologies."

Selon bowed in acceptance, but his smile was an insincere one, provoking rather than soothing the strain which underlay the episode.

"Not that I would not welcome such a beauty to my harem as would a botanist the acquisition of a rare flower for his garden. But in the transplanting there has been a strange coincidence. This happens to be the room of my favorite *hanum*

and my favorite *hanum* does not happen to be here.

"Your favorite *hanum*? Which implies that you have more than one wife?" Grimshaw offered the question with well-feigned surprise.

Selon blew a draft of cigarette smoke towards the ceiling.

"In your country, Grimshaw, a man sows his wild oats while he is yet young and shares the harvest with but one woman when he is old; whereas a man of my country does the same in his youth, but, lest the harvest fall too heavily upon one wife in maturity, he gives her many sisters with whom to share it.

"But that does not explain the disappearance of Madame Rebia, nor the coincidence which brings you to her suite.

Terry shrugged his shoulders. "I can give no solution, Pasha. The coincidence is as strange to me as it is to you. Naturally, now that I know my selection of quarters for Merrimee has been unfortunate, I shall be only too pleased to move on. If your original invitation does not stand now, perhaps I can find some abode for her in El-Ara."

The Turk raised a protesting hand. "Again you misconstrue my words. To properly study your model and to blend her spirit with your canvasses you must keep your inspiration close to your palette; and as you are my guest your palette remains in my house. Therefore your *hanum* must remain here, too. Why, it delights me to have her with us, for I, too, feel that

there is much in her to study." This last was said with a meaning look.

"I thought I made it clear to you that Merrimee is not a model, but that she will be my wife."

"Then I shall be pleased to entertain her as the wife of my guest. I will send a servant to arrange a bridal suite for her immediately."

To carry out his intention he advanced to the door. His hand was on the knob and he was about to open it when, through no force of his, the door came towards him, just an inch at first, then more and more, until the Pasha stepping back and continuing to move in a semi-circle was hidden in its shadow unseen by Rebia, who stood framed in its arch.

Grimshaw raised a hand to warn her, but failed to stop her eager entrance and her exclamation of dismay.

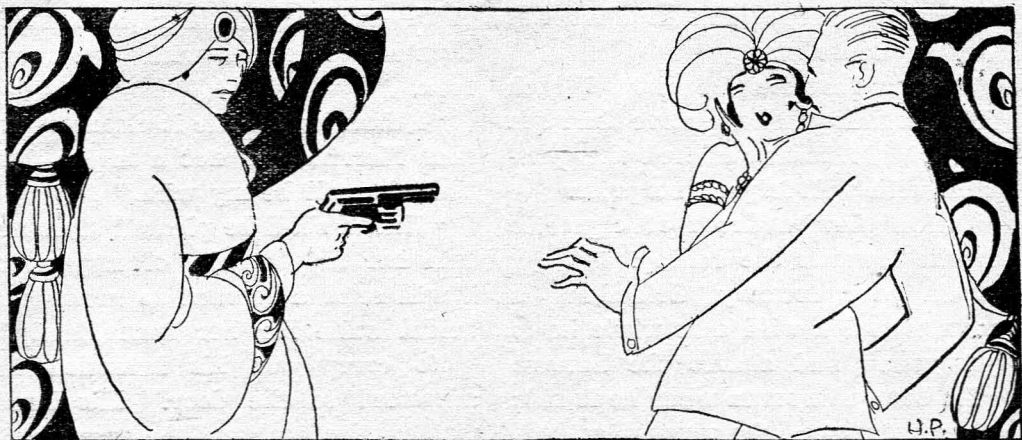
"Ter-ry! Ter-ry! You should not have come here."

To Merrimee, staring amazedly, there came instant recognition of the *hanum* as the "man" whose offer of marriage she had accepted in a moment of pique.

She fairly sprang in front of Grimshaw to intercept the arms Rebia stretched out to him; and the old fire was in her eyes and on her tongue.

"So it was a woman who tricked me into this! What does it mean?"

Rebia laughed softly, derisively. "Merely that you will be the *hanum* of the Pasha."



The echo to her voice was the sudden slam of the door. Selon Pasha stepped from hiding, one hand still plunged into the pocket of his *caftan*, the other nonchalantly swinging a revolver by his side.

"Quite — an — excellent — arrangement — from your point of view," he commented.

A pall of silence dropped upon the room. Grimshaw put an arm about the Dancing Virgin and drew her behind him; Rebia's hands were raised in front of her and paralyzed at clasp point; Selon's hand was also raised, but only just far enough to bring the blunt nozzle of his weapon in a direct and upward tilting line with Grimshaw's heart.

The girl, with quick intuition, found a dread as great as that of the woman; one man battled for control of his wits to guide them into some definite course of action; the other, who held the revolver, gave expression to his thoughts in a mouth play that was a cold, vindictive smile.

VII

SELON PASHA was the first to speak.

"Then you have already met Madame Rebia?" he asked of Terry, who did not answer.

"That was a foolish question, wasn't it, when it is obvious that your acquaintance is even intimate since she called you by your Christian name?"

With his left hand he seized the *hanum* and spun her around until she faced him, but all the time he looked directly over her shoulder and kept the revolver pointed at the artist.

"Where did you meet this girl?" he demanded, indicating Merrimee.

Rebia answered in a frightened, subdued tone. "At the café of Kassad. She was dancing there."

"And the man?"

"There, too."

"Don't lie to me. You could not have met him there in public. Where did you meet him?"

"At the house of Madame Aysce."

"Oh, the delightful *cocone*. A convenient friend during Ramadan, taught by her western ideas to cultivate the intrigues of wanton *hanums*!"

"That's not right!" Grimshaw broke in. "I owe my life to Madame Rebia. She dragged me out of Kassad's when the café caught fire. Afterwards she took me to the *cocone's* house so that I could dress a cut in my head. That is all."

"But that is more than enough. A woman does not risk her deceitful skin for anybody unless she is actuated by one motive, unless she expects something in return.

