SNAPPY STORIES

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July 15, 1922
Vol. LXVIII, No. 1

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SNAPPY STORIES

VOL. LXVIII 2nd July No. No. 1

CONTENTS

Cover by C. Becker

Cuts and Decorations by Bruel, Arden, Lauren Stout, Donner

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.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, $4.00 SINGLE COPIES, 20 CENTS

FOREIGN, $5.00 CANADIAN, $4.50

THE NEW FICTION PUBLISHING CORPORATION

9 East 40th Street, New York

H. B. EMERSON, President H. E. MARTIN, Treasurer

Entered as second-class matter August 14, 1915, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of March 3, 1879

This issue dated July 15, 1922

CONFIDENTIAL

Fiction holds a mirror up to life—and life holds a mirror up to fiction.

It would surprise you to see the number of letters we get from readers telling us, "I knew someone who had an experience like that," and "almost that very thing happened to me." Which is why some stories have an extra strong human appeal. They match up with what people have felt and gone through.

Interesting indeed have been the spontaneous comments on the novelette "Why Girls Leave Town" which appeared in the Second May SNAPPY.

> "This is certainly true of life in the small towns," writes Mrs. S. "I am originally from Washington, Penn., and had to run away from it. Now, thank God, I am happily married to a man with a good paying business of his own. I always read your magazine and enjoy all the stories, but I can truthfully say that the writers of this story have given me more satisfaction than a movie, because I have lived out in more than one small town and know what goes on. I sure liked to see Fred Hawthorne get it in the neck for more reasons than one."

John P. R., a traveling man, likes the novelette but takes issue with the authors on one point.

> "The dope in the story is straight stuff. I have been in hundreds of little towns where the same kind of goings-on prevail."

But when it comes to the small town girl's going to the big city, it seems to him a case of—

> "out of the frying pan into the fire. Much better for her to stay and marry one of the home town men. But I enjoyed the story, and many a man in my line will do the same, because we've seen the small towns."

How did *you* feel about it?

If there is a story in this issue you're reading that matches up with an experience you've had, write and tell us. We'd like to know.

THE EDITORS

The Head of Madame

By Harry King Tootle

These models! No matter how well the poor artist behaves, they are a constant hazard

THE blow had fallen. Although it had impended more than once, when it really came it came as a surprise. Francisco Murdo, the well-known (to his confreres only) Greenwich Village painter, stared at the letter in astonishment. Then he counted the money in his pockets. The total was four dollars and seventy-four cents. That sum was all that separated him from the Hudson River and oblivion.

Murdo gazed about his studio. It was barer than an æsthetic dancer. Gone were the batik draperies of the opulent days of his allowance. Gone was the sofa which had masqueraded as a chaise longue by having its back and one arm knocked off, its honorable wounds then having been covered with an imitation Navajo blanket. Gone were the rugs. But the pictures—ah, the pictures!—remained.

Who in the Village could sell oil paintings which were not masses of geometrical figures? Francisco Murdo was not appreciated because his art was honest. He could give a picture the lineaments of its model as well as the soul. In the Village that skill made him anathema among the forward-looking young men and women. Now that he was broke the Village would rejoice and be exceedingly glad.

Upon the young man's grief entered Ardeson Beaumont. Gall was added to wormwood, because Beaumont—a Cubist, and worse—looked his prosperity.

"Why the lodge of sorrow?" inquired the visitor airily.

"This!" With tragic intensity Murdo handed his friend the letter.

It was from the office of Murdock & Murdock, Manufacturers of Plumbing Supplies, St. Louis, Mo. The letter read:

Mr. Frank Murdock,
New York City.

DEAR MR. MURDOCK:

Your father has requested me to state that he cannot see his way clear to supply you with further funds under the circumstances. He suggests that you return to St. Louis.

The firm of Murdock & Murdock is preparing a new catalogue of bathroom fixtures. We have had one hundred new photographs made of the stock, and we must have them retouched before having the half-tones made. Your father suggests that you return and do this retouching at the usual price paid by the firm, five dollars a photograph.

Yours truly,

ELSIE OLIVER,
For Mr. John Murdock.

"Well," commented Beaumont, "it is a generous offer. It is five hundred dollars for you."

"Am I a painter of plumbing supplies!" groaned Francisco Murdo. "Must I be plain Frank Murdock and throw Chinese white high lights into swinging soap racks and rails for bathtubs? No! A thousand times no! I would rather become a follower of Gauguin and Matisse and draw as badly as you do."

The visitor flecked an imaginary speck of dust from his sleeve. In this manner he indicated that the insult had passed him by without rankling in his soul.

"My dear Frank," he replied. "I am one of your father's disciples. He preaches art that pays. To keep yourself alive would you object to doing an honest oil painting for an advertisement?"

"Not if I do not have to sign my name to it," replied Francisco Murdo, after an inward struggle that visibly wracked his frame.

"Then listen. Goldblatt, who does the work for old man Sandrock, has gone to Europe. The old man wants someone to do an oil for him to advertise his new Sandrock's Barley Beerette. Squinch, his advertising man, told me at the club to-day. Run up to the brewery and tell Squinch I sent you. Be sure to ask five hundred dollars for the picture. If you ask less, he will think you are no good. If you get five hundred you will do as well as if you had taken the bathroom fixture job."

Two hours later Francisco Murdo returned to his studio. As he gazed about the bare walls his imagination replaced the batik hangings, the rugs and the chaise longue. He was already spending the five hundred dollars. His first act was to write to Murdock & Murdock. He addressed Miss Elsie Oliver as follows:

DEAR MADAM:

Mr. Francisco Murdo has asked me to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the third inst. Mr. Murdo is so busy at present upon a portrait of a prominent society woman that he is unable to accept even other New York commissions. It will not be possible under any circumstances for him to go to St. Louis. Mr. Murdo asks me to express to Mr. John Murdock through you his appreciation of the offer.

Yours truly,
ARTIMISIA MENDOZO,
Secretary to Mr. Murdo.

What he had in mind for the picture was a beautiful woman, airily clad, and with a foaming beaker in her right hand. She was to recline upon the back of a goat, her left elbow resting upon the goat's head between the horns, her head supported by her left hand. And she was to be, oh! so airily clad. Greenwich Village was full of models, but was there the combination he desired? He catalogued the charms of his Venus of the Goat. He could take the Trilby feet of Mamie Granden. The Spinelly legs he could get from Lucy Coulter, who did stocking advertisements. The deMilo torso he could get from

Nan Murphy of the art school. But the head bothered him.

This could be no ordinary head. It must be a head with a certain *chic*. It must be an exotic head. It must be a head of the south; a head with something Latin in it, Gallic at any rate. The face must radiate pleasure and refinement, to convey the impression that one who drank Sandrock's Barley Beerette would come to look just like the divinity upon the goat's back.

It was noon the next day before Francisco found the model for the head, quite by accident. He had searched the tea-rooms and the subterranean dance halls until three o'clock in the morning and had not found her. And now she came to him, a *dea ex machina* descending from a nondescript taxicab near Jefferson Market. At a glance the painter saw that she was his ideal. He would gladly have dismissed the three models he had engaged on tick, could he have taken this lissom woman in their stead.

In every way she was beautiful. In every gesture she was grace personified. She did not belong to the station in life of the models he knew. She was a creature of luxury, a creature of too much luxury perhaps.

Fascinated, Murdo watched her. The young woman seemed terrified. Yet what was there to frighten one in Greenwich Village? She cast furtive glances about, as if fearing she were under observation. She strolled toward the elevated station, looking up from time to time at the Market clock. Murdo walked rapidly past her and waited by the newsstand. She paused there and he had a chance to study her. The gods had favored him. Here indeed was his model, if he could only have her long enough before him.

While the painter studied her, there bounded down the stairs a young man who could have posed for Apollo himself. He rushed up to the goddess from the taxicab and shook hands with her effusively.

"Decidedly, they are not married—to each other," mused Francisco.

As she greeted him she looked about as if to see if they were observed. Murdo, canny fellow, was gazing at a magazine devoted to finance and banking.

"Decidedly, they don't want to be seen—together," commented Murdo to himself. "Human nature is much the same whether it is in St. Louis or Greenwich Village. And so is my human nature. I shall observe what becomes of them."

The Apollo of the elevated escorted his divinity to a little restaurant not much frequented at the noon hour. The artist took a table near them, and used up all the menus from the four surrounding tables making sketches of the goddess. She wore a wedding ring. Francisco licked his chops as he enjoyed their clandestine meeting. He felt a third at the table.

The meal, with tip, cost the painter eighty-five cents. He agreed it was worth it. He rapidly made a rearrangement of his budget, switching

the big meal of the day from evening to midday.

As the beauty was handed into a machine, Murdo heard her say, "Here to-morrow then."

"At the same time, madame," answered the man with courtly grace as he closed the door of the taxi.

"I shall be here, too, madame," added the artist as he loitered near; only he said it under his breath.

Murdo was off almost as fast as the taxicab. He scuttled to his studio and there painted all afternoon like forty devils. At the end of the day they stared at him from all over the room, his sketches: madame smiling; madame doubtful; madame puzzled; madame triumphant; madame surrendering.

It was a head of refinement; it was a head of intellect; it was a head that tempered passion with caution and eagerness with prudence. He had only to close his eyes and have her brunette beauty before him. The tendrils of chestnut hair framed a face with color bursting through rounded cheeks to tone the tawniness of skin. Her dark, sparkling eyes were only more restless than the dimples in her cheeks.

At the lunch hour day after day Francisco studied the unknown. Her name he never sought to learn. He was always the gentleman. He simply called her madame, following the lead of the handsome fellow who came every day to laugh away her fears as she glanced furtively around with the feeling that a hundred tell-tale eyes were upon her.

When the picture was finished Murdo invited Ardeson Beaumont to view it. The disciple of Matisse pursed his lips as he looked at it and gave a little whistle.

"It is a fine chromo to please nitwits," he said cynically. In truth, it was a beautiful picture. "It will sell."

"The first thing I do will be to give you a dinner, my friend and benefactor," cried Murdo. "Had it not been for you I should not have got the commission. I have worked hard to do you honor."

"Get in a taxicab with your masterpiece and go up to Sandrock's Brewery. Have you the money?"

"I have a dollar and a quarter," said the artist as he made a census of his pockets.

"Take this five dollars. The taxi fare may be more than you have. I shall be here at six o'clock for you to take me to dinner."

"Telephone Mamie Granden and Lucy Coulter to come at six, too," Murdo called from the taxicab. "We'll dine in state at the Purple Muskrat."

At the brewery Murdo backed cautiously out of the taxicab with his precious painting. The machine registered a dollar ten. He gave the chauffeur fifteen cents as a tip. In the advertising department the painter began to unwrap the work of art for Tom Squinch's inspection. The advertising director telephoned Sandrock that the painting was there. Now the brewer was a busy little man, hiding his more than mid-

dle age under a nervous, unresting activity. He hurried across the hall to the advertising department just as Murdo proudly placed the painting on an easel under the light.

Willebald Sandrock took one look at the picture and began to tear at his collar. Without having glanced at the painting Tom Squinch had gazed at his boss to take his cue for approval or disapproval. He saw Sandrock seemingly about to have a stroke of apoplexy. He hurried to the brewer, but too late to catch him. Willebald Sandrock was not falling. With a shriek of rage he rushed to the table, seized a paper knife, dashed at the picture and began to cut it to shreds. Before he had reached it Tom Squinch had gazed in horror upon the unwrapped painting.

"Get out of here, and get out quick!" came the sudden command of the advertising director to the astonished artist. He seized Francisco Murdo by the collar and pushed him from the room.

"Here! Here! What's it all about?" gasped Murdo.

"Get out of here, you big boob," cried Squinch. "What the devil did you mean bringing Mr. Sandrock a nude portrait of his young wife!"

On the pavement Murdo got his bearings and limped in the direction of a crosstown car.

"At any rate, I still have Beaumont's five dollars," he reflected. "I think I had better dine uptown alone to-night."

Words

By Floyd Meredith

OH, I could give you words,
Dear and gay and shy,
But words are only speech,
And would they satisfy?

Let us not say: "I love you,"
Oh, let our words be few,
But, dear, the speaking silence
Between us two!

She Was Difficult to Reach

By Harry Irving Shumway

THE night was alluring in every way. Soft breezes caressed, lingered and sighed away. The gentle lapping of water came to our ears from below. The silver crescent riding above seemed never so soft before. Sweet smells of flowers added their touch. It was a night of romantic feeling.

I reached out my hand and touched the fingers of the girl beside me, a shadowy form of indistinct loveliness. "This is a wonderful night," I said. "Don't you feel the spell of the moon and—"

She sneezed.

It was like a slap in the face. So unlooked for. But I laughed and began again. "Do you know when I look at you with the moon silvering your wonderful hair, it seems to me—"

Slap!

"Drat that mosquito," she said and relapsed into silence. My sensibilities were shocked, dampened. When I wished to be carried away by the magic spell of the evening my beautiful companion seemed not to feel its call—surely it must reach her. I made another attempt.

"Hear the little waves lapping down below," I murmured. "We might well imagine ourselves, just you and I, upon some South Sea Island and gazing out over coral reefs to a moonlit sea. Can you not—"

"Oh, my hair!" she cried, pulling at a strand. "I guess it caught on this wicker chair. It's rough."

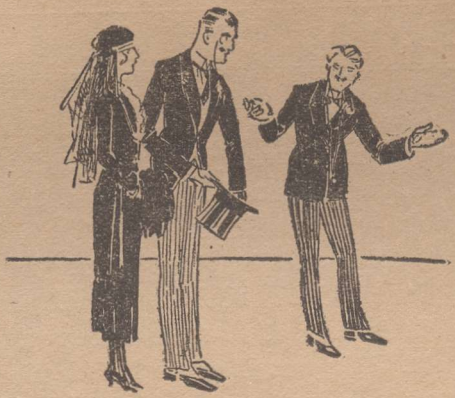
I felt as if a pitcher of ice water had been thrown in my face. Was there no romance in this girl's make-up at all? Could so lovely a creature be devoid of that intangible something that reaches out for the magic of an evening like this was. It seemed so. And yet—well, I'd try something a little different.

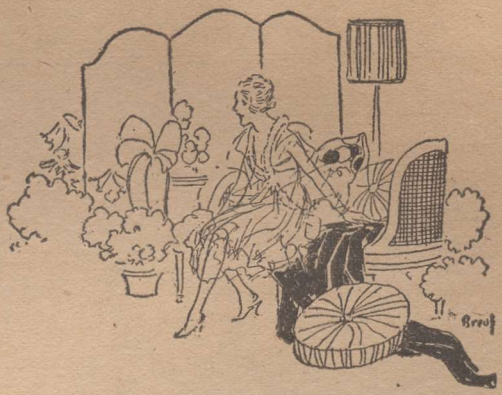
I leaned nearer, deliberately placed my arm around her waist, turned her lovely face to mine—and kissed her on the neck.