"Even if you were entirely innocent, that could not be said of her. And the lies you have told to-night damn you and her together." He reverted to Rebia. "So you went to Kassad's and you tricked this girl into coming here with an offer of marriage? To whom?"

The *hanum's* head was bowed, and when she did not answer the Pasha laughed.

"Well do we train our *hanums*. Thus do we **know** all their tricks. You reckoned to offer me this girl as a substitute for yourself. Quite a confession of faded charms, eh?"

"Grimshaw!" The soft, goading irony dropped from his voice and he uttered the name with a whipcrack. "Hitherto I have regarded you as a fool, a helpless sort of idiot, but quite inoffensive in your stupidity. Now I know I was wrong. Once before to-night I quoted you in the

terms of your own country as a fast worker. You are! You're too damned fast! You're not content with having won a prize from the desert which I myself would envy, but you've taken my favorite as well. You've blundered about all your life until at last you've blundered into a snarl which has only two unravelings.

"Once in London I saw a play wherein a wife was given her choice between her own husband and another man. It was a threadbare theme, but a favorite one in those days. I laughed at it because I am a Turk and know that such a course would be against all our tradition and precedent.

"Were we in America or Europe, Merrimee would be eliminated altogether and Rebia be given the choice between you and me.

"But we're not in Europe; we're out on the fringe of Mesopotamia where no one knows what goes on inside this palace, where I could shoot you without any fear of trouble, not only because I am a pasha and a ruler, but because news of your death would never reach the ears of some quizzical consul."

The Turk's cheeks, which had flushed with anger, paled again as he bridled his anger. His voice softened, but bitterness remained; and the emotion beneath it was streaked with the torture traits of his ancestors that gave him callous enjoyment of it all.

"The whole thing is arrantly melodramatic, Grimshaw—melodra-

matic because there is, to me, crude humor in the fact that a fool should be the bone of contention. In *that* play I saw, the woman decided her husband was the best man to take.

"But that was the European way of doing things. Ours is exactly the reverse. The woman does not have the choice. That is the privilege of the man. I might delegate it to myself could I but forget that you are my guest. Therefore I accede the opportunity to you."

"You mean—" It was an incredulous exclamation.

"Exactly. Two women are interested in you, but the fact that one is already my wife and the other was intended to be my wife need not discourage you. As you will not stay in Asia all your life, you cannot take both; but by selecting one the difficulty may be cleared up."

"And what happens to the other?"

"That is for me to say."

During the entire meeting he had kept his revolver pointed at the artist to anticipate any possible hostile movement; but now he dropped the weapon to his side and swung it there as he reopened the door.

"I will wait on the gallery while you make your choice."

"Stop! Surely it's obvious to you that there can be only one choice."

"Absolutely, but which woman is it?" Selon was leaning against the rail of the balcony now, and looking into the room. "Since the presence of one at least will be em-

barrassing to you may I suggest that you lead the—er—the less fortunate *hanum* out here to me."

To Grimshaw there was no difficulty of decision, but the necessity of carrying that decision to effect was invidious. He felt Merrimee's tightening clasp upon his arm; he felt the appeal of Rebia's wide eyes stirring from despair with a hopeful gleam.

But that was just for a flash. The gleam died; woman's instinct was its shroud.

"Terry, you need not lead me to the gallery. I will go alone," she whispered, with the choke of a sob in her throat. "Allah be merciful to me now!"

Slowly she turned, her head lowered till her chin touched her white chest, her shoulders slumped forward, her hands clasped tightly in front of her, her eyes tear-filled.

Grimshaw and Merrimee saw her walk straight through the door and turn quickly at right angles to escape the menace of the Pasha's stare. A sob simmered to the lips of the Dancing Virgin.

"I am sorry for her, Terry," she whispered and clung to the man. But before he could reply the Turk called again.

"Grimshaw, may I have a few words in private with you on the gallery. Merrimee will not begrudge this one moment of explanation, as circumstances may make it the last you and I will enjoy together."

Terry stepped from the room and

out into the half light in which the Pasha stood. He felt something hard press suddenly against his heart, and each wrist clamped in the grip of two giant mulattos.

"I have always considered it wise to have my guards accompany me when I walk about this portion of my place, Grimshaw, for the intrigue of a *hanum* sometimes breeds danger.

"Now I wish to congratulate you upon your choice and at the same time to tell you that I, too, am awakened to the charms of the dancing girl. I regret any inconvenience or anguish it may cause you, but you have also caused me a measure of that. Besides, in compensation you may make a second selection.

"She is waiting for you in the harem below. My guards will conduct you either to another suite or out of the palace altogether if you prefer it. A train passes through El-Ara bound for Beirut just at dawn, and you may take that if you wish to leave us altogether. But Rebia must go with you. You owe it to her."

Laughing now, Selon lowered the revolver and moved back to the door. Freed of one menace Grimshaw found his first opportunity for action. He lashed out suddenly with his foot and crashed it into stinging contact with the shin of the mulatto to his right.

Pain brought a yell from the man and freedom for Terry's right arm, which he whipped full into the face of his other guard with a force that

staggered but did not shake the vise-hold.

Before he could hit again the first mulatto was on him, with every ounce of strength in his ebony body hurling downwards on the white man, to crush and to overcome, and to take an accounting for his agony.

Selon stopped the slaughter with a quick Turkish command, and offered ironic sympathy ere the door closed behind him.

"I am sorry, Grimshaw, that you are not so successful with the men as you are with the women. Good night—or should I say good morning?"

Held on either side by the guards, the artist stared at the shut door, waiting for some sound from within the room and heard none. Even had there been a call or a cry it could have won no answer from Grimshaw, for the mulattos started him towards the stairs, leading him at first, and dragging him when he struggled in a new offensive.

But there was no sound from the room, neither cry nor call; for Merimee greeted the Pasha with a smile.

She had watched the drama enacted on the gallery and had wondered at it. She had seen the tall, handsome Turk reënter the room and had welcomed him when he slipped his revolver into his *caftan* pocket and approached her.

"Allah has decreed a strange bridal night for you"; the Pasha speculated.

"Did Allah do it, or did you?"

"Allah does all things, but sometimes he needs assistance and guidance. For instance, he decreed the fool Rebia should love the fool Grimshaw, and likewise that you should be brought to me to become my *hanum*.

"An infidel intervened and Allah was momentarily nonplused by such impudence. Then I, as his servant, pointed the way."

As a servant of Allah, the Pasha was an excellent master; it was like him to assume the direction of his deity in a few stray functions. But he did it smilingly, and, as with everything else, with a cool presumption which not even Merrimee would gainsay when he placed his two hands on her shoulders and looked down at her.

"I have heard of you—the Dancing Virgin of Kassad's," he commented.

"And you did not seek to inquire further?" the girl asked.

"I hardly thought El-Ara could boast such a flower. Otherwise I would have cultivated it with daily homage."

"It is a pity you should discover it so late—too late."

"Too late? I think not."

"No; of course, you don't. Because you are a pasha you assume no woman is impervious to your attentions. And you are so—so cold in your regard for beauty that only as an afterthought you take her.

"You expect me to be flattered by your secondhand affection. Selon Pasha, for all your wisdom of the

West, you do not know the women who come to the East and combine the desire to be won, that Europe breeds in them, with the joy of giving which Asia bestows."

"Then you believe that hunting women is the same as hunting foxes—that there must be a chase before a capture, with the former the more zestful? That is a philosophy of which I have not heard before. Yet it explains one thing—your easy greeting to me instead of your abuse. Was Grimshaw's chase not exciting enough? Or was the capture too commonplace?"

The Dancing Virgin did not answer with her lips, but her eyes held the old baffling elusive dare which men had known in Cairo years before, and which now registered on the Pasha.

"I have captured you entirely without chase," he provoked. "You came to me instead."

"I was brought to you, and I know of no capture."

"You are amusing, and when one is that one also has brains. Brains, I think, would make you ineligible as the favorite of any harem."

"Have I courted that honor?"

"Court it!" Selon spoke quickly, almost hoarsely, and drew the girl to him without her protest. But she gave no outward response to his embrace. "Court it! You've won it. Your eyes have given it to you, and would give it again even if your face were lined and your body shrunken.

"Yesterday I spoke to Grimshaw

of Cleopatra, Delilah, Sheba and Salome. But I had not met you. Were I to speak of them to-morrow your name would be in my first breath."

Surely was the Pasha a perfect lover!

"Tell me, Merrimee," he continued; "even had I let Grimshaw take you, what could he have given you? Nothing more than a return to a civilization which would have smothered you. You weren't made for that."

"Though you were born in the West, you were born for the East, for this empire of desert where even custom and tradition cannot prevail against a woman's beauty, where wars have been fought for a woman's smile."

The Dancing Virgin peered up roguishly. "And what is the reward to the woman?"

"A life such as no western woman knows. The life that I would give you now . . . just for a kiss."

He would have taken payment in advance had not the girl swooped suddenly downwards and out of his arms. As she escaped she slipped her hand into the pocket of the *caftan*, and then danced laughingly from his reach leveling his revolver straight at him.

Straightened by its threat, the Pasha started to raise his hands in surrender. But the girl, enjoying the surprise, checked him.

"I did not ask you to do that, Selon. It is just that I don't like you to have such ugly friends. It

might have gone off and hurt either you or me. There!" The silvered weapon whirled through the air to her toss and fell behind a divan. "Don't let us think about it," she urged, inviting his embrace. "For one kiss you say you will show me the life you can give me? I am waiting."

The caress of the Pasha was a masterpiece.

"I will show you the life now," he promised. "And I will do as no other pasha of my line has done. I will sit at your feet and not you at mine."

He hurried out to the gallery and to the head of the stairs where a gong hung. Three resounding notes came back to the Dancing Virgin, and then Selon Pasha led her into the court below.

The blue half light died in an orange blaze which leaped from huge lamps of purest crystal to the torch-touch of scurrying eunuchs, startled from sleep and aware of the purport of the gong.

Doors opened on the gallery, and out of recesses many *hanums* emerged, hastily garbed in their transparent robes, banishing sleep from their eyes by forcing smiles which hid rebellion at the Pasha's commands.

These, as conveyed by the now mute gong, they knew implicitly; for the whims of Selon were always gratified at their expense.

Knowing nothing of Rebia's de-thronement they stared at a new woman reclining on the Pasha's own

divan, and stared harder still at their master who occupied the humbler cushions of the favorite at her feet.

A eunuch stood behind Merrimee's couch waving a huge fan, others set new incense braziers about her, and more brought wine and sweetmeats and long cigarettes charged with soothing drops of amber.

Each made some offering and then disappeared to return with humbler oblations to the *hanums*, who, having danced, now reclined in a semi-circle of pulchritude on the floor.

Then suddenly the Dancing Virgin sprang from her divan. Seizing a goblet filled with wine, she flashed into the center of the court. There as a strange Bacchante, a harem-esque Bacchante, she raised it high above her head and challenged her suitor with a toast that had been bandied about the cafés of Cairo.

She spun in a circle, sprinkling many divans and many *hanums* with the wine from the goblet.

"Send them away—all of them! Find Grimshaw and Rebia. Bring them here, and let me wish them a love as unmeasured as mine. Let Rebia know what she has lost. Let Grimshaw see what he thought he had attained. The fool! The fool to think he could hope to win the Dancing Virgin!"

And again the Pasha obeyed a woman's command.

The *hanums* trooped upstairs and disappeared behind the gallery doors; eunuchs who had stood about the walls dissolved mysteriously;

the babel of carnival seeped away, leaving its only echo in the low tinkle of music from unseen players.

Two mulatto guards sped over the palace grounds to find Rebia and Grimshaw.