"I saw the peachiest diamond and emerald necklace yesterday that would look just great on the spot where I just kissed you. I think I'll buy it for that spot."

"Oh, Jack," she sighed, swaying towards me. "Aren't you—you so—so romantic—and poetical!"

The evening had got to her at last.





Pretty Plaything

A NOVELETTE

By Frances Harmer

Do women want to be men's playthings—
or their weapons? Antoinette finds out

I

ANTOINETTE RENOIR turned from the big house on the hill impatiently, and with a truly Parisian shrug of her flexible shoulders. She had just given the Benjamin children their dancing lessons—two hours of hateful drudgery, for which she had four dollars in her handbag.

Perhaps she was cut out for a danseuse, perhaps not—but she was quite sure that she was not temperamentally fitted for a dancing teacher. At least, not the teacher of the Benjamin children, with their awkward, self-conscious movements, their lack of feeling for rhythm, their roly-poly normality.

"I beg your pardon. Is this the home of Mrs. Benjamin?"

The question interrupted her meditations. The questioner interrupted them still more. Antoinette knew all the young men in Hillville, Connecticut—but here stood one she had never seen before. And he was interesting! About thirty, possibly even a little more, and entirely different from anything that Hillville could possibly produce. The first impression she had of him was one of grayness. His smartly-cut suit was gray, his eyes were as gray as pebbles, and there was a stony cast to his features, a look of fixity to his square jaw and straight forehead.

But he was attractive, very attractive, and in a man's way.

Antoinette smiled slightly, yet dazzlingly, marking with exactitude the *nuance* between too much complaisance and too little.

"The home of Mrs. Benjamin is here. And she is at home. I have just now left her."

He murmured a few words of thanks and replaced the soft hat he had taken off when he first addressed her, making the gesture include a bow, and continued on his way. Antoinette, with a beating heart, continued on hers, in the opposite direction. But, after a few steps, she ventured to glance back. He was walking briskly toward the house, and not looking back, which piqued her a little but spurred her on to determine that, one day, he *should* look back!

Then depression seized her—why *should* he ever look back? Would Mrs. Benjamin not inform him that she was merely a dancing teacher? Fatigued with her morning's efforts, she went down, down, down! What chance would she have to meet anyone like him again?

Instead of going home, Mademoiselle Renoir betook herself to the stores, where she bought shell pink *crêpe* and a string of jet beads, marked down. At their original price of five dollars, she had admired without emotion, as one admires stars—not thinking of them as personal adornment. She had been ever so slightly thrilled when they had figured with other trinkets in a group labelled, "All in this window, Four Dollars." Consideration of them had not come till they were two dollars and seventy-five cents. To-day, at two dollars and twenty-five cents, she made them her own.

The shopping and a very modest lunch had occupied two hours. Therefore, it was not to be marveled at that, turning into her own street at the foot of the hill, she should meet Mrs. Benjamin, Emily and Georgette, driving to town.

What was more than good of Fate was the fact that the stranger should be with them, that Georgette—*petite ange!*—should call out a greeting so affectionate that, coinciding with a slight congestion of traffic necessitating the stopping of the Benjamin car for a few moments, introductions naturally followed. Yet even this good fortune paled before what immediately succeeded it. Mrs. Benjamin, important, yet gracious, leaned from the window and said:

"I shall be glad if you can come up to-night and arrange a little dance with the children, Mademoiselle. Bring your own things also. Mr. Cary must be entertained a little. I will send the car for you at eight."

II

Antoinette lost some of her high spirits as she crossed the threshold of the little cottage which was her home. Her mother, a sallow, discontented looking woman of about forty-five, looked up with a frown.

"What kept you, Tony! It's turned five o'clock!"

"I know, Mother. But—" and Tony recapitulated the events of the day.

"Well, she might have asked you to dinner," Mrs. Renoir grumbled. "Never once has she done that."

"I'm thankful she didn't, Mother, dear. Run me out the machine, will you, like a love. I'm going to make this into a smock."

"By eight o'clock?"

"Two seams, dear, and four hems. Nothing to it."

But when she slipped it on, over her white skirt (she made no pretence at evening dress), there was a good deal to it. The oval neck just revealed the tips of two white shoulders. The lines fell gracefully. And the black beads made her skin look ravishing and gave tone to the delicate pink.

Tony was more than satisfied as she looked critically into her mirror. She had the unusual combination so *piquante,* so arresting, of a pearly skin, golden hair, and dark eyes, set in brows and lashes of ebony. Her slender grace was partly the outcome of a beautifully moulded body, partly of severe training. Her father, now two years dead, had known some fame as *un maitre de ballet* and had intended her for his own profession.

Her American mother—New England at that!—regarded his taking as the intervention of a Providence bent on salvaging Tony from a life of shame. Puritanism ran rife in her veins.

She had fled from Paris at once, put Tony in a girls' boarding school with Presbyterian overtones, and only this year, when her education was considered complete, permitted her to teach dancing to the Benjamin and other Hillville children. But she was horrified at the idea of her daughter's developing her talent.

And this night, Mrs. Renoir was unaware of the filmy chiffons left from Paris school functions which Tony carried in a little suitcase down the garden path and into the Benjamin car.

But Tony made her entrance in the pink smock. And she had the feminine delight of seeing Mr. Cary start. In evening dress, he looked, she decided, like a prince. There were other guests, the *élite* of Hillville, evidently fresh from the dinner table. Coffee was served as Tony entered the room, and the guest of honor managed to approach her with sugar.

"I hardly expected to find Terpsichorean revels in Hillville," he smiled down at her. "Mrs. Benjamin tells me that you could gain entrance into a ballet if your mother would allow it?"

"But she will not!" Tony sighed over her one real grief. "And she is so far from strong that I must not oppose her."

"But you would like it?"

Tony lifted laughing eyes.

"My dancing shall answer you that."

It did. After the children's charming performances, Mrs. Benjamin called upon Tony for an exhibition.

"We three will do the *'Danse des Papillons.'*"

She went away to change into her gauze tunics and reappeared, transformed. Lovely she had been before, but with arms bare, and loose flying draperies, she was hauntingly beautiful. The dance, a simple but well arranged composition, was delightful. The children were the butterflies, she herself the nymph chasing them. Her technique was of an old school—the true *ballet*—and of those who watched her as she pirouetted, floated, swam, languished, or glided over the shining floor, none knew what hours of pain and weariness had gone to this wasted perfection.

Yet she stirred deeply the emotions of her audience, for she possessed that elusive thing, genius; the magic combination of personality, talent, and training.

"But she should be on the stage!"

"It's a crime!"

"Someone should speak to her mother."

A word or two of this came to her, and made her heart beat, her cheeks flush. What bliss, what a life, might lie beyond the dull walls of circumstance now enclosing her, if only Mother would see things!

The dance ended, she bowed to right and left, holding the chubby hands of Georgette and Emily. Her brief moment of pre-eminence was over. In a few minutes, she would be in the car, on the way home.

But—he had seen her, seen her at her best. It was not to be asked that Fate do more—yet!

However, Fate did more. As she came down the stairs, Tony saw Mr. Cary standing in the hall. He turned to her, and the girl felt a thrill of fear—but delightful fear! Everything she had dimly longed for, half timidly hoped for, seemed upon her. He came very close, as she halted trembling on the last step.

"You're a wonder! A darling!" He whispered the words, as his hand sought hers. "I've got to see you again! Do you hear me? Must see you!"

"Oh!" She could say no more. She was trembling with excitement, with that half delicious fear, with slowly growing rapture at this sudden burst of life.

"I leave to-morrow evening. Where can I see you, and when?"

"Oh, oh!" then she heard Mrs. Benjamin's voice nearing the open drawing room door, and hurried. "At the foot of the hill, to-morrow at three."

He released her hand, only just in time, passed her with a bow and went upstairs.

Mrs. Benjamin and the children came out. Tony hardly heard their adieux, their compliments. Hardly knew that she was being escorted to the waiting car. Only when she felt herself swinging down the sloping drive did she realize that she had made an assignation with—almost—a stranger! That not a word of this must be told to her mother! That life, romance, mystery, love—all were coming into the calm of her days—at once!

III

"DARLING, sweet little plaything, don't! I feel worse than you do!"

Tony lifted a tear-drenched face.

"No, Guy, you don't! You can't! You're going to New York, to big things and crowds of people—I'm just staying here. Alone!"

"I wish I could take you with me, dearest. You haven't any conception of how badly I want you. If I had a wonderful, lovely, jewel box of a home for you, and if I could come there when the day's work and struggle was over—I'd do big things."

"What sort of big things, Guy?"

"Nothing you could understand, dear. Contracts with firms abroad, importing and exporting of great cargoes. Money, in tens and hundreds of thousands. I am in this all day, and it fascinates me. But somehow I can't escape it and rest as some men do at night. Theaters, dances, clubs, cards—none of them interest me. You do. I want to have you all for myself—my one girl harem. Why can't I?"

"Why," she laughed and blushed, "you couldn't take me altogether away from my mother, could you? I'm all she has."

"True." He frowned thoughtfully. "But if we took her, too?"

"I don't think she'd come. I don't think she'd consent to—my being married—so young."

Then she blushed rosily, remembering that he had never yet mentioned marriage.

"True, again." He was abstracted, not really talking to her. "I've half a mind to see what she says to it."

Tony flashed a quick glance at him.

"What would you say to her?" she asked, with innocent craft.

"Take me home, and I'll see."

Life was again rosy. But, at the door, Tony paused.

"Guy! She only knows that I've met you a few times at Mrs. Benjamin's! I haven't mentioned—the walks, you know."

"No need to."

"MOTHER, dear! Mr. Cary wanted to call on you before he went away."

Mrs. Renoir turned, in some surprise.

"I am very glad," she held out her hand. "Tony has told me of your visit to Mrs. Benjamin's—two visits, in fact."

"The second was on her account," he smiled, as he accepted a seat. "Let me have your mother all to myself, Miss Tony, will you?"

For an hour Tony waited for that interview to end. At last, the door opened. She flew to greet Guy as if she had not seen him for a year.

"What have you had to say to her?"

"Quite a lot." He drew her into the little porch entrance, and clasped her close. "She'll tell you. How much do you care for me, Tony?"

"All my heart, all my soul!"

"Make a sacrifice for me?"

"All the whole wide earth—all the heavens above."

She lifted her face for his eager kisses.

"That's my girl! We'll be happy yet. I'll write to-morrow. Now, go in to her and she'll tell you."

But Tony clung to him.

"I hate to let you go, Guy. Out into the big beautiful world where there are so many beautiful women, all wanting to take you away from little me!"

"No one could do that, Tony. No one can ever do for me what you can. Good-by!"

"Good-by for very long?"

"Perhaps for only a little while."

When at last she had let him go, Tony danced in to her mother's dour presence.

Her mother was staring into space, with a queer expression on her face.

"Oh, what is all the mystery?" demanded Tony.

"Your young man is quite a talker," said Mrs. Renoir grimly. "He's almost convinced me that black is white! I've always been so strict about these divorces, and yet—"

"Divorce! Mother!"

"Maybe I'm making a mistake, like when I married your father—but mistake or no mistake, he's convinced me, and I'll go through with the crazy scheme!"

"But, Mother, what crazy scheme? What did Mr. Cary tell you?"

"A lot of stuff about how fond he is of you, and that he can't marry you for a long time."

Tony's exquisite face was blushing and dimpling.

"But he wants to marry me?"

"When he is free."

Tony started, looked at her mother's serious face, and threw herself on her knees in front of her.

"Mother! *Free?*"

"He has a wife who won't release him just now. You know my principles, but—"

Tony crouched on the ground, the light stricken from her face.

"He has a wife! Oh, Mother!"

Mrs. Renoir became stubborn in the face of opposition. "At least, he is a man who will get on in the world—and after your father, I certainly want you to get a man who knows how to make a respectable living for you. But you—"

"Mother, please explain everything."

"This is what he proposes, Tony, and I think it is very sensible and highly proper. You are to consider yourself engaged to Mr. Cary—formally engaged. It may be a long engagement, depending on how things work out in connection with his wife, but it will be a regular engagement. And then you and I will move to New York, where we can have a little apartment and he can see you, as he could not in a smaller place. Then, as soon as he is free, you and he can be married. Can you wait—in that way?"

"I don't know." Tears were welling from between the fingers pressed over her eyes. "It isn't the same. He has a wife."

"She is ten years older than he. He was barely twenty when he married her. I don't think he's so much to blame. And she takes drugs."

It was pleasant to hear her mother defending him.

"But, Mother, we couldn't *afford* New York."

"You could get more pupils there than here—and charge more."

"And you'd not mind that?"

"Tony, I'm not a strong woman, and I want to see you safely married to a successful man before I pass out. I've made enough sacrifices for you. I've suffered enough through your father. And now I see a way to ease and happiness for you—why not take it? Don't think I liked being snubbed by these Hillvills folks any more than you did. And it's going to be pleasant to take away the biggest fish from under their noses!"

Tony laughed to herself at her mother's strange mixture of conventionality and freedom. This mixed temperament probably accounted for her strange marriage and her inability to make a success of it.

But Tony was happy. A slight disillusionment remained in her heart, but she tried to forget it, and gayly prepared for New York.

IV

"THIS is something like!"

Guy Cary spoke the words with profound satisfaction. He was seated at one side of an open fire, for the weather, in late September, was chilly. Mrs. Renoir occupied a low chair on the other. They were both looking at Tony, who was dancing for them to the strains of a Victrola on the wide rug in the middle of the cleared floor. She was in her *"Danse des Papillons"* tunic, flying, darting, gesturing with delicious abandon. As the music stopped, she sank in an exquisite pose to the floor.

"The water is boiling for the tea," her mother remarked. She rose to leave the room. Guy sprang to his feet to open—and close—the door. Then he strode to Tony, who was laughing up at him, and lifted her in his arms. He kissed her passionately.

"Oh, Guy, be careful!" she gasped at length, when she could. "Mother would be so shocked!"

"If I could have you to myself! Not to have these snatched kisses," he snatched some more, "darling, you must, must give me the first day I can get off. A picnic—"

"Too cold—"

"Finer days will come—"

"Mother wouldn't understand my wanting to go without her. She's so proper!"

"I know. But *we* do?"

"We *do!*"

He carried her to his chair, sat down and took her on his knee.