VIII

THOSE two mulattoes knew where they were going. Less than an hour before they had dragged the fighting Grimshaw over the path they were taking now; for, though Selon Pasha had not forgotten the courtesies he, as a host, owed his guest and had given him the choice between return to his own room and eviction from the palace altogether, one guard nursed a stinging shin, the other a bruised jaw, and both a grudge, overlooked the alternative.

They had led him through the solitary gate abutting the river and marooned him on a narrow mud bank where the Belik failed to reach the ramparts. There they left him to wallow in his anguish of body and mind with the suck and slop of the waters as a melancholy accompaniment.

There Rebia found him, when, a few minutes later, she followed through the gate, an Eve cast from a doubtful Eden.

She crept to his side and, with the hem of her gown, wiped the mud and blood from his face. She did it passionlessly, without pity for him, without anger at him, but with a strain of self-reproach when she spoke.

"For a woman to build a castle in the air, or a palace on a quicksand is to have a stronger possession than happiness built on a man's love."

Grimshaw grunted acknowledgment of her ministrations and surveyed the walls to ascertain vantage points and footholds. But there were none; the surface was of a smoothness that would defy any climber.

"Then you still think you can get back to the Dancing Virgin!" the woman commented.

"I don't think it, Rebia! I'm going back!"

"It is foolish to attempt it, Ter-ry. Even if you passed the sentry at the gate or got over the walls, what could you do against the Pasha's guard? Surely one taste is enough. If Merrimee loves you as you think she does she will find some way of beating Selon. But will she want to?"

"You at most can offer marriage and take her back to your own civilization, whereas he can hold her against you by force if he cannot dazzle her with luxury. And because I know him I know he will show her the glamour of it all—something a woman of the East cannot resist."

"She is not of the East. You know my opinion about that, and nothing will shake it."

"But what does an opinion amount to? Nothing you can do will help her any more than it will help me."

"Why you? Why couldn't I help you?"

"Because—well, because only the desert awaits me now. Somewhere out there is peace, if not with you, as the Pasha has bidden, then without you. But the desert will bring forgetfulness."

It sounded like a prayer to the blue vastness of the brooding, deaf-mute sands. Somewhere in that pall it was easy to believe soothing surcease lay; and the woman peered into it as though seeking a compass to oblivion.

The spell left her with a desire for action.

"A boat is moored somewhere along this bank. We can go to the other side in it," she suggested. "There, if you still think you can get back to the palace, you can plan a new strategy; but for me, I am weary, and Madame Aysce will take me in till dawn."

They found the craft and punted across the river. Without speaking they faced the palace from the opposite bank, just standing there, the man with a score of fears for a girl lost in the dark pile, the woman with a stray regret for happiness lost there, too, and neither noticing the figure which came into being from the murk of night and stood by them with the light breeze swishing his long robe about his legs.

He took a position at Grimshaw's side and made no comment until the artist, turning, became aware of his presence.

"A strange hour to be by the

river, *effendi*," Amid Bey offered. "A strange hour, also, to bring Madame with you. But it has been an unusual night, has it not? We fought, you and I, in the café of Kassad, while madame-your-friend looked on."

The Arab's voice was deep and pleasant. He spoke with the unruffled serenity of one who bore no malice nor hatred in his heart, and with a fatalistic acceptance of the universe which accorded with Rebia's mood.

"Then you saw I was a woman?" she asked across Grimshaw, and at the same time sought an unmuddied hem of her gown as a *yashmak*.

"Assuredly, Madame—a *hanum* of beauty on a *hanum's* age-old quest."

He spoke with an infinite understanding, for was he not a barterer in unusual wares, often of unusual beauty, as richly white as that of the *hanum* whom he addressed? But his predatory instincts now lay deep beneath a surface of philosophy.

"We stood by three pillars we three—one for each woman-hunter, and a fourth unoccupied. And each of us craved the Dancing Virgin, Madame, as an offering for her lord and for her own freedom, this *effendi* perhaps as wife, and I because there is loneliness in the desert whence I come.

"Now we three stand again and watch while another takes our prize. But that is life. The miner finds the gold, the goldsmith de-

sires from it the ring, the woman to whom a lover gives it treasures it, and a thief, lacking in sentiment of discoverer, creator, or lawful recipient, robs her of it."

"How do you know all this about our missions at Kassad's?" Grimshaw interrupted. "Who told you the Dancing Virgin is at the palace now?"

"I watch, *effendi*. The eyes of the Arab are keen in the night. You challenged me in the café, but Allah intervened to save you—or me. Nursing a hatred of you, I followed to the house of Madame Aysce. I waited in the shadows.

"First came the Dancing Virgin, guided by a eunuch who took her across the river to the palace. Then you. And long afterwards, the same fat eunuch running back and returning with madame-the-*hanum*. I followed to the Belik, still watching, for I was interested in it all.

"Two guards hurled you from the palace; Madame crept after you. Such things tell their own story, for I know the Pasha to be a keen searcher for blooms in the Garden of Allah."

There descended on the trio another silence which lasted until the darkened windows in the lower right half of the palace on the terrace sprang into orange life.

"Another flower will be added to the garden," Amid Bey murmured.

"What!" Terry spun on him for confirmation or dissolution of his doubts, but before the Arab could reply Rebia supplied the answer.

"It is as I said, Ter-ry. He offers the glamour of his harem before he offers force. See, the lights are not in the *selamlık* at all."

"The beast!" The exclamation was wrung from him. "I'm going back!"

Rebia wheeled suddenly in front of him with arms horizontal to detain him. "Ter-ry — Ter-ry — please! It is useless!"

"Let him go!" Amid Bey grunted. "A fool and his life are soon parted."

Not because the *hanum* obeyed that injunction, nor because he himself agreed with the Arab's sentiment, Grimshaw pushed forward to the boat drawn up on the mud. But Rebia still clung to him, repeating her appeal until the artist's apparent determination prompted a change in tactics.

Despite his protest she stepped into the boat with him and clung stubbornly to a seat until he poled from the bank.

"I know it is a fool's quest," she muttered when they were halfway over the Belik; "but Allah has led us into this distress and I go with you to pray to Allah to guide us out."

Truly was it a busy night for Allah.

"Do not try to force the gate as yet," Rebia suggested again. "Let us move further along and perhaps find a way over the walls. There must be one."

But though they punted many yards up and down the river and ex-

amined the ramparts closely, these remained smooth and sheer and impregnable.

"Got to force it," he muttered, as they returned to the gate. "May be able to beat the sentry."

The grounded on the stretch whereon Grimshaw first had been marooned, and started towards the gate, the man carrying the punting pole, the woman creeping behind him and giving an occasional glance across the river where the figure of the watching Arab was blurrily visible.

Grimshaw's whisper warned her into the deeper shadows of the walls. Two mulattoes emerged from the gate and looked directly towards them, their keen eyes undeceived by the darkness.

"*Effendi*—Madame Rebia!" they called and salaamed with such docility that the artist lowered the pole he had raised for an emergency. "The Pasha sends us to bring you back to the palace. Madame-the-New-Hanum has commanded it!"

Madame-the-New-Hanum!

Little wonder Grimshaw gasped and Rebia smiled at the confirmation of her hopes.

The journey over the terraces was far different from the eviction. The man harbored consternation instead of impotent anger, the woman a revival of those emotions which first had precipitated disaster.

And in the bearing of the guards was cringing subservience now.

Through the little door of the palace they went, and up the many

stairs to emerge on the corridor directly before the heavy curtains of the harem.

Grimshaw waited for no announcement. Boldly he seized the folds and flung them aside—then twisted and hung on them in an engulfment of despair.

From the Pasha's divan a white figure arose; but Selon himself remained supine on the cushions at the feet of the Dancing Virgin, his smile a boast of eventual conquest.

"Enter, friend," he greeted. "We welcome you and your new *hanum*."

Terry felt himself, with Rebia, being shepherded into the harem by the two guards who thereafter loitered by the curtains until Merrimee urged their dismissal.

"Send them away, out of the harem. The Dance of Surrender is only for the eyes of lovers."

She paused, as though waiting for the Turk to pick up a pre-arranged cue, and endeavored to fasten Terry's glance with hers. But Grimshaw refused the attention. He strode towards the reclining Pasha who made no attempt to meet his challenge.

"You cur! You—"

"*Stanna!*"* The Dancing Virgin halted him with a cameleer's command.

And the Pasha proceeded unperturbed.

"An hour ago, Grimshaw, you honored me by presenting me to your future *hanum*, a great and un-

precedented honor in this country, to be shared only among trusted friends.

"Now I desire to assure you of my confidence and regard in like manner by presenting *you* to *my* favorite *hanum*." He indicated the girl with a graceful gesture. "Merrimee, the dancer."

Terry turned slowly, and for the first time met the Dancing Virgin's eyes, baffling as ever, and yet determined enough in their return look to stifle his reproach.

It dawned on him then that he *was* a fool.

"Merrimee has suggested that as you, too, have taken to yourself a wife, whom I believe I have met (this with a bow of meretricious humility to Rebia) that you might wish to share mutual congratulations."

The congratulation Grimshaw would have wished to accord the Pasha was far more forceful than felicitous, but Rebia's presence and the knowledge that on his actions depended not only his own safety but hers, too, restrained him.

Of Merrimee he tried to pretend he did not care; but a failing effort it was. Deep down he wanted to believe all this to be a subterfuge; yet the evidence of the girl's own conduct was damning, and more ruinous still when she lolled luxuriantly back on the divan and accepted the caress of the Pasha's hand upon her feet.

"Friend of my master," she addressed Terry in flowery imitation

*Stop.

of Selon's style. "You have seen the Dancing Virgin in her Dance of Surrender. But then it was performed before a cage of fools, and not for the eyes and hearts of lovers alone. Now I am weary for I have had no sleep, and it has been a night of strange conquests.

"Soon the sun will rise; and the love that steals in by night often pales with the dawn. But before then will I dance again my Dance of Surrender that you may carry its memory with you always; for never again will you see it."

While speaking her eyes carried to all three in turn and then to the curtains which covered the harem entrance. On these her gaze held; they, too, were her objective when she swept on to the floor in the exultant Dance of Surrender.

It was the last she had performed in Kassad's cafe. There, even in drab surroundings, it had been bewitching. Repeated here in the bewildering beauties of the huge court, with her piquant figure elfed by towering pillars and dome, her crimson trousers and white skin flashing against the deep-hued drapes, it was an ecstatic revelation.

Grimshaw knew what was to follow: Selon didn't; the final furious whirl, the pause and submissive collapse at the master's feet.

It had happened in the café when three people stood and stared from the pillars; it was to happen again here, under different circumstances, but with two of those three strangers still watching.

It was coming now.

The Dancing Virgin swept into a revolving tantrum straight at Grimshaw. Just as she had teetered before Amid Bey a few hours before, so she paused now, whirling a second on tiptoes, tantalizing the Pasha to a protesting half rise from his couch. And exactly as she had veered from the bearded Arab so she swung from Terry.

Then to Selon Pasha.

Before his divan she started to sink, and the Turk, springing to his feet, stooped to catch her.

Unexpectedly she laughed; then twisted and eluded him.

Rebia saw both men follow the girl as she dashed into the center of the court, joyously hurdling cushions and couches, gyrating, pausing and sinking with fawn grace at the very fringe of the harem curtains.

Christian and Mussulman stood above her.

The Turk reached for his *caftan* pocket, forgetting that his revolver lay on the floor of his favorite's room. It was a disastrous move which left his guard down when Grimshaw swung.

The thud of fist against jaw was the only sound to signalize the slow sagging and doubling forward of Selon Pasha to unconsciousness and the floor.