"I'm mad about you, Tony!"

"I'm mad about you, Guy."

"Well, then—" She struggled in his embrace.

"Sh-she's coming."

"Not a sound! You're trying to cheat me."

Tony yielded, suddenly, to his clasp.

"Tony, give her the slip, when I go away. Just put on a wrap and come for a walk with me."

"Dear, mother would be furious if she thought I'd do a thing like that. She has a violent temper. . . . What a long time she is!"

"Want her to come in?" He crushed her to him.

"N-no, not exactly," she laughed, panting for breath.

"Listen! I've a wonderful scheme. You won't mind, if you love me."

"What is it?"

"Let her think I've got my divorce and that we're married! Then I can at least take you out for walks."

"Guy, you're *insane!* If we were married, Mother would go away at once. She told me so. She thinks young people ought to be alone, at least the first year!"

Suddenly she sat up.

"Let me go. Something's wrong."

She hurried out to the kitchen. Then, hearing her cry, Guy followed her. Mrs. Renoir lay very white and still on the floor. Tony, distracted, knelt beside her, tearing at her blouse.

"It's her heart again. Get a doctor, quick!"

Guy went to the telephone. Tony, listening, noticed that he seemed to have his number pat. Then she heard the words:

"Race up here—it's my wife's mother!"

Mrs. Renoir moaned at that moment and Tony became absorbed in such simple remedies as she knew. Guy came out and helped her.

Soon the doctor came. He was a tall young man with a quizzical face, which grew very grave, however, as he laid his fingers on Mrs. Renoir's pulse. Tony noticed that Guy made the same error—if error it was—in speaking to the doctor.

"My wife's mother."

Mrs. Renoir's eyelids fluttered.

"Guy—is that—right?"

"Trust me," he whispered. "She will be."

The doctor wrote a prescription.

"Telephone the drug store, dear, to send for it," suggested Guy. As Tony obeyed, she noticed, but only subconsciously, that he took the doctor aside, as one who knew him.

When she came back, he said:

"Dr. Sharp advises a milder climate, dear, at once. He will make arrangements for a sanitarium in Hot Springs."

"I'll look in to-morrow morning." Dr. Sharp began packing up his bag. He had administered a hypodermic. "Call me, Cary, if there is any reason."

"He is a friend of yours?" Tony remarked, kneeling by her mother. They had carried her into her bedroom.

"Yes. Known him for years."

"Well, then," Tony turned to him in astonishment, "what would he think—of what you called me?"

"Oh, we don't butt into each other's private lives. Now, Tony, be sensible. He must think that—to account for my sending you both to Hot Springs, which I am going to do."

"But—"

"No 'buts' in the case. You couldn't go without money and plenty of it. I've got that, and you're mine, Tony. What on earth should you lack money for when I've got it?"

"You're very good," the girl faltered, "but—"

"'Buts' again? My child, you're essential to me. I've done better in my work for the good cheer of coming to you every night. No, my pretty plaything, don't think I will give you anything you haven't earned."

Tony smiled:

"'Your Pretty Plaything!' I might be another Nora!"

"Don't begin to think, then. *That* ruined Nora."

V

It was pleasant in the well-run sanitarium, with abundant means to command the very best in service and attention. But Tony fretted at the prolonged absence from Guy, whose letters, daily missives of love, told her how much he missed and wanted her.

Then, suddenly, about the middle of October, he appeared on the scene. Mrs. Renoir was better but the physician advised her remaining where she was, for the winter, at least.

"Oh, but Guy—that means I shall be all that time away from you?"

"No, dear—not if you'll be sensible and let her think that what will one day be true, is true now."

"It can't be, Guy. She'd expect us to be married in her room, rather than have her absent from the wedding."

"You'd better run up to New York, then—and let her think we pulled it off there."

Tony was silent.

"Isn't there some cousin, niece, somebody—she'd like with her?"

"Yes—a third cousin of mine—Dolly Winter."

"Get her, then—pay her a salary. You see, everything is easy once you consent to this, Tony. Now, manage it. Come up the day after tomorrow."

"I'll think it over, Guy."

He had to let it go at that. But, three days later, longing for him, Tony went. In less than twenty-four hours, she returned to her mother, with Dolly, a pretty, soberly merry little girl of two and twenty, always a favorite of Mrs. Renoir's—and of her own flesh and blood. It was with a strangely jealous ache that Tony saw her settled as her mother's companion.

". . . And you and Dolly will travel, Mother, just as soon as the doctor permits. Dolly's to have fifty dollars a month and all expenses. You're to have a hundred and the bills here go to Guy."

"Oh, Tony, if I could have seen you married!"

Tony bent her head.

"It had to be quiet, Mother—and we're not announcing it for a month, for business reasons. So don't talk it over with Dolly."

"You'll tell me as soon as I may?"

"Send you the announcement, the first one, dear."

Sad as she felt when the parting moment came, Tony's spirits rebounded on the trip North. To be able to go about with Guy, see him frankly—that would mean a great deal.

"But, to her surprise, he met her at the Pennsylvania depot and took her immediately to an apartment much further north than the one in which she had lived with her mother. It was more costly—"a jewel box"—but almost in Yonkers.

"Dearest, I'm absorbed in tremendous deals just now. And, of course, I want to protect you—till we can make this real. So I'll come up here to see you, my pretty plaything, and we won't go about together. You spend the days as you like. I'll come up—"

She looked at him, wide-eyed:

"Guy!"

"My life! You're trusting me? You're to be mine—but it may be years before I secure that release."

"Guy!"

"Not willing to make any sacrifice for me? Is that what your love is? Well, Tony, I'll do what you wish. *When you want me—send!* You know where."

And he was gone!

For five tortured days, five wakeful, wretched nights, Tony fought—fought for her honor, for all traditional standards, for the right to hold up her head before the world, to look unashamed into her mother's face when she should see her again. But, on the sixth day, ill, feverish, lonely, and more wretched than she had ever been before in her life, she sent a telegram to his club:

"Come to me. Tony."

A wire came from Washington:

"Meet me here at seven will be at depot. Guy."

At the depot she found him waiting. He led her to a taxi.

"Missed me, my Pretty Plaything?"

"Oh, Guy!"

"Love's the real thing, the big thing, isn't it? I'm going to show you it is. Here we are."

The taxi had stopped before a small, handsome hotel.

"I shall come back for you in half an hour."

"Guy—how shall I register?"

"Just Miss Renoir." He went in with her. She wrote the name with a dull sense of disappointment.

But when, in her prettiest frock—he had insisted on her getting clothes when she first came to New York—with a realization that at least her loneliness was past, she went down to meet him, her spirits were rising fast. In his evening

dress, handsome, distinguished, he came forward to join her.

"Tony! You're a dream!"

It was pleasant to be told that, after the tortured doubts of the last week. And dinner, with champagne, a gay musical comedy, supper, with yet more champagne, all combined to make her feel that she had been taking life too seriously. After all, one was young but once. Why fling away happiness for convention's sake?

"I've wired them you're spending the night with friends—at your hotel," he said, when they were once more in the car. "I've borrowed a little place on the outskirts—we've so much to say to each other, Tony."

VI

BACK in New York, Tony gave herself up to the present, to her love, to Guy's need of her, to the delight of being his pretty plaything, the sunshine of his strenuous life. She did not go out with him, very much. She danced for him every night—he seemed never to tire of watching her, and she gave up a good deal of time to practicing. There happened to be several terpsichorean shows that winter, and in the afternoons, she attended these. One night, over the dinner their Japanese houseman had prepared, Tony said:

"Guy, I wish I *could* dance—in public."

Guy frowned:

"Never, Tony. Your mother would hate it, and I couldn't endure other eyes seeing you as I see you. Put the idea out of your pretty head, Plaything. You dance for me alone."

And, in spite of the fact that she was pining for some mental pabulum, Tony did put the idea aside, and bent all her energies to being the lightsome, frolicsome toy whose tricks enabled him to find that relief from toil so essential to his success.

It was a week before Christmas that a telegram from Dolly told her of her mother's relapse. She hurried down to Hot Springs.

"She's been quite well and so cheerful, till just the last two days," Dolly said. "She seems worried about you."

Tony took charge of the sick room—that is, as much charge as the nurse would allow. But the end, she could see, was near.

"Dear, are you happy? Is he kind?"

The whispered words came from feeble lips. Tony put her own close to her mother's ear.

"He's as good as gold, Mother. No one could be kinder."

The dying face lightened.

"I—was—so—afraid," she faltered. "I'm—so glad. Tell him so. My dreams were not true."

She did not regain consciousness. And once again, Tony realized the comfort of abundant means. Guy wired her three hundred dollars and urged her to stay in the sanitarium till after Christmas.

Her mother died on Christmas Eve and Tony had her own grief and Dolly's to sustain. When, after the

funeral, she began to make plans, she found herself in a state of collapse. The physician advised a complete rest. Dolly was glad to stay with her, and so it was well into the new year before Tony could pick up the strands of her life again.

She was aware of a slight relief at her mother's passing. Now, there was no fear of the truth hurting her. She arranged with Dolly that the furniture stored in Hillville should go to relatives, she sent all clothes to the Salvation Army, and she gave Dolly herself a hundred dollars over her expenses. The two girls traveled together to New York, then Dolly went to her Connecticut home.

Guy did not meet her, but the apartment was lavishly supplied with flowers.

"I must, I must keep up. I must be cheerful. I must be his pretty plaything," thought Tony, as she sat by the window, waiting for him. "But I wish I could be permitted to grow up! I'd like to discuss big things with people. I must take some classes in something, I must read. And he needn't know."

When Guy entered the room, she thought that he looked at her oddly, furtively.

"He's wondering if he has to put up with tears," she thought, and drove them back.

"Well, darling?" His tone held something tentative.

"Oh, Guy, dear—we mustn't be unhappy. She didn't suffer and she sent her love to you—and now we needn't be afraid of her knowing. Let's not mope, dear. Want me to —to dance?"

His face lightened. He caught her in a fierce clasp.

"You darling! I was afraid— Tony, you're a trump."

So, though she had to bite her lips to keep back the tears, Tony put on record after record and made merry for her lord. Guy, leaning back in a comfortable chair, a fine cigar between his lips, felt the cares that infested the day melt into thin air.

"I've missed you so," he said, when she collapsed into his arms, "my pretty plaything! You're what every man wants—and so few have."

"Oh, but Guy—when shall I be able to come out of hiding? Are you trying—about that divorce? It can't mean to you what it means to me, but think of me!"

"I always think of you, darling."

"Do it, then—"

"Just as soon as it's possible, Tony. Trust me."

"I wish I knew more about your work, Guy. Just what is so strenuous, so trying?"

"Plaything, if you could understand even the words in which I explained it—well, you wouldn't be a plaything, but a damned unattractive, brainy woman! And I'd never want to see you again!"

VII

Towards the end of January, the blow fell.

After a spell of weather so bad that Tony had not left the apartment—and for two nights Guy had not come up to it—the sun shone, the sky showed cloudless breadths of blue, and the air was pleasantly nippy. Then—it was Saturday—Guy telephoned her that he was coming up to take her for a drive.

He was perturbed. No denying that.

"Brought you something, Plaything."

He showed her a little case. It contained a diamond pendant, on a platinum chain. Tony gave a cry of delight.

"Like it?"

"Oh, Guy!" She looked at him suddenly. "Does it mean—that it's coming?"

"What?"

Her heart sank.

"You *know!*"

"Oh," he had evidently not caught her meaning before, "no, dear. It means, alas! that I have to go away on business. I want you to get that Dolly person and go to Atlantic City with her, till I come back."

"For how long?"

"Three weeks."

"Couldn't I go, too? Stay somewhere near?"

"No, you could not."

He took a turn across the room, then stopped and faced her.

"Tony, sit down. You're bound to hear of this. It can't be kept quiet. Never mind Atlantic City. There'd be papers and gossip there. Tony—now be a sport! Don't make a scene," he took both her wrists, "I'm going to be married!"

"What?"

"Married."

"Yes—to me!" But she was frightened.

"Not to you, my pretty plaything, though I'd love to, Tony; you're the only woman, so help me God, I've ever really cared for. But I'm the most ambitious man I know. I've got to get to the top. I'm marrying—because that'll get me there in half the time."

"Marrying—*someone else?*"

"I don't want to."

"But—how *can* you? You mean," she wrenched her wrists free and stepped back, "you mean you got your divorce? *When?*"

"Tony, that was just to bluff you—and quiet your poor mother. There was never any need for any divorce. I was never married."

"You—you—said—"

"See here, Tony. I did it all for you. You'd have come away with me, from Hillville, you know. I'd have had you. I didn't want to do that. I wanted you to have the protection of your mother's presence. That was the only way to get it. If I hadn't cared for you, thought of you and for you—I needn't have lied about it. You'd have come."

She went to a chair and sat down.

"Yes—I suppose I would have."

"It's decent of you to admit it. You know, Tony, I was hoping you'd take it—quietly. Some girls would have howled, and raised Cain—but I don't think you take things to

heart as some would—and a jolly good thing, too. I was glad you could dance—remember?—so soon after your poor mother went. Now, Tony, this needn't make so big a difference; I'll look after you—always.

"Before long, I'll make you independent for life. Able to snap your fingers at *me,* if you like. You don't have to do a thing, or give me a thing, if you don't want to. But, after a time—why, Tony, we couldn't ever be anything but good friends—you and I, could we?"

Tony sat still. He came behind her.

"You believe me, dear?"

Still silence. He put his hands on her shoulders.

"I didn't mean to tell you. I hoped, madly, that you *never* need know. That was folly. The darned business is too public. Tony—pretty plaything—"

She rose and faced him. In the dead whiteness of her face, under its crown of gold, her eyes, large, dark, wide open, blazed at him with fires that startled him. He stepped back.

"Tony—why, Tony—"

"Stop," her lovely voice was rough. "Don't dare add another insult to those you've been heaping on me. Don't tell me how you hope I'll continue to be your mistress!"

She flung the pendant at his feet.

"Listen!"

She went to the telephone. Alarmed, Guy took a step to her, then paused:

"Tony—"

"Long distance," she called. "Hillville, Connecticut—"

"Tony—"

"Mrs. Benjamin—"

"My God, Tony—do you want to ruin me?"

He was bending over her, trying to take the receiver from her hand.

"Leave me alone. I'm not mentioning you."

Relieved, but still a little doubtful, he moved away.

"Mrs. Benjamin. This is Tony Renoir. I'm in trouble. I've lost my job. . . ."

(Guy made a gesture of furious despair.)

". . . Will you wire me twenty dollars and let me come and stay a little while with you?"