But it brought an answer from behind the curtains. They parted silently as Amid Bey stepped through them and lifted Merrimee to her feet.

"History repeats itself," the Arab

whispered. "Surely are the ways of Allah tortuous and—stop!"

He threw both hands above him and uttered the hushed command to head off Grimshaw's attack. "Listen! I come in peace. The Arab is a fair fighter and admires one. When he sees a man follow the quest of a woman as you have, he will assist rather than rob him.

"I followed you to help you and found double reward in also responding to the appeal of the Dancing Virgin as she lay on the divan talking to you with her lips, but to me, as I stood behind the curtains, with her eyes which were quicker than yours. That she danced to me in her moment of stress is full recompense."

Amid Bey permitted himself a smile of wisdom. "Ah, she is wise—too wise by far to be the best beloved of a sheik.

"And she is not of my faith, nor of my desert to which I return at daybreak. I have sought a beauty to take back with me, not to be bartered but to charm away my loneliness, and I have found one. But it is not she. I would not—no—I *could* not take her from you. See!"

Stepping to one side he robbed Merrimee of the support of his muscular body, and she would have fallen had not Grimshaw clutched her. He held her tightly and marked her eyes closing in contentment, and heard from her lips as he bent to kiss them:

"I did it for you, Terry. And I

have danced for the last time, too. I could have shot him when we were in the room together, but that was not the way out. Terry—never let me see the desert again. I want to go back home—where my mother came from, or where you came from."

IX

TERRY came down from the clouds eventually, in fact in time to see Amid Bey cut a drape from the walls, use part of it to bind and gag the unconscious Pasha, envelop him with the rest, and roll the unwieldy bundle beneath a divan which he proceeded to camouflage with cushions.

Grimshaw noted then that the Arab's long robe and hood were gone, and that his shaggy chest was bare but for a finely-spun silken shirt. Sensing a question, Amid Bey shrugged his shoulders in self-deprecation.

"I lost them on the way here. The sentry at the wall gate has my hood—twisted about his mouth and head—and a eunuch sleeps peacefully in the corridor with my bournouse as his blanket, but takes no pride in possessing it."

The Arab looked through the curtains and then up to the galleries.

"Go quickly," he urged in a whisper. "At any moment some one may find the fallen eunuch and raise an alarm. A train passes through El-Ara at daybreak. There may not be another for a week; so hide by the station until it comes." He sa-

lammed profoundly. "Take it—take her—and the everlasting blessing of a friend."

"And you?"

"I will follow."

As Terry led Merrimee from the harem he paused just long enough to look back to a woman who lay with her face buried in the cushions of the favorite's divan.

"Good-by Rebia!" he called.

But she did not answer. Perhaps she did not hear.

XX

The sky was rusting to dawn when a train wheezed casually along the single track from El-Ara to Beirut. In one of its battered compartments sat two people: a man whose clothes were torn and mud-died, but whose face glowed with content and showed few signs of a stressful night, and a girl huddled happily in a heavy cloak and in his arms.

It was a slow old train which never had learned time-tables; and a half-hour's jolting achieved few

miles. But time and distance were not reckoned by two of its passengers that morning. Sufficient for them the safety which even a fur-long from the palace of the Pasha would have afforded.

Together they watched the re-born desert and a little sand cloud which moved quickly towards the tracks and resolved itself into two riders who waited for the train to pass.

"See! They're waving," the Dancing Virgin discovered.

Terry Grimshaw peered out the window and flagged response.

"Do you know who they are?" he asked.

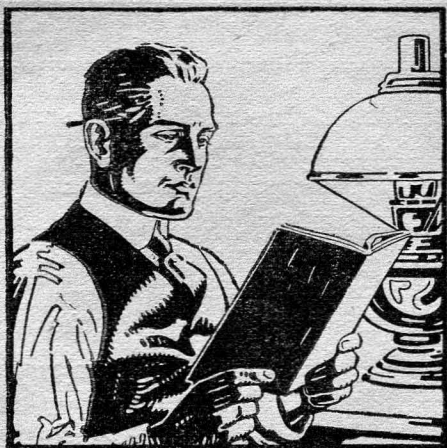
Merrimee snuggled closer to him, and murmured, "We ought to, don't you think?"

And Amid Bey and Rebia, the *hanum*, gazed till the train slunk over the horizon. Then they turned their horses towards the horizon to the south and rode into the desert, with the Arab's hand resting on the pommel of Rebia's saddle, and her own white hand upon his bare brown arm.

THE END



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Long ago in old England love caused many a lady to have a sleepless knight!



If you can't be good be tactful.

NERVE EXHAUSTION

How We Become Shell-Shocked in Everyday Life

By PAUL VON BOECKMANN

Lecturer and Author of numerous books and treatises on Mental and Physical Energy, Respiration, Psychology and Nerve Culture

THERE is but one malady more terrible than Nerve Exhaustion, and that is its kin, Insanity. Only those who have passed through a siege of Nerve Exhaustion can understand the true meaning of this statement. At first, the victim is afraid he will die, and as it grips him deeper, he is afraid he will not die, so great his mental torture. He becomes panic-stricken and irresolute. A sickening sensation of weakness and helplessness overcomes him. He becomes obsessed with the thought of self-destruction.

Nerve Exhaustion means Nerve Bankruptcy. The wonderful organ we term the Nervous System consists of countless millions of cells. These cells are reservoirs which store a mysterious energy we term Nerve Force. The amount stored represents our Nerve Capital. Every organ works with all its might to keep the supply of Nerve Force in these cells at a high level, for Life itself depends more upon Nerve Force than on the food we eat or even the air we breathe.

If we unduly tax the nerves through overwork, worry, excitement or grief, or if we subject the muscular system to excessive strain, we consume more Nerve Force than the organs produce, and the natural result must be Nerve Exhaustion.

Nerve Exhaustion is not a malady that comes suddenly. It may be years in developing, and the decline is accompanied by unmistakable symptoms, which, unfortunately, cannot be readily recognized. The average person thinks that when his hands do not tremble and his muscles do not twitch, he cannot possibly be nervous. This is a dangerous assumption, for people with hands as solid as a rock and who appear to be in perfect health may be dangerously near Nerve Collapse.

One of the first symptoms of Nerve Exhaustion is the derangement of the Sympathetic Nervous System, the nerve branch which governs the vital organ (see diagram). In other words, the vital organs become sluggish, because of insufficient supply of Nerve Energy. This is manifested by a cycle of weakness and disturbances in digestion, constipation, poor blood circulation and general muscular lassitude usually being the first to be noticed.

I have for more than thirty years studied the health problem from every angle. My investigations and deductions always brought me back to

the immutable truth that Nerve Derangement and Nerve Weakness is the basic cause of nearly every bodily ailment, pain and disorder. I agree with the noted British authority on the nerves.

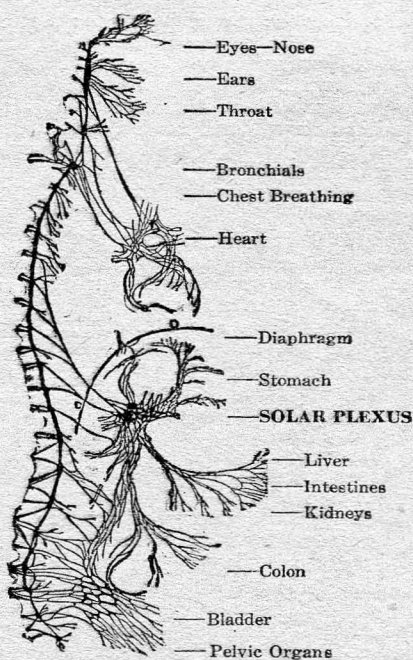


Diagram showing how the Solar Plexus, known as the "abdominal brain," is the great center of the Sympathetic (Internal) Nervous System. Mental strains, specially grief, fear, worry and anxiety, paralyze the Solar Plexus, which in turn causes poor blood circulation, shallow breathing, indigestion, constipation, etc. This in turn clogs the blood with poisons that weaken and irritate the nerves. Thus Mental strain starts a circle of evils that cause endless misery, aches, pains, illness, weaknesses and generally lower mental and physical efficiency.

Alfred T. Schofield, M. D., the author of numerous works on the subject, who says: "It is my belief that the greatest single factor in the maintenance of health is that the nerves be in order."

The great war has taught us how frail the nervous system is, and how sensitive it is to strain, especially mental and emotional strain. Shell

Shock, it was proved, does not injure the nerve fibers in themselves. The effect is entirely mental. Thousands lost their reason thereby, over 135 cases from New York alone being in asylums for the insane. Many more thousands became nervous wrecks. The strongest men became paralyzed so that they could not stand, eat or even speak. One-third of all the hospital cases were "nerve cases," all due to excessive strain of the Sympathetic Nervous System.

The mile-a-minute life of to-day, with its worry, hurry, grief and mental tension is exactly the same as Shell Shock, except that the shock is less forcible, but more prolonged, and in the end just as disastrous. Our crowded insane asylums bear witness to the truth of this statement. Nine people out of ten you meet have "frazzled nerves."

Perhaps you have chased from doctor to doctor seeking relief for a mysterious "something the matter with you." Each doctor tells you that there is nothing the matter with you; that every organ is perfect. But you know there is something the matter. You feel it, and you act it. You are tired, dizzy, cannot sleep, cannot digest your food and you have pains here and there. You are told you are "run down" and need a rest. Or the doctor may give you a tonic. Leave nerve tonics alone. It is like making a tired horse run by towing him behind an automobile.

Our Health, Happiness and Success in life demands that we face these facts understandingly. I have written a 64-page book on this subject which teaches how to protect the nerves from every day Shell Shock. It teaches how to soothe, calm and care for the nerves; how to nourish them through proper breathing and other means. The cost of the book is only 25 cents. Bound in purple leather, 50 cents. Remit in coin or stamps. See address at the bottom of page. If the book does not meet your fullest expectations, your money will be refunded, plus your outlay of postage.

The book "Nerve Force" solves the problem for you and will enable you to diagnose your troubles understandingly. The facts presented will prove a revelation to you, and the advice given will be of incalculable value to you.

You should send for this book to-day. It is for you, whether you have had trouble with your nerves or not. Your nerves are the most precious possession you have. Through them you experience all that makes life worth living, for to be dull nerved means to be dull brained, insensible to the higher phases of life—love, moral courage, ambition and temperament. The finer your brain is, the finer and more delicate is your nervous system, and the more imperative it is that you care for your nerves. The book is especially important to those who have "high strung" nerves and those who must tax their nerves to the limit.

The following are extracts from letters from people who have read the book and were greatly benefited by the teachings set forth therein:

"I have gained 12 pounds since reading your

book, and I feel so energetic. I had about given up hope of ever finding the cause of my low weight."

"I have been treated by a number of nerve specialists, and have traveled from country to country in an endeavor to restore my nerves to normal. Your little book has done more for me than all other methods combined."

"Your book did more for me for indigestion than two courses in dieting."

"My heart is now regular again and my nerves are fine. I thought I had heart trouble, but it was simply a case of abused nerves. I have re-read your book at least ten times."

A woman writes: "Your book has helped my nerves wonderfully. I am sleeping so well and in the morning I feel so rested."

"The advice given in your book on relaxation and calming of nerves has cleared my brain. Before I was half dizzy all the time."

A physician says: "Your book shows you have a scientific and profound knowledge of the nerves and nervous people. I am recommending your book to my patients."

A prominent lawyer of Ansonia, Conn., says: "Your book saved me from a nervous collapse, such as I had three years ago. I now sleep soundly and I am gaining weight. I can again do a real day's work."