"Tony, this is madness—"

"Thank you so much. This is the address. . . ."

Guy went to the window. He was beside himself.

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Benjamin. Good-by."

She rose, and came to him. He turned round.

"My dear girl—"

Her things had been lying on a chair, ready. She put on her hat.

"I must wait here for the money she will send."

She picked up her bag and emptied it on the table.

"I'll some day pay you back all you spent on me—and my mother—though God knows, you had value received. And, don't misunderstand me—one day you'll grovel on the

earth before me, and I—I, who will by then have ruined you—will laugh at you. Get out of my sight!" It was as if she went suddenly mad. "Go, or I shall find a way to kill you!"

No *man* counted Guy Cary a coward. But he went!

VIII

Mrs. Benjamin sat frozen to her chair.

"Oh, *Tony!*"

"Now I've told you all."

Tony, facing her, watched her face anxiously.

"I can do just one thing well—I can dance. You know people in New York who will help me, don't you? That is why I turned first to you. I must do that one thing that will pay. I must—*must*—make something of my life."

"Yes, I can do that, Tony, and I will. But if only you had come to me before. *I* could have told you he was not married!"

Tony's face quivered with pain.

"Dear Mrs. Benjamin—I *didn't!* I trusted him. And, in a way, I must remember that my mother died in peace and with many comforts—oh, I won't say he *gave* them to her! *I* paid for them! I paid for them with what was priceless. Now, help me to forget him."

Mrs. Benjamin turned to her desk.

"I'll give you two letters, Tony, to managers I know. And I'll lend you two hundred dollars—and you must tell me, mind, if you need more. *I* introduced Guy Cary to you. I'll do what I can to undo what *he* did."

There was a silence broken only by the scratching of her pen—she used a plumed quill—upon the glossy surface of the paper. Tony, unable to keep still, rose and walked about the well-remembered room. How innocent, unstained, she had been when she walked about it last!

Mrs. Benjamin rose and came to her.

"There, dear. And if I can do anything else, you're to be sure and let me know."

Tony accepted the two letters and the check and dropped them in her little handbag.

"You are very good," she faltered. "I begin to think all the goodness in the world is intrusted to just a few of its women."

"Some men—" Mrs. Benjamin was beginning, when the door opened and Georgette and Emily bounded in, their governess behind them.

"Oh, Miss Renoir! *Dear* Miss Renoir!"

The two little girls were rushing forward, when their mother called, very sharply:

"Georgette! Emily! Don't stay here! Go—both of you—with Miss Jones."

Then, to the little governess, still sharply:

"Take them to their room, Miss Jones, and wait till I send for them."

Amazed, disappointed, the children obeyed, pausing at the door to kiss their hands to Tony.

She, turned to marble by the unexpectedness and bitterness of this blow, watched them. As Miss Jones closed the door, Tony looked at Mrs. Benjamin.

Mrs. Benjamin looked back at her.

"I'm sorry, my dear," she was breathing hard, "but a mother's first thought is for her children. I couldn't let you—"

She did not finish. Embarrassed and perhaps a little ashamed, she went back to her desk.

Tony looked after her. Then she opened her bag, and took out the two letters and the check. For a moment, she stood in doubt. She longed to lay them down. But the cruel realization of how little she could afford such pride, how helpless and poverty-stricken this gallant gesture would leave her, conquered the impulse. She put the letters back, but held the check in her hand.

"Mrs. Benjamin?"

The lady turned round. There were tears in her eyes.

"Mrs. Benjamin, I am keeping the letters. After all," Tony's chin went up, "they will profit the managers as much as they profit me. But the check," she put it on an adjacent stand, "I can't take. And the first money I earn will go to paying you back your first loan."

She swiftly went out of the door.

IX

It was an afternoon in April—Guy Cary's wedding day!

Tony had no fear of recognition. Her suit was so shabby, her carriage so dejected, her appearance so down and out, that she knew she could stand unchallenged in the spot by the church steps she had managed to creep to and hold. Someone couldn't stay till they came out, and into the someone's inch of foothold she had managed to creep.

Her twenty dollars had long, long since gone. No work, except in a chorus, had been available. She felt it was folly not to wait for something better than that. She must have a chance to dance a solo, or every advantage she had would be lost in the crowd. She would have no chance for distinction, no opportunity to show the public what she could do. So, in despair, she had sent to Dolly for more money, and Dolly had replied by coming to her, insisting on sharing her room and looking after her.

Tony's mind reviewed the bitter months of the late winter and early spring as she waited. She scorned herself for waiting. It was a cheap, idiotic thing to do, she told herself, and that on the very day that was to see her last chance with the manager, but recently returned from Europe, to whom she had her perforce unused letter of introduction from Mrs. Benjamin. Odd, if Guy wrecked her last chance, through her desire to see the woman who was to hold her place!

At last!

The doors opened. The ushers came out. The low gray car moved

so as to be more exactly in line with the center of the steps. And, down them came Guy Cary, with a tall, white-veiled figure on his arm. Tony felt a wild terror. If he should turn his head, see her, know her? After all, her eyes, her self, remained the same.

Then she lifted her bent head and saw the face of her successful and unconscious rival. A very handsome face, with big brown eyes, and a pouting mouth, with handsome, heavy features that matched the heavy, voluptuous figure. A beautiful girl, yes, but of the beauty that would mature too early, be lost in weight, a little later on.

"Oh, but why should I hope that?" Tony was smitten with remorse. "He doesn't love her, and she will find it out!"

For the bridegroom's set face showed no rapture. Tony, who knew that face so well, knew that. He was already paying bitterly for the success that seemed in sight.

Closer, closer, they came. Tony's head was bowed again, so that only the top of her shabby hat could be seen. Then, as they were upon her, an usher's elbow, almost in her chest, drove her back as far as the watchers behind would let her retreat. Guy and his bride, under the usual shower, entered the closed car. The crowd slunk back. Tony slunk with them. When she could draw a free breath and stand erect and alone, something fell from her hat into her hand.

Just a grain of rice!

X

DOLLY, two hours later, paused in her patient marching up and down, outside the stage door of the Metropolitan Opera House. What a long time poor Tony had been in, waiting, no doubt, for an interview, which, like all the others, would end only in disappointment.

And then she came out. Her face was very pale. The rouge showed in odd little patches. The lips looked crudely red. The eyes blazed from the shadow of the long, dark lashes.

"Dolly!"

"Oh, Tony, dear! Don't be—what are you doing?"

For Tony had beckoned to a taxi, who swooped down to the curb.

"Get in, Dolly. Uptown, driver, to One Hundred and Eighteenth Street. Dolly—look!"

She opened her clenched hands. Inside them lay a wad of bills.

"Tony?"

"The psychological moment, dear. The *premiére danseuse* eloped last night, after the performance. They'd been trying aspirants out all day and were in despair. I danced as I had never danced before—as perhaps I shall never dance again."

"You're engaged?"

"At five hundred a week, and a long contract. And, Dolly?"

"Yes, Tony, dear?"

"Don't call me that again. I am 'La Diane' straight from Paris! Just 'Diane', Dolly, from now on. Tony—Tony—*is dead!*"

XI

THE magnificent dining *salon* of the Rushforths' was filled with a gay party the night of the opening of the Metropolitan Opera house. The new ballet had been widely heralded, and the Rushforths in common with many others, were dining early to enjoy the first glimpse of *La Diane,* the French dancer who had replaced the eloping *premiére danseuse.* Her tour through minor cities had been tremendously successful.

"They say she's awfully like Genée," remarked the daughter of the house, now more than six months a bride.

"I hear that she is of a personality, of a charm," added a young French attaché, run up from Washington for the performance. "A powder puff with a soul!"

"Did you hear of her in Europe recently, Baron Von Hapshof?" Mrs. Rushforth turned to the guest of honor at her right hand.

The gentleman, a handsome, grizzled, profoundly melancholy-looking individual, with three or four orders on his breast, turned to her.

"La Diane? No. But I have had little time for dancers, Madame."

"Who is he, Mr. Cary?" The lady Guy had taken in put the question curiously. "An Austrian noble, someone said."

"He is a new form of merchant prince. He is building up commerce between this country and Austria. Silver was discovered on his estate, and he managed to find backers to finance its working. They all made moderate fortunes, and now he controls a chain of factories there and stores here. He is taking in other activities—banks, theaters, and even papers. One day the Monroe doctrine will interfere with him, but, at present, he seems to have the senators buffaloed."

"But our own merchant princes? Don't they find him a rival?"

"No, because he has joined forces with some of them. He shares his products with them, and with them only."

"It doesn't seem quite right." The lady knit pretty, puzzled brows. "Won't anyone stop him?"

Guy smiled grimly.

"Someone may."

"Mr. Cary! I believe *you* will!"

Guy was tired, and his powers of resistance weakened. He was missing the relaxation Tony had once given him more and more. Claire was no pretty plaything!

"I and three others may. We're risking a good deal on the chance."

"I call you patriotic!"

"I'm not so sure. I'm just helping my country to grab most of the plunder of the world so that I may grab my share from my country."

"Oh, aren't you cynical!"

The gentleman the other side of her claimed her attention. The lady the other side of Guy was engrossed with the man on her other side. For a moment, his thoughts were free to wander, as they so often did wander—groping after Tony!

He had done ill, and now he knew it. With her to fly to, when the fierce struggles of business were over, he had re-issued the next day, strong of heart and clear of head. And *that* condition had done more for him than the partnership secured by marrying Claire Rushforth. True, he was now the guiding partner, his father-in-law being old and infirm of will, and the other Rushforth a mere absentee.

But he worked alone, lacking wise counsel, and fretted beyond measure by Claire's exactions. Not that she pursued him with too much love, but she was determined to appear the adored wife, and insisted on his presence at her side evening after evening, till the treadmill wearied him, till his brief nights were sleepless and his waking fevered.

To-night, he counted almost as an off night, however. He liked the ballet better than any other form of amusement.

An hour later, he found himself with Von Hapshof, for whom he entertained a cordial dislike. The man held so exactly the position that he himself wished to hold—that of a merchant prince, governing vast interests, controlling millions. His one comfort lay in the fact that all Von Hapshof's advantages did not seem to make him happy. The long, thin face was melancholy, the eyes profoundly sad.

The box held six comfortably. Mrs. Rushforth, the lady he had taken in to dinner, and Claire, Von Hapshof, another man and himself.

"Ah!"

A little sigh went over the vast house. The talking died, as it were under that sigh.

The curtains parted, swooped aloft in curves. Twelve very satisfactory ballet girls came tripping in from the wings on either side, and formed into a lane. At the end of this lane, a grotto came slowly from the ground, a grotto like some immense flower, whose petals fell backward, revealing columns of water, sparkling in iridescent drops. These, too, fell back, and a form, a shimmering, silver-clad form, rose, rose, and rose yet higher, then stood, still and straight, with folded arms and bowed head. The ballet skirts stood stiffly out, the slender limbs were sheathed in silk. The face was half covered with a little black mask.

Plaudits, generously welcoming an unknown quality, filled the house. La Diane waited just long enough to acknowledge them, and then leaped onto the ground, and came down the lane of living beauty on the tips of her toes. A deep murmur of satisfaction came from the audience. Skill, agility, trained muscles? The twelve had those. Beauty of form? Most of the twelve had that.

But that indefinable something, that intangible aura, which, without a spoken word, can cross the footlights and enchain the audience, that which Fanny Elssler and Taglioni, and, in more modern days, Genée and Pavlowa can exert—that was hers! That was La Diane's alone, of all the dancers there.

At the end of a number so severe in its demand on skill and strength that the house held its breath, Diane sank upon one knee, a still image of frozen loveliness. The applause was deafening.

"Unmask! Unmask!"

The cry was insistent. Rising, bowing, showing the gleam of little teeth below the mask, she at last lifted her hand and removed it. The face revealed was of an exquisite, ravishing beauty. The eyes, the tremulous, wistful smile tore at one's heartstrings. The demonstrations of delight passed all bounds.

Leaning from their seats, Claire Cary and her mother and guests feasted their eyes upon the dancer, now making gracious obeisances to right and left, now bending over the flowers rained upon her. Ushers came down the aisle with more and yet more.

Von Hapshof stood up. Most of the men in boxes stood up. One alone sat still, his face ashen white, his lips pressed into a pallid line, his eyes staring wildly at that form of silver light upon the stage.

His Pretty Plaything, lost to him forever!

XII

La Diane lay upon the *chaise lounge* in her magnificent room facing the Hudson River. All about her were the floral trophies of her triumph. A maid was fastening little slippers on her feet.

The elderly lady engaged as chaperon was heating a delicate broth over a spirit lamp. Dolly was kneeling at her side.

"Aren't you happy, *Diane?*"

Diane looked across at the open window and beyond to the river, running darkly.

"Happy, Dolly? I can never be that again!"

"Oh, your poor mother! But she died so happy about you, dear. She thought you were going to be married!"

"Never."

The telephone rang sharply. Dolly rose and ran to it. She listened and then turned to Diane, her hand over the transmitter:

"The manager, dear. And he wants to bring a gentleman and a lady up with him?"

Diane lifted her head. She was in a pale rose *negligée,* but the kind of *negligée* that is possible.

"I am not yet famous enough to say 'no.'"

Dolly, whose sense of humor was not her strongest point, repeated this verbatim. Diane sat up, alarmed.

"I didn't mean you to *say* that! Oh, well, it doesn't matter. But take that away, Mrs. James, till they've gone."

The manager came in, rubbing his hands over the reply. Beside him was the imposing form of Von Hapshof and a tall lady in black.

"Mademoiselle Diane, Baron Von Hapshof, who saw your performance, begged me to arrange an audience for him, and for his sister, the Countess Berger."

Diane turned. At the sight of the woman's long, aristocratic face and snowy hair, she rose and came forward.

"Madame is welcome. Monsieur, I am honored."

"Mademoiselle, I have come to you with a strange proposition. May I state it?"

A little shiver of alarm clouded Diane's quick sensibility at the somberness of his tone.

"Mademoiselle, I ask no small thing. I ask that you abandon, even thus at its beginning, your stage career and consent to dance only for me?"

Diane stared at him. Then she turned to the manager.

"It will be our loss and the loss of the world, Mademoiselle. But the company of which you are at the head is merely an enterprise of Baron Von Hapshof's. His will is law."

Diane faced him.

"Ah, then, Monsieur—you can dismiss me?"

"That would profit me nothing, Mademoiselle Diane."

"Let me speak to her," his sister came forward, her English pure but haltingly spoken. "You can do for my brother, Mademoiselle, what every man with tremendous cares needs to have done for him—you can amuse, delight, render forgetful of strain and torturing anxiety. Few realize that the heads of vast organizations labor under anxieties as cruel, encounter difficulties as great, as kings in earlier, less strenuous days.

"You can give my brother such help as David gave Saul! You have a quality of gaiety, of grace, of beauty, that cheers, that scatters clouds of care. You can do this—you, out of hundreds more willing to do it, who are yet unable to delight him—as you will, because, because you are—*you!*"

"Monsieur then wants—a plaything?"

She said the words bitterly.

"If you will, yes." The Baron now spoke himself. "And if, Mademoiselle, it seems a small thing to delight one man, when your gifts could please thousands, remember that I rule over thousands and I may, by your help, rule better over them. Your influence may be as far reaching, even though I appear its only goal."

"The Baron controls vast interests, the manager interrupted, "factories in Austria, in Silesia, chains of stores in England, in France, here."

"Ah!" She remembered Guy's words. "Then—then—Monsieur would perhaps permit me some share in that power?"

"Nothing should be denied you, Mademoiselle, if you accept my proposition, which has care for your good name."

"And—that is—?"

"That you take up your residence with my sister here, whose home, wherever I go, adjoins mine."

Diane's eyes burned black in the pallor of her face.

"May I speak with Monsieur—alone?"

XIII

It was an evening in early spring. Guy Cary sat in his study—a ruined man. He was haggard and unshaven. The desk was heaped with papers and cigar ashes.

He looked up as the door opened to admit his wife. She was magnificently dressed for the evening, and a costly fur wrap fell back from her shoulders.

"Guy!"

"Well?"

"Papa is here, for me. I saw him to-day. He and mother agree that until you have a home for me, I must stay with them. Until you have a *suitable* home!"

"That is never likely to be mine, Claire."

He rose, looking coldly at her handsome face and superb figure.

"Then—we shall have to see about a separation."

"May I come in?"

Mr. Rushforth entered without waiting for permission.

"Claire's told you, Guy? I feel it's the right thing, you know. She can't stand poverty, you know."

"I do know it. Her extravagances have helped to bring me to this pass."

"That's cowardly."

"And it's untrue," cried Claire. "At the most, I have spent, this year, fifty thousand dollars. He is in the bankruptcy court for more than ten times that!"

"If you had stayed by me," Guy faced his father-in-law bitterly, "I'd have beaten the entire firm of Courtleigh and Courtleigh. It was your withdrawal left me at their mercy."

"The head of the firm warned me that nothing could save you. I did withdraw, just in time to keep my own fortune intact. You had made ducks and drakes with all that I gave you, as Claire's dower."

"And then he speaks of my extravagance! I was spending my own money!"

"I brought two hundred thousand into the business."

"Yet you used your partnership for a private grudge and ruined our chances of joining Von Hapshof."

"There has been an evil genius pursuing me." Guy put his hand to his head. "Everything I touched has turned to ashes. I started a chain of stores—new, original, should have been profitable. Courtleigh and Courtleigh started a chain in the same cities and undersold every commodity I offered. Whatever charters or franchises I sought to secure—that firm had secured them first. I know, now, that my own people were in their pay, that my plans were sold to them before they could be matured."

"I don't suppose that there is any truth in that," Claire objected coldly. "Why should any firm *pursue* you? Do you know these people? Have they any grudge against you? I understand they are two very respectable Englishmen."

"They are figureheads, my dear, merely," explained her father. "The real head is remaining *incognito*. Possibly it's some English duchess

—you never can tell. I heard that they had to go into conference this evening."

"Where are their private offices?" asked Guy.

"Somewhere in Broad Street! Look in the telephone book. But you won't get them to-night."

"Let us go, Papa." Claire accepted her wrap from his hand. "Good-by, Guy. I can't say you've given me much of a married life."

"Sorry, my boy, sorry, but you tried a game too big for your own capacities," murmured Rushforth, and followed his daughter.

Guy secured his number.

"What—meeting to-night—where? Thanks—good-by."

He hung up the receiver and rang his bell.

"My evening things—I'm going out."

XIV

He walked up the steps of the handsome house on Riverside Drive, with a vague feeling that he had heard something about it—some odd story of its belonging to a wealthy foreign woman, a Countess or Baroness. But, as a servant in livery admitted him before asking his business, he forgot it.

"I have an appointment with two gentlemen—the Courtleigh Brothers."

"This way, then, please."

Through pictures, vases, statues, rugs, furniture of an extraordinary richness, through two reception rooms and a hall, he was led into a magnificent and spacious library.

A handsome, white-haired woman was reading.

"I think there must be some mistake," almost stammered Guy. "I had an appointment—"

"With the power behind the throne of Courtleigh? If you will wait? You know, perhaps, that women have done great things in business often under their own names. The lady who has conducted this business prefers to remain *incognito* but—here she is."

The lady in black left the room. Another lady came slowly forward. She wore a dress so simple that it was out of place in that room—a white skirt and a little shell pink smock, with a chain of jet beads. Guy stared at her.

"Tony!"

"La Diane!" she corrected him. "And now—Courtleigh and Courtleigh."

"You? It is *you* who have ruined me?"

"As I told you."

"For a year—you have been working, plotting, scheming—"

"Ah, you had no fear—of a plaything?"

"Tony!"

"You took my life in your hands, and played with it. When you had no further need, you tossed it away. Now, we are quits. I know so much about you! Your wife will divorce you, before long. Not a capitalist will trust you. You cannot rise—again."

"You—*you*—have done this to me?"

"No. I have used your own weapons against you. But, in time, your own methods, your own greed would have brought you to the same pass."

"Tony—you are wearing—why, this is—two years ago to-night, since I saw you first. A year—Tony, I have never loved any woman but you. If, as you say and as I know, Claire will divorce me, will you not be satisfied with your vengeance?"

"Yes, quite satisfied. I shall never seek to harm you any more."

"Tony!" There was almost a sob in the relief of his cry. "Then—then, we can start over again! When I am free, I will marry you. With you at my side, I *can* rise again—I *shall!* Tony, you need not have schemed and intrigued to ruin me. Losing you ruined me. I can do nothing without—"

"Without your plaything?"

"Mine, Tony, mine. Say you forgive me, that you will come back to me. Tony, only love could hate as you have hated. Now that you have been so cruelly victorious—you will relent?"

"Ah," her voice softened, trembled, "I have ceased hating. I sometimes even think I have done wrong—that I should have left to a Higher Power the punishment—"

"Let's forget it, Tony. Let's start again. When Claire divorces me—"

Something in her look silenced him

"You had better go," she said, coldly. "It isn't safe for you to be here. *He* may come at any moment, now."

"He?"

"The man I shall marry, in three days. Oh," her voice was soft again, "there has been no heart in my vengeance, for a long time, now, because I no longer hated you."

"Then, Tony?"

"Listen—because of late, I have grown so content in being the Pretty Plaything to—the man I shall marry!"

"Tony!" He came quickly up to her. "You can't marry any man! You're mine, you always were mine. You—"

He retreated before the look in her eyes.

"The man I shall marry knows the truth—the whole truth—*except* my betrayer's name! If I tell him that—my betrayer will die. Ah, you should have thought! Latin hearts love deeply, but they hate. Go. Apply yourself to fresh efforts. Courtleigh and Courtleigh will persecute you no longer. Now, go!"

He remembered the time before when she had ordered him from her presence. Broken in spirit, he obeyed her now.

When he reached his home, he found the evening papers on his desk. And, somehow, one item, though not in any special type, arrested his attention:

"It will be remembered that, last November, a romantic incident

marked the opening of the ballet on the first night of the Metropolitan Opera House—a wonderful dancer appeared and took the audience by storm, only to disappear the next day. She has for a year been living quietly with the Countess Berger. A marriage will take place, on April the eleventh, between this dancer—a French girl named, according to unimpeachable authorities, Antoinette Renoir—and the Baron Von Hapshof, brother to the Countess Berger."

So! To his melancholy rival—whose power had of course supplied her hand with all that had been used to ruin him—to brighten *his* life, would go the pretty plaything he had thrown away!

XV

THE ship sped on across the waters sparkling in the moonlight.

A bridegroom, elderly, but handsome, stood with his arm around his bride of a few hours.

"If I can make you happy, Diane?"

"You can, August. I care for you so, I admire you so—"

They were interrupted for a moment by some passing idlers. One of them claimed Von Hapshof for a moment. Diane, with relief, alone, looked down at the waters rushing past.

"Yes, I am so grateful. I shall soon be so content. But, oh—if it could have been otherwise!"

The cry of so many hearts!

"Beneath the Stars"

By David Cory

BENEATH the stars our spirits kissed,
Like lilies in the night
When swept together by the wind
In rapture, breathless white.

For just a faint, illusive warmth,
A tender, fleeting sigh,
Fell on my lips, as if your soul
Had paused as it passed by.

Romance

By Mildred Evans

HAVE you ever kissed anyone besides me, Mabel?"

"Yes, Arthur, at the age of fifteen I kissed a boy in back of the schoolhouse. I kissed him squarely on the lips because at the time I believed myself in love with him. Between the ages of fifteen and twenty I kissed a sailor three times, a lawyer once, a school-teacher seventeen times, several day laborers once each, the ice man once; and I vaguely remember kissing my mother's fifth husband at a Christmas celebration. That is all. And you?"

"I kissed a stenographer two hundred and one times and an actress three hundred and forty-two times. That is all. Mabel, we have been frank with one another. I now propose, if it accords in every way with your tastes, if it will inconvenience you in no way, that we go over to the courthouse and obtain a license for a six months' lease on one another. Is it agreeable to you, Mabel?"

"Yes, Arthur, except that I suggest we make it a three months' lease, with the privilege of renewal at the end of that time."

"It is agreeable, Mabel. Let us seal the contract." They kiss, and immediately each one records the kiss in a notebook.

"Frankness is God's gift to the enlightened, is it not, Mabel?"

"Yes, Arthur—it dispells all hateful mystery. Of course, if you are unfrank to me the marriage lease is dissolved."

"Of course, Mabel. How old-fashioned and ignorant you seem to think me. Shall we go over to the courthouse immediately?"

"Yes, why not. I still have a half hour of my lunch period left. I am not expected at the office till one-thirty. Another thing. Shall I reserve Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays for you; or Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays?"

"The first days, by all means, dear. I think we shall be very congenial, don't you?"

"Indeed. Splendidly matched."

They reached the courthouse, were married, and lived happily for three months after.

Make 'Em Love You

By C. S. Montanye

Bevan fell for Cupid, since the arrow was gold-tipped

ALONG Broadway Archie Bevan was a well-known figure. The young man was everybody's friend. Sharpshooter, grifter, crust flopper, chorus dirty neck, penny-weight and bamboo-whiffer all gave him the high sign of the Lodge of Good Fellowship. Head waiters along the Alley tipped back chairs at choice tables when they saw him coming and personally fixed it so he got his rye highball in a discreet coffee cup.

Bevan was a good spender.

He was the junior partner in a William Street law firm and picked up considerable business along the main stem. If a show girl was pulled for busting her sweetie, it was Bevan who was sure to get her S. O. S. When a millionaire bootlegger got in a jam or a leading man had his contract broken, it was Bevan who came to the rescue with his craft and cleverness.

"One nice cuff-shooter," was the unanimous verdict, when the Rialto hounds spoke of him.

Danise Destyn shyly counted herself as one of the coterie of the popular young lawyer's friends. Danise was a "line girl" in a new show at the Casino. She was a notch higher than the ranks of the dancing chorus because she had a little dialogue and business. They were very little. In the first act she said, "Oh, girls, here's the Duke now!" In the second act she was allowed a peal of silvery laughter all by herself just before the finale.

For these brain-strainers she received five dollars a week more than the other girls.

Backstage Danise was called the "chorus widow." Whether she was sod, grass or golf, was a matter of conjecture. The truth was that two years previous she had entered the bonds of holy padlock with a certain young electrician who answered to the name of Edward Grimely.

One month after the nuptials had been properly celebrated, Grimely had gone out on the road with a burlesque show. He had written every day until the troupe played Detroit. There his letters had abruptly ceased. Danise didn't know if he had been run over by an automobile or run away with by a burlesque queen.

The fact remained that she never heard from or of him again.

She had loved her Eddie devotedly and had spent a couple of hundred dollars in detective fees. All she got in return for her money was the information that when the burlesque show had left Detroit, Grimely had been conspicuous by his absence. But

she hadn't given up. Even yet she was supporting the Wilmarth Agency, whom she had commissioned to search for her missing one.

Danise kept the little apartment on Fifty-first Street in which she had spent her honeymoon. She took in one of the girls of the Casino show to help pay expenses. She burned incense nightly before the photograph of the absent Eddie and shunned anything that bore a remote resemblance to a "date."

It was because she gave the cold shoulder to good times and figuratively, if not literally, wore somber weeds, that her friends had dubbed her the "chorus widow." She had only attended one function since Grimely had left home and that was the birthday dinner Archie Bevan had given himself on the eve of his twenty-seventh natal day.

The whole show had been present.

Danise was thinking of her missing husband as she touched a match to the gas burner in the kitchenette in the Fifty-first Street apartment one morning in May, shortly after the hour of eleven o'clock. Mavis Marleigh, the girl who helped her battle with the expenses of the establishment, yawned in the other room. Mavis hadn't arrived home until four p. s. that morning and was slightly enervated in consequence. She tottered into the kitchenette presently, a handsome, willowy girl with hair of a startling yellow hue and eyebrows she had inherited from her mother.

"What's the menu this morning, old dear?" she inquired, after a barrage of more yawns.

"Sausages," Danise explained briefly.

"I hope," Miss Marleigh said pointedly, "they are better than the ones we had last week. Those tasted like they were filled with chopped up transfers."

"There's nothing in the penal code that says you have to eat what you don't like," Danise answered shortly.

"Certainly not," the other said hastily. "We won't argue about it because, after all, what's a couple of sausages between friends?"

When the morning repast was placed on a gate-legged table the missing Grimely had bought second-hand for nine dolars, Mavis perked up considerably.

"I had the time of my young life last night," she began. "You should have been along. We all went up to Al Bernard's apartment for a big time. Al had sixty-nine bottles of home brew with a kick in them that would tear the rats out of your hair. We pulled up the rugs and turned on his electric pianola. We had a grand time, although there was just a little unpleasantness that came when we were almost ready to leave."

"What was that?" Danise inquired absently.

"The family under Al's apartment," Mavis went on, "are a bunch of crabs. They telephoned up and told us to can the hoofing. Well, Al don't stand for that sort of thing and he informed them just where they got off at. Then when everything looked

peaceful who comes up but the janitor to tell us to lay off. That got Al mad and so he soaked him one on the conk with an empty beer bottle and laid him out stiff. These little things do crop up now and then, don't they?"