Publisher's Note—Prof. von Boeckmann is the scientist who explained the nature of the mysterious Psycho-physic Force involved in the Coulon-Abbott Feats; a problem that had baffled the leading scientists of America and Europe for more than thirty years, and a full account of which will be published in the March and April issues of Physical Culture Magazine.

The Prevention of Colds

Of the various books, pamphlets and treatises which I have written on the subject of health and efficiency, none has attracted more favorable comment than

my sixteen-page booklet entitled "The Prevention of Colds."

There is no human being absolutely immune to Colds. However, people who breathe correctly and deeply are not easily susceptible to Colds. This is clearly explained in my book NERVE FORCE. Other important factors, nevertheless, play an important part in the prevention of Colds—factors that concern the matter of ventilation, clothing, humidity, temperature, etc. These factors are fully discussed in the booklet, "Prevention of Colds."

No ailment is of greater danger than an "ordinary cold," as it may lead to Influenza, Grippe, Pneumonia or Tuberculosis. More deaths resulted during the recent "FLU" epidemic than were killed during the entire war, over 6,000,000 people dying in India alone.

A copy of the booklet, Prevention of Colds, will be sent Free with either the 25c or 50c book, Nerve Force. You will agree that the booklet on colds alone is worth many times the price asked for both books.

PAUL VON BOECKMANN

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NEW YORK

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Little Mistakes That Wreck MARRIAGE

Why do so many married couples always live at cross purposes? Why do they grate upon one another? Why shouldn't their lives dovetail instead of being a sort of saw-tooth existence? Why do they get on one another's nerves? What's the matter with marriage anyway! Instead of perfect happiness and understanding why does marriage commonly bring discontent and sorrow? Is it that people do not know how to marry or is it that they do not know how to act after they are married? In either case, why shouldn't you know more about marriage? If you contemplate taking the step why should you take it blindly. If you are already married why shouldn't you be perfectly happy?



Take the Risks Out of Marriage

It's the little mistakes, the little misunderstandings that often make marriage a risky proposition. Instead of two lives blending into one through marriage these two lives often go off on a tangent. Life for both becomes a question of nagging, bickering, criticizing and doubting. Yet thousands of couples living in married misery could just as readily enjoy the daily contentment that marriage should bring. When marriage means as much to people as it does, don't you think you should understand it? There are many little secrets that really take the risks out of marriage and send it on its way toward continual happiness. We want to tell you these secrets and we want to tell them to you without any cost.

FREE "FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF MARRIAGE"

Professor Ray C. Beery, A.M., the author of a number of books on marriage and other subjects now offers you his expert help. Some of the questions he answers are fault-finding, jealousy, doubt, suspicion, quibbling, incompatibility and other sources of matrimonial discontent. Let us send you his little book, "Fundamental Principles of Marriage." It will cost you nothing now or any other time and it will not obligate you in any way to send for it. Just a postcard or a letter will bring it to you at once. Why not write now?

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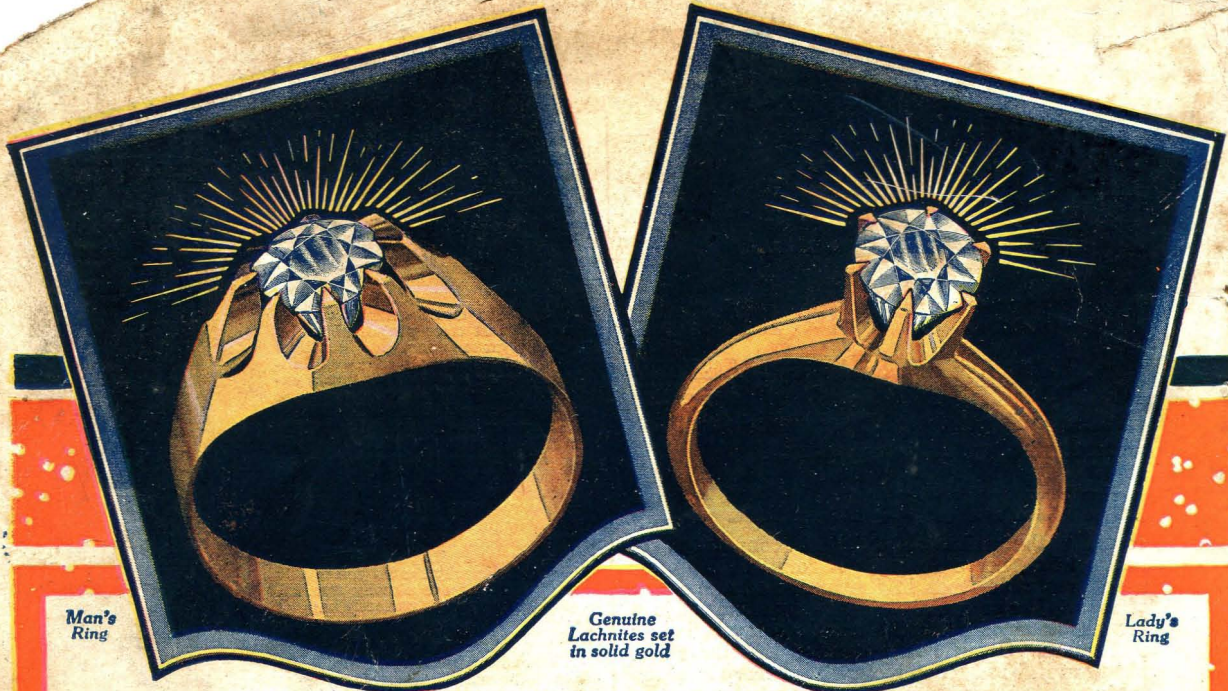
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in solid gold

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Ring

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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 accidentally 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 brilliance. 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 . . | 4970°F. | 5050°F. (platinum melts at 3187 F.) | 850°F. (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**.

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.



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Mail this Coupon

Harold Lachman Co., Dept. 1902, 204 S. Peoria St., Chicago

I enclose \$1.00. Send me prepaid on 10 days' free trial Ladies' 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

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