Danise finished her fourth sausage.

"I suppose," she ventured, "the cops collected Mr. Bernard."

"Yes, they did," Mavis said. "But one of the boys threw in a call to Archie Bevan, who was over at Murat's, and he came right around with bail. Bevan says a pretty girl can always goal these roughneck magistrates so he wants me to be a witness for Al. Bevan said he would stop in here about half past eleven this morning to get my testimony. I almost forgot about it."

The fork Danise used slipped from her fingers.

"Archie Bevan coming here?" she gasped.

The other nodded.

"He'll only stay about ten minutes or so. You needn't bother to count the silverware after he leaves. You don't object, do you, hon?"

"No, not at all," Danise stammered. "I guess," she added, "I had better go and get dressed."

"No particular necessity for that," Mavis drawled lightly. "From what I hear about Bevan he knows more about a kimona than Rockefeller does about oil. Just slip on a boudoir cap and we'll polish the dishes before he shows up."

Despite the advice of the other, Danise was fully garbed in her best blue taffeta when Archie Bevan appeared some fifteen minutes later. Dutifully, she retired to the bedchamber while the popular young attorney and Mavis had their conversation in the living room. She remained there until her friend called her in at the termination of the interview.

"Archie," Mavis said, when she came in, "mitt my side-kick, Miss Destyn. We're in the same show together. She's all wool and a yard wide—a nice kid."

Bevan gravely shook hands with Danise.

She saw that he was one of those trim, alert young men who always appear to have just left the hands of a capable valet. The dark blue English lounge suit he wore, became his tall, sinewy figure. He was darkly handsome with a square chin, shrewd, slightly mercenary gray eyes and a thin mouth with a humorous quirk to its corners. He looked at Danise intently before speaking:

"Haven't we met before? Somehow your face is familiar but the name doesn't seem to strike the same chord of memory."

"I was at your birthday dinner last fall," Danise said. "Destyn is only my stage name. My legal moniker is Mrs. Edward Grimely."

Bevan lifted his brows.

"Oh, you're married?"

"Yes, but you'd hardly know it," Danise said. "If you can spare a minute I'll tell you the story of my husband. You are a lawyer and maybe you can slip me some dope."

"Excuse me while I go and dress.

I've heard the story once or twice before," Mavis Marleigh murmured politely.

Bevan sat down and listened to the tale with keen attention.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said, scribbling something in a notebook, when the narrative was over. "I'll shoot this to one of the boys down at the office who is a young wonder at looking up lost people. You made a mistake spending money on private detectives. Most of them couldn't find a wardrobe trunk in a hall bedroom. Perhaps it might be well for you to come and have supper with me to-night after the show. I might have something else to ask you. Will you?"

"I'd love to!" Danise answered simply.

After Bevan had departed, Mavis stalked in.

"So you and Archie made a date, eh?" the blonde girl remarked. "Well, dearie, let me give you a little free advice. Bevan never does anything for anyone for nothing. He's nice and all that but he's always got an ace up his sleeve. You can bet your life there's an object in his taking you out to dinner!"

It had been so long since she had supped with anyone that Danise was in a flurry of anticipative excitement all day. Her bubbling vivacity during the evening performance at the Casino surprised not only the other girls but the stage manager as well.

"Cutie," that dignitary told her between acts, "take my advice and don't let the habit get you."

"What habit?" Danise demanded indignantly.

He grinned.

"The homemade hootch one!"

Later, when the last curtain was down, and she was dressing with the other girls, good-natured remarks concerning the engagement with Bevan flew back and forth across the room.

"Darlink," the young lady next to her murmured sweetly, "don't go and get any funny ideas. I had a friend in the Follies, much better-looking than you, who lost eight pounds trying to get Archie to the altar. He's not the kind that tumbles for the old matrimonial guff."

"I couldn't get married if I wanted to," Danise said shortly.

The remark won her some free advice.

"Divorce him for desertion and nonsupport!" someone volunteered "That's what I'd do if I had a husband who didn't come home for two years."

"Do nothing of the kind," someone else cried. "My first husband tried to get away with that same stuff but I fixed him. I went out to Plainfield, New Jersey, where he was living with his creature. When I got through with him his relatives asked what kind of a car hit him and why he didn't watch out when he was crossing the street."

There was a general laugh.

"One plunk on the button," a girl who lived in the Bronx chuckled, "is worth five trials by jury. Make them suffer—that's my motto!"

Punctual to the minute, Danise found Archie Bevan awaiting her in the lobby of the Astor. She was slightly relieved when she perceived he was not in evening attire but was still garbed in the smart business suit he had worn that morning.

"Always bright and smiling!" he said, taking Danise's hand in his own. "Hungry, fair one?"

She smiled.

"I can eat a zebra, and enjoy every stripe!"

Bevan gave her a choice of restaurants, and she selected the St. Setelan. There, as was his custom, the young attorney was given a choice ringside table. He ordered with the careless air of a connoisseur, and watched the girl opposite with the corners of his lips turned down.

"Your husband is being looked up," he said. "Try and be patient for a little while. I'm positive we will learn something shortly. This boy I have on the case never falls down."

"I'll be patient," Danise replied. "After two years it comes sort of easy."

Bevan smiled.

"That's the idea. Dance?"

She circled the room a number of times in his arms, finding him a perfect partner, sensitive to every barbaric rhythm in the music. He appeared to have a deep understanding of feminine likes and dislikes, and when two o'clock finally came and they left the St. Setelan, the last of Denise's shyness had completely vanished. For the first time in months she discovered she had not thought of Edward Grimely once.

Bevan whistled for a taxi and took her up to Fifty-first Street.

"What did you say the name of the agency was that you had on the job?" he asked, when they stood in the gaslighted entryway of the apartment building.

"The Wilmarth Agency," Danise told him.

Bevan took her hand.

"You'll hear from me soon."

"Thanks awfully for a lovely time," she said softly.

"Don't mention it," Bevan replied. "You're a nice girl, and nice girls should always have nice times!"

She saw him again on Friday of the same week, and dined with him at the Hunter Island Inn. Still Bevan had nothing to report except that her case was not languishing through neglect. For some reason Danise merely shrugged at the information. Oddly, Edward Grimely was a person who was fading from her memory. She had even taken the photograph that she had burned incense before and put it on the top shelf of the linen closet.

Somehow, she felt that she didn't wish to be reminded of the one who had entered her life so slowly and who had left so rapidly.

"Well," Mavis Marleigh said one morning, a few days after the Hunter Island Inn event, "I see I don't have to go to court and be a witness for Al Bernard after all. Archie certainly knows how to bunk the judges. He had the case dismissed. So

that's all over except that Al is going to sue the owners of his apartment house for a thousand berries. His nerves are all shot from having had to flatten the janitor that night."

"Mr. Bevan is wonderful," Danise said.

Her blonde friend smiled cryptically.

"Evidently," she answered dryly. "When being out with him twice makes you take the picture of your husband and hide it up among the sheets and pillowcases. I suppose if you're out with him twice more you'll forget you're a married woman. I don't want to be catty, old thing, but Bevan isn't quite as rich as half of Broadway believes. And, as I think I told you, he never spends any money on anybody unless he figures he's going to get it back with interest."

"He has my interest," Danise remarked coolly.

Another four days elapsed, but she saw nothing and heard nothing further from the well-known young lawyer.

Discreet inquiries around Times Square furnished Danise with the information that Bevan was in Philadelphia on a case. For some reason she felt immeasurably relieved when she heard it. She began to ask herself questions to which she could find no answers. What was there about Archie Bevan that warmed her imagination and conjured up a tender emotion every time she thought of him?

Surely, she told herself, it could not be love. Still, if it was, what did it avail her? She was Mrs. Edward Grimely, bound by steel though invisible bonds to her absent husband. How could she ever marry anyone else so long as this condition remained unchanged?

It was an impossibility.

Of course, she was aware there was another way out. She was perfectly free to entertain and enjoy love in a cottage with anyone she so desired. But Danise put that thought sternly away from her. A babe of Broadway, she looked at life through worldly, wise and sensible eyes. She had seen too many *sans*-wedding-ring girls drive the barque of Love onto the treacherous rocks of disillusionment. She knew of heartaches and misery, of quarrels and disappointments, near-tragedies and nearer ones that resulted from a flagrant defiance of the staid old conventions. She knew that the primrose path was full of cruel thorns.

The best thing under the circumstances, Danise concluded, was to soft pedal the song that sang within her whenever she was with Bevan.

Yet this was difficult. The same evening of the day she had found he was in Philadelphia, Bevan was at the stage door of the Casino when the show was over, waiting for her with the inevitable taxicab.

"I thought," Danise said, "you had forgotten all about little me."

Bevan assisted her into the vehicle, sat down beside her and laughed.

"Far be it from such! I had to go to Sleepytown on a traction case. I didn't write because every day I thought I'd be back and every day I wasn't. I wanted to come to you again in person. You'll forgive me, won't you?"

"I'd forgive most anything you'd do," Danise said softly.

They went to Callag's.

During supper she noticed that he seemed preoccupied and listless. They danced once or twice, but there was little enthusiasm in his steps, and she was glad to return to their table.

"Somehow," Bevan said, when the midnight hour had struck, "I'm getting fed up on Broadway. It's a great little street when you first dip into it, but like brew it gives an awful hang-over. What I would like would be a little house in the country, with a garden back of it, and rambling roses around the door. It's no cinch trying to burn the candle at both ends. I'd like to settle down and cut out the nocturnal stunts."

Danise half shut her eyes.

"No matinees or six shows a week," she said under her breath. "No bawling out from a roughneck stage manager. No washing your pinkies and drying them over the steam heater so they'll be ready the next morning. No wondering how you can pay the rent, buy a pair of stockings and live for a week all at the same time. A little house in the country. It would be heaven!"

Bevan's mood of abstracted retrospection seemed to pass. He brightened up and conversed lightly until it was past two o'clock. When they left the café they emerged on a Broadway that lay supine and stirless under the early morning stars.

"Let's walk," he suggested.

Danise linked her arm with his.

"Walking and singing are two things I adore," she said briskly. "Let's!"

It was only fifteen minutes or so before they had reached Fifty-first Street and were in the hallway of the apartment building. As usual, Bevan took off his hat and joined his fingers with hers.

"Can't you come up?" Danise invited. "I'll get Mavis to make us a Blushing Bunny. We got a new chafing dish the other day with coupons, and there's no reason why we shouldn't all chafe together. Do you want to come up?"

"Want to?" Bevan breathed. "I'm dying to!"

"Follow me then, and I'll save your life!" Danise chuckled.

Upstairs, the front door of the apartment opened into darkness. The only visible sign of Miss Mavis Marleigh was a note left on the table in the living room that said she had gone to a "drag," and was staying all night on Washington Heights with some girl friends.

"That's just like Mavis," Danise said, provoked. "I never knew a blonde yet that you could depend on!"

Bevan removed his topcoat and helped himself to a chair.

"In the absence of the rabbit, I'll make merry with a cigarette," he declared. "Won't you sit down —near me?"

With fluttering pulses Danise perched herself on the arm of his chair. She could see the ripples in his dark, sleek hair, the light of his mercenary gray eyes, the attractiveness of his lean face. Her heart began to beat heavily.

"I like you," Bevan said in a low, vibrant voice.

Danise encountered his uplifted gaze and stirred.

"I don't see why," she answered frankly. "I'm only a chorine trying to kid myself that I'm a near-star because I have one line and a laugh in a Broadway show. I can't read a book without having a dictionary beside me to find out what it's all about, and when I have a letter to write I get Mavis to do it for me."

She drew a breath.

"While you," she continued with frank candor, "are rich and famous. Any girl would be tickled crazy to have you notice her. I don't see how a person like you could like a person like me."

Bevan put his arms around her and drew her down to him.

"It isn't *like*, it's love!" he whispered. "I want to marry you and share that little cottage in the country with you. I want to settle down and be a regular married man. Will you marry me the minute you are free, Danise?"

Through the sweet confusion invading her crept a peaceful happiness and contentment.

"The very instant!" she promised, giving him her lips. . . .

The following morning Bevan, in his private office on Willian Street, pressed a button for one of the clerks employed by the law firm of which he was a junior partner.

"Call up Wilmarth's Agency," Bevan directed, when the slave of the buzzer appeared. "Tell Wilmarth that I say he is to release the information any time now. Tell him to notify the young lady about her husband. Oh, yes, and bring me in that Texas telegram that came up last week."

A few minutes later Bevan picked up the yellow blank laid on the desk before him and considered the message typed across the face of it. It read:

"Edward Grimely investigated died two months ago Waco. Oil speculator leaves two million dollars authentic. Please advise if possible if married or any heirs."

Bevan reached for a cigarette, struck a match and smiled thoughtfully.

"Make 'em love you," he said under his breath, "and there's nothing to it!"

The Girl Who Tried to Do Right

By Mary Barratt

Treading the easiest way, one night, Sybil's feet stumbled into another path

MISS SYBIL LANTRY sat with her chin cupped in her hands. It was twilight, and spring. The scent of potted hyacinths came through the open window. Down the street a hurdy-gurdy played. Children scampered back and forth in the shadows; now and then girls and boys strolled past, two by two.

Miss Lantry followed each couple with her eyes, musingly, till the dark blur and the light blur seemed to blend in the little square of park. Innocent youngsters, these, who reminded you of your own far-away, two-some twilights. As she watched, the woman at the window looked as innocent as they. Soft light upon a soft dress will do that sort of thing.

Besides, Sybil Lantry's thoughts had floated back to the time when she wore gingham frocks—even sunbonnets!—when she thought the world whirled deliriously around one young fellow in flannels and blue serge, and when all the evils of life, though they may have been just around the corner, seemed a million miles distant. And it is impossible for a woman to look very cynical or wise when her thoughts are thus engaged. The woman-she-had-become was lost, for the minute, merged with the girl-she-used-to-be.

She wished, vaguely, that she was like that girl, that she hadn't changed. . . .

Then, suddenly, she straightened, drew back a trifle. The lines of her face went slightly taut. Her eyes narrowed. A smile—not a very nice smile—curved her warm, full lips.

The girl from the apartment across the hall was going briskly down the steps. She was carrying a suitcase, and walked rapidly. Sybil watched the lithe, buoyant young figure till it rounded the corner. She felt the hot sting of color on her cheeks. Then she laughed, softly, a little bitterly. It was absurd that this girl should affect her so!

But then, the girl herself was absurd. Just a small-town kid, come to conquer the city—as Sybil had come, how long ago she didn't care to remember. Not so long in years, but so long in experience. This girl, too, was fired with young energy, the battle was all new to her. She was still so ambitious that she got up

early in the morning to practice at her piano. The same movements, over and over. Over and over. It annoyed Sybil. She needed her morning sleeps! It was the more irritating, somehow, because the girl across the hall was so credulous. Didn't even guess the kind of place she lived in. She, too, must have thought the world's crudities an infinite distance away.

Once, indeed, Sybil—to do her justice—in an impulsive urge of the protective sense that is in all women, had tried to tell the girl. Not out-and-out, of course. Gently. But she might have spared herself. She might have known better, after her rubbing up against ingratitude!

It was, in fact, that impulsive effort, singularly well-intentioned, that had drawn this Woman Who Knew abruptly back upon her guard; which made her smile now, not nicely, as she saw the other girl going down the street, and around the corner.

They had been chatting in the hall—random, inconsequential woman-chat.

"I wonder," Sybil had broached, with careful casualness; "I wonder, my dear, if you mightn't like a cozy apartment in some—other neighborhood? I mean, you know—"

"Yes?" prompted the other, a cool monosyllable that should have warned Sybil from her wild urge to Good Samaritanism.

"Well, the taxicabs we're always seeing at the curb here—at all hours—and—"

Little Stella Faunce had lifted her head high and eyed Sybil frigidly.

"Really," she remarked, "I'm not interested in such—speculations. I thought that I'd left gossip behind when I came to the city!"

And she had flounced into her room, the door shutting noiselessly but decisively upon Sybil Lantry's stare.

The same old reward for generous assistance! The same stinging denouement that always had seemed to meet her uncontrollable impulses to help someone! She promised herself that this was the last time. No one wanted advice. Not even vital advice. Sybil was through. Life was a game you played for yourself, and she knew it. She ought to! Let the absurd girl find out things for herself, as Sybil had. . . .

Thinking of the absurd girl now, in the twilight, Sybil laughed again. A somewhat forced laugh. "She's a boob," she soliloquized. "And so am I. The idea of telling her she ought not to associate with people like—*me!*"

Beneath the laugh there was a pain. She felt it gnawing closer to the surface. Twilight was a bad thing for women who didn't like to think. Particularly when what they had to think about was chiefly what they wished so very, very much otherwise.

She got up, switched on a light, picked up a magazine, tried to read. But the distant hurdy-gurdy, the leisurely tap-tap of young feet on the cement walk, the shrill staccato

cries of children at the corner . . . these, or the languorous evening, or something, vaguely distressing, made her thoughts wander from the page. She tossed the magazine aside, reached for a cigarette; tossed that after the magazine.

"It's no go," she muttered, trying to reach back into her memory for the words of a song that said something about "memories that sting and burn." Something like that. . . .

She put on a hat, surveyed herself in the mirror, took the hat off. Found a plainer one. Likewise a simple, girlish wrap she hadn't worn in ages. Wiped the carmine from her lips. Somehow that girl had got at her again; Sybil was ridiculously self-conscious of her own expensive fineries. At the same time, she felt a hostility toward the girl who made her so. Finally she considered the revised vision of herself in simpler clothes, satisfied. So, thus hatted and wrapped, she opened her door, closed it, started to the stairs, glanced across the hall. And suddenly, abruptly, halted. Stared.

For on the door opposite, pinned to the polished panel, a bit of paper fluttered in a flirt of breeze from the stairway. And in the mellow glow from the electric cluster overhead, Miss Sybil Lantry was reading its legend:

"Going home, back to-morrow. Couldn't wait, but you can clean up just the same without me.

"S. F."

A curious message. Miss Lantry advanced to read it a second time, a finger lightly fixing the paper where it tended to flutter. The pin gave, and she stood holding the slip in her hand.

A vague sense of guilt disturbed her. Not because she had read what he who runs may, but because. . . . Well, why? She didn't know. It was rather a foreboding than a fear, a sense of what she might do rather than of what she had done.

As she stood there, it occurred to her, with clarity, that the note was for the woman who came irregularly to tidy Stella Faunce's apartment. Sybil knew the woman came at night, often, because the girl was out so much of the day, busied with her lessons. Then the key. . . ? Sybil turned the knob tentatively, the door swung . . . she was within the room. The door swung to behind her.

She stood still, looking, not knowing why she was there. And slowly, subtly, like a presence, the spirit of the room rose to meet her. Soft, simple, faintly fragrant of some homely essence—was it lavender? It couldn't be, people never used lavender seeds in bureau drawers any more!

But again, without volition on her part—rather against it, indeed—Sybil felt herself being wafted back, and back, and back, until she could picture the old white-and-pink room that had been her own room at home, years before. . . . She turned her back upon such thoughts, and upon the room that evoked them;

resolutely reached for the knob; stopped, startled.

Her pulse raced. A staccato tap-tap-tap sounded on the heavy wood. For a fractional second she wavered. But hesitation was folly. A light remark, an easy explanation, a coin—the woman who did the cleaning up would understand, or think she did. . . . She opened the door.

Her lips were parted for the off-hand explanation. They didn't speak it. They just remained parted, a practiced smile curving them. But she felt a renewed tremor of foreboding running through her.

In the mellow light of the hallway, a man stood. A young man. Grinning. The grin came down distractingly from a tanned face high above her. She thought it ought to disappear at sight of the wrong girl in place of Stella Faunce; but it didn't.

"Hello," he delivered through the grin. "I'm here, you see."

Sybil saw, silent.

"I'm Stone," he elucidated, the smirk intact. "Timothy—Tim."

Sybil's silence seemed to settle. Her mind was busy, dangerously busy, but you couldn't tell it from her immobile face.

"Or maybe," the man ventured, "our friend Les Hard didn't call you up? Said he would, but you never can be sure of Les, can you? Anyway, Les said maybe you'd—show me what puts the 'go' in Chicago. My first trip, and I'm ready to take in all three rings *and* the sideshows. If you haven't a date—"

He paused, expectantly. Sybil hesitated. Or seemed to. She looked very demure. Actually, into her eyes there was advancing just the shade of a glint. A glint of victory.

"I don't know," she said slowly; and added, with a sudden genuine cautiousness: "You haven't made a mistake? It was Stella Faunce you wanted, of course?"

"Sure!" with cheery resonance.

"But she isn't considered the sort who knows what puts the 'go' in anything."

The grin didn't depart—it seemed to be a facial fixture—but a trace of something—bafflement, disappointment?—crossed the crescent of it. In the hiatus, Sybil made a movement as if she wished to escape. But the man, with funny, appraising eyes, lifted a bulky hand protestingly.

"But listen, Miss Faunce, I guess I bungled things. What I meant to say was—"

He stopped, as if to reach for the right words; and Miss Sybil Lantry, upon whom the world had forced so much of its canniness, studied him calculatingly as her secret plan grew rapidly, and her concealed exultation went higher. . . .

"Listen, Sister," he began afresh; and involuntarily she smiled at the epithet. "I'm a friend of Les Hard's, and so are you. That makes us kind of old friends, too, see? I'm sorry he didn't call you up, but—if you could just sort of think of me *as* an old friend—if you see what I mean—"

"I see what you mean," said Sybil. "At least, I *think* I do. We're to see what puts the 'go' in Chicago, *just like two old friends from the same town?*" She spoke matter-of-factly, as if repeating terms of a contract.

"Just like," he nodded; as he would verify a bargain in Arizona sheep.

Sybil Lantry laughed. "I think we'll *both* need to use our imaginations!"

"H'm," drawled Timothy Stone, also laughing. "I didn't reckon I'd have to draw on *imagination* in Chicago! You see, out in Maricopa County, riding all day, and sitting propped against a 'dobe wall at night, you get the habit of thinking that big cities supply so much entertainment you don't have to manufacture any yourself. . . . Well, where do we begin to take this little old clock apart?"

Sybil smiled, cryptically; and hesitated once more, looking at him. In her mind was humming the old refrain about the spider and the fly. . . .

Now, I wish that I could picture Timothy, while she looked and he stood there in the doorway, weight poised on one foot hopefully, as slim and supple, with the blue eyes of freshsome nineteen. I even wish that he had never linked his arm possessively into the arm of a girl, nor called her Kid. It would be such a nice story. So spiced with contrast—Sybil the spider, and Timothy the gullible young fly.

But the fellows called him "Tiny" because he was so tall, and he was supple but not slim. He was a husk of a fellow, and his eyes—they were blue, at that—had a worldwise look that only twenty-five plus some things and minus others, can have. He could strum out a jerky mandolin accompaniment to Kipling's, "The Ladies," and sing it cannily from "I've taken my fun where I found it," to "So be warned by my lot, which I know you will not," with a droll snap in his eye to match the tap-tap of his size nines on the floor.

And, of course, I shall have to give Timothy as he was. He was a regular fellow, no better and no worse than other fellows, and he knew a good many things that aren't in the primers. . . . I think it was because he was as he was that he appealed to the artist in Miss Sybil Lantry. If she could put anything over on him! . . .

"Ready?" he suggested blandly.

For reply, she stepped into the hall, shut Miss Faunce's door behind her; and they went down the stairs side by side, and thus into the pleasant warmth of the twilight. . . .

"I been hearing about you for years," he told her, as they swung toward the car line.

"Yes?"

"Ever since Les made his first trip West. He sure thinks you're the pink of perfection!"

"Then I'll have to be careful to live up to the reputation." She was

looking away from him toward the dim filmy figures in the little park. "You'll want to give Les a good report."

"I'll say I expect to!"

"M'm," musingly from Sybil.

Again a hot wave of resentment shot through her. Why did some girls have everything? Why should she be treated as if she were so innocent just because he thought her name was Faunce? Perhaps, if Stella Faunce had received her impulsive advances kindly, the older girl would not have contemplated her present plan so coolly—might not, indeed, have had such a plan at all.

But a plan she had, emphatically. Only the details remained to be worked out. She could do that as the evening advanced. The main theme was decided: The absurd Faunce girl would be minus her "reputation" before Timothy Stone went back West. Timothy, being human, would tell Les Hard, and Les . . . Sybil foresaw the damage, without regret. She wouldn't swerve; she was adamant with the cruelty that springs from injured pride. . . .

Yet she did not look hard, or cruel, or scheming. The spell of the twilight had something to do with this; the art of her, the rest. She let him guide her. He did it clumsily enough, with a shy proprietorship, as if he were piloting a girl who never had been around.

They had dinner in an Occidentalized Chinese restaurant. Two or three pudgy men who knew her caught from her swift glance that recognition wasn't desired. That was easy.

It was also easy to deflect Timothy's design of strolling on Michigan Avenue: she preferred a 'bus ride. They had it. She was charming naïve. He said she acted as if she had never been on a 'bus top before. (She hadn't; where Sybil Lantry went she taxied.)

In the Loop once more, Timothy halted hungrily before placards of a smart and saucy revue on Randolph Street. Sybil was touched by his obvious eagerness, it was so human; but she wasn't going to throw off the rôle of the conventional Stella Faunce. Not yet. Her coup could wait until later—when he took her home, perhaps— So:

"It doesn't look exactly—nice," she demurred, "from the posters." And she blushed. A real blush. Somehow, there was something disarmingly ingenuous about this big fellow, like winds through pine trees. You talked freely with everyone, these days about leg shows—with everyone except the Timothy Stones. To him, she divined, a leg was still a "limb," when mentioned by or to a young woman.

"Pshaw," Timothy lied the gentleman's lie, "I didn't want to see that. Isn't your style. How about a movie?"

"Oh, yes, a movie! I love the movies, when they're nice." She hated 'em, especially home-sweet-home ones!

So they went to a movie.

It was here, in the great glaring lobby, that she felt the first stirrings of that maternal impulse that all women, even not-very-nice ones, have at unexpected moments for men who have grown up with a good deal of the boy in them. For, arriving at the box office, her escort showed a sudden flare of temper. Sybil, a little to the side, saw him pass in a gold piece. The sleek young man in the cage said something tart, whereupon Timothy straightened like a Jack-in-the-box.

"Ain't anything the matter with it, is there?" he demanded in a voice that electrified Sybil and brought the waiting line to attention.

The ticket seller muttered something more.

"Haven't *got* anything smaller," Timothy retorted tersely. "You get busy and hand out the dough."

Sybil was all at once startled to action. She feared a fight, publicity, possibly an arrest. And so she did the ludicrous thing which a moment later made her cheeks go scarlet.

"Here," she whispered, *"I've* got change." And thrust her purse into his hand.

At the same instant the ticket man was irritably (also a trifle apprehensively) pushing a wad of bills back at Timothy. And there Timothy Stone stood, with the greenbacks in one hand and the silly gold-mesh purse dangling from the other. A titter ran down the line of spectators.

Timothy turned toward her with all the dignity he could command. But—

"Don't you want your *tickets?"* snapped out of the cage at him. The titter became a jovial guffaw.

His cheeks flaming, big Timothy Stone, who was afraid of no man, stared helplessly at his hands, fumbled desperately to free one of them by transferring its contents to the other. Sybil hurried up to the window to rescue the tickets.

"Huh," mumbled her companion as they went in. "Suppose they think I'm a squaw man!"

And right there he took the first gate of the citadel of her sympathies. That latent maternal instinct pitied him for his boyish confusion, and loved the boy of it. . . .

The darkened auditorium was balm to him.

For a few minutes they were conscious of their embarrassment steadily diminishing in the darkness. And then it vanished. The screen had got them. They were lost in the delusion of illusion. Miss Sybil Lantry, who knew the world and hated the pictures, particularly the sweet ones, as she sat in her cushioned chair (for which the crude Timothy Stone from Arizona had paid a dollar and war tax), began to feel very much like the girl he thought she was.

The picture was just like old, old times. She dabbled her handkerchief to her eyes luxuriously. As for Timothy, he leaned forward, he asked questions, he made stage-whisper comments. He was as self-forgetful, if differently, as when he had fumbled helplessly out in the lobby. Sybil divided interest between the

screen and him. It was delightful. . . .

And then, suddenly, not so delightful. Not delightful at all. The lovely-young-thing in the picture was getting to the temptation stage; the man who seemed so good to her was giving signs of villainy, which anyone could see except the celluloid heroine. Sybil felt uncomfortable. The situation was drawing too near home. She wondered if Timothy—He did! He was living the drama vividly, and he leaned to her to say:

"She's all right, that kid. Just as good and—s-sweet as you, Stella." Sybil winced. "If that guy tries anything more—"

Sybil laughed, nervously. "Remember, T-Timothy, it's only a picture! Because that man is all wrong, I'm not suspecting *you!*"

Then they laughed together—and the drama came to a close-up—and Sybil and Timothy Stone were out on State Street once more, vetoing a supper because so soon now his train would be leaving for the West.

"And of course I couldn't let you go home alone," he explained.

"Of course not," echoed Sybil.

How odd to have a man talk that way to her once more! It was pleasant to receive simple, honest protection. Then she remembered, with a start, that this was all for Stella Faunce. If the man knew the real woman beside him, he, too, would be different. She knew men well enough, she told herself. They were all alike.

The lines of her face hardened, as they had, earlier, at sight of Miss Faunce departing. The other girl's disdain flashed back to her, sharply. And sharply Sybil's plan returned. Little Stella Faunce would pay. . . .

THEY were before her apartment building. Down through the scraggly trees along the curb moonlight filtered. Night noises came to them, dulled and muffled. The little park was quiet, empty, oddly as if tucked in for the night. She glanced up at her darkened windows. Again a vague sense of guilt drifted to her. It *had* been an unexpectedly pleasant evening; she and Timothy Stone much like the old, same-town friends they had pretended to be. Now the minute was striking for her to assume a different rôle, to shatter Stella Faunce's "reputation." It would be so simple. So very simple. All men. . . . She glanced up at the large form beside her.

He was gazing down upon her, thoughtfully.

"I reckon I ought to tell you something," he spoke awkwardly. "I didn't expect to find anyone like you. Thought Les must be stringing me. Didn't believe there were such—nice girls. . . . I don't want you to get the idea I'm a Willie boy. Soft pedals ain't my line, and sob-stuff makes me sick.

"But I wanta say that this has sure been one fine evening. You've made me see what a good time can be, just—natural. I wouldn't know how to repay you, it's made such a difference. I reckon I'll think about

to-day, out in Arizona, and—and sort of look ahead to the next trip."

He mopped his brow with the back of his hand, like an orator after the peroration; and at that, it was a long speech for Timothy Stone. Also, like an orator, he didn't eye his audience; he scrutinized a tree trunk, embarrassed.

But Sybil Lantry, loking up at him, looked steadily. Her eyelashes were trying to tremble, but she controlled them. She was fiercely fighting back a mad desire to cry, to cry straight into his woolly coat sleeve.

No man had talked to her that way, not in a long, long time. It touched the great softness of her down beneath the thin layer of hard, cynical wiseness. But she must cling to the hardness. Must grip her plan. He would kiss her. Surely he would kiss her. And after that. . . .

Yes! He was going to do it!

Slowly he removed his eyes from the tree trunk until their gaze met Sybil's. She seemed—and felt—very small, and fragile, under the scraggly trees in the uncertain street. He leaned forward, bent slightly, she felt the warm masculine nearness of him, he bent closer, and then. . . .

Suddenly drew himself erect with a jerk.

Sybil knew that her lips were a-quiver. Her hands, too. All of her. In that brief, fleeting minute she knew that she had wanted him to kiss her. And he must have seen that she did. Must have seen through her pose, straight into the soul, not of Stella Faunce, but of Sybil Lantry. *That* was why he jerked back! He would have kissed little Miss Faunce. He drew back, erect, from Sybil Lantry.

She bowed her head. She swayed a second. Shame flared to her cheeks. She felt its hotness burn down into her neck. Then, swiftly, her pride shot flame-like above the other burn. At least he *thought* she was Stella Faunce. Her plan was realizing itself, in spite of her! She was winning, although the manner of the winning was gall to her. . . .

Timothy Stone was speaking, slowly, firmly, repressedly.

"I reckon you'll hate me now. A nice girl like you. . . . I couldn't help it. If you can forgive me, I hope you'll—try."

Sybil stared up at him, wonderingly, unbelievingly. He hadn't drawn back because he loathed her! He respected her. Respected her! The tears were coursing down her cheeks. She didn't mind. She was sobbing, aloud. And didn't mind. The tears and the sobs had washed through the hard outer layer of cynicism, broken it, left her real self, the soft self she had taught herself to dispise. And she was glad!

Timothy Stone touched her arms, very lightly. Contrition was written on his sturdy face. "I've been a cur, to make you feel like this," he muttered.

Sybil shook her head, pressed her fingers once across her eyes.

"No, Timothy. You've been wonderful. It's I who—" She stopped, but not with change of purpose. That familiar, great surge of sympathy, of impulsive frankness, swept her on, so that she paused only for words as right as she could find.

"It's I who've been bad. Oh, yes, just that, Timothy! I'm not what is called a n-nice girl. Stella Faunce is, but I'm not. I'm not Stella Faunce. I hated her. I think—" with a tremulous, sad little laugh—"that perhaps I'll hate her again. But she's nice, good. She went home. I saw her go. I went into her room—oh, don't think I meant to steal anything! All I stole was a look! I wanted to see the room of a girl like that, because I used to be a girl like that, myself."

"And are!" Timothy Stone interrupted, brusquely. At first he had stood, dazed. Then, as the impulsive recital went on, had comprehended, or seemed to comprehend, slowly, until he couldn't longer stand the pain of the remorse-wracked little figure before him.

"Sure you're a good girl. Gosh, haven't I seen that all evening? Just because you stepped into her room—just because I insisted that you *were* Stella. . . . S-a-y," he broke into his own jumbled argument, blushing in the shelter of the dim light, "I'll say I'm glad I found *you* instead of Stella! You're the sort of girl I've always been looking for."

"No," said Sybil.

"Yes! And when I come back next time, we'll see a lot of each other."

"No," said Sybil. The monosyllable seemed all she could articulate.

"Oh, yes. Sure!" He hesitated; went on, awkwardly: "Did you ever think you'd—I mean, did you ever have an idea you'd like the West? It ain't so wild or woolly as the movies make you think."

"No," once more; feebly, weakly.

"But—"

Finally words came to her. "I've told you the truth, straight. I know you, and you're good. I didn't know there were men like you."

"Me? I'm no gilt-edged model," he put in.

"But you don't know me," she finished her determined confession. "You don't begin to know me. I'm bad. . . . And now, I'll either have to go right upstairs, or cry again. And I'm not going to cry any more. Not—ever!"

"You poor kid, you *are* all in. It's my fault, too. You're right, you ought to get to bed. Next time we're together, it'll all be different. . . . Well, then, *adios* till next trip!"

"So long," said Sybil.

She stepped, head up, into the entryway. But from there, droopingly, she watched the big form go striding down the street. . . .

An hour later, once more up at her window, alone, she was contemplating the trees, without seeing them. A clock struck somewhere,

she roused herself; unpinned her hat, began preparations for bed. She opened her gilt-mesh purse to get out her watch and wind it. . . . And suddenly sat down limply, with a roll of greenbacks in her hand. . . .

You and I know that Timothy Stone had absently jabbed them into that silly purse in the excruciatingly embarrassing moment at the movie house. But Sybil didn't know it. Her throat went tight, her cheeks flamed, and a great, dull ache came upon her. She had been paid. Paid in money.

For once she had tried to do the right thing, only to get *money* in return for good intention. He was simply sorry for her, after all. Pitied her. Disdained her, of course. . . . All men were alike, she kept saying to herself, the words a drone. . . . All men alike. . . .

Meanwhile, down at the Dearborn Street station, big Timothy Stone, reaching into his pocket to pay for his Pullman reservation, slowly drew his hand out while his eyes hardened to a glint.

"H'm'm," said Timothy Stone to himself. "Just a dip, eh? Robbed me. Easy mark! Thought I'd found a gold mine, and instead of that—bought a gold brick on my first trip to the big town! One every minute is *right!*"

A Woman's Reason

By Gwendolen Cumnor

YOU know, I'd wear the flattest shoes—
But Bobby likes high heels.
The simplest woolen wraps I'd choose—
But Bob likes costly seals.

I think my neck is pretty—bare—
But Bob insists on pearls.
I'd never fuss to wave my hair—
But Bobby worships curls.

I'd never rouge nor shape my brow,
Nor youth in make-up waste,
I'd never use a lipstick now—
But Bobby likes the taste!

In Transit

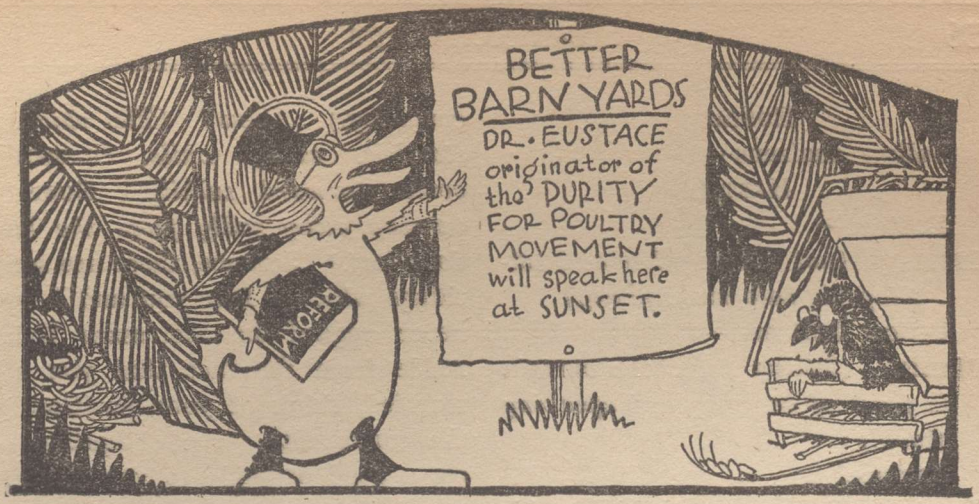
By H. D. Kline

SCENE—Commuters' train.

CHARACTERS:

HE and SHE

"PARDON me!"
"Certainly."
(*Five minutes lull.*)
"Very crowded train!"
"Yes, very—"
"Awful mob!"
"Yes, awful."
"Look at paper?"
"No, thanks."
"Talk?"
"No."
"Why not?"
"Why?"
"Lonely."
"Yes?"
"Yes."
"Too bad."
"Goin' far?"
"Not very."
"This time every day?"
"Hardly."
"New Yorker?"
"No."
"Look it."
"Yes?"
"Where to?"
"Not far."
"See you again?"
"Don't know."
"Want to?"
"Why?"
"Can't guess?"
"No."
"Try."
"Can't."
"You're pretty."
"Think so?"
"Certain of it."
"Thanks."
"Annoying you?"
"Not yet."
"Oh, please—"
"Don't mind."
"All right—let's talk."
"We have."
"Not enough."
"No?"
"What station?"
"New Rochelle."
"Mine too."
"That so?"
"Yes."
"Address?"
"Fourteen Elm."
"Mine too."
"What apartment?"
"Fourteen."
"Oh, Lord!"
"Why?"
"Mine, too!"
"No?"
"Who are you?"
"New maid."
"Oh, hell!"



Scrambled Eggs

A Drama in Fowl Language

By Lawton Mackall and Francis R. Bellamy

CHARACTERS

CLARENCE, a rooster
MARTHA, his wife
EUSTACE, a drake
GERTRUDE, his wife
PHYLLIS, a fair stranger duck
Chickens, turkeys, ganders, pigeons and other inhabitants of the barnyard.

SCENE: A Barnyard.

When the curtain goes up the stage is empty. Then EUSTACE *appears, carrying a huge book and dragging behind him a large sign, which he solemnly affixes to the signpost. As he does so the head of a chicken appears from the bars of the chicken coop on the right* (MARTHA) *and stares at him through a large pair of lorgnettes.* DR. EUSTACE, *unaware of this, takes out a large halo from his pocket, affixes it to his silk hat, opens his book and assumes the attitude of an orator.*

EUSTACE

Fellow denizens—

MARTHA

Eustace—

EUSTACE (*not noticing her and settling his halo more firmly*)

Fellow denizens—

MARTHA (*letting down the curtain in front of her coop and speaking sharply*)

Eustace!

EUSTACE (*pausing and hiding his halo under his wing*)

Ah! A neophyte, no doubt.

MARTHA

Your wife left a message for you.

EUSTACE (*looking in the direction of his nest and then at* MARTHA)

What, has she gone?

MARTHA

Since early morning. She said you were to be sure to sit on the eggs until she comes back.

EUSTACE (*with ruffled dignity*)

I? I?

MARTHA

Well, of course, you aren't my husband. My Clarence believes the female's place is on the nest. That's what your wife said.

EUSTACE (*sadly folding his book and putting his halo in his pocket*)

Alas! No reformer should have a family. (*He starts for his nest and has just drawn aside the burdock leaf which leads to it, when enters* CLARENCE *gallantly following a young chicken. A look of horror overspreads* EUSTACE'S *face as he sees the chicken drop a feather and* CLARENCE *picks it up and rushes forward to give it to her.* EUSTACE *coughing.*) Ahem! (*The chicken, startled, exits, while* CLARENCE *comes forward sulkily.* EUSTACE *turning away sadly from the burdock leaf.*) Clarence, there are some things which I fear you and I will never regard in the same light. Aside from the fact that you are married, think of your position in the community, your obligation to set a good example to young peepers. How can you forget such things, and carry on with other chickens under Martha's very beak?

CLARENCE (*sulkily*)

Been sitting on your eggs?

EUSTACE (*angrily*)

Certainly not, sir!

CLARENCE

Just hesitating on them, I suppose.

EUSTACE (*loftily*)

Clarence, Gertrude and I have the modern view. The single standard of morality and equal division of responsibility.

(*Enter second chicken, carelessly from right, giving* CLARENCE *inviting glances.*)

CLARENCE (*aside*)

What elegantly slender drumsticks!

EUSTACE

My wife has her responsibilities and I have mine.

CLARENCE (*again aside*)

What irresistible pin feathers!

EUSTACE

Gertrude is Chairman of the Committee on Free Puddles for the Public. She is raising a fund for the Laying-in Hospital. She is leader

of the movement for Sex Education for Ducklings on a platform of More Rain.

CLARENCE

What a walk!

EUSTACE

When I am speaking for better barnyards she is warming our eggs.

CLARENCE

Where is she now, then?

EUSTACE (*stammering*)

Why, I—I— (CLARENCE, *unable to stand it longer, follows second chicken, who is now about to exit left.* EUSTACE *discovering that* CLARENCE *is no longer beside him, and that he is following second chicken, horrified.*) Clarence!

CLARENCE (*turning and seeing third chicken entering right.*)

You're right!

(*He picks up the third chicken and goes off in the opposite direction as first chicken enters wildly from left, looks around and seeing no one but* EUSTACE *makes for him. Whereupon* EUSTACE *rushes to the sign and clasps it to his bosom. She peeks at him but he clasps the sign tighter, and she shrugs her wings and exits.*)

MARTHA (*her head appearing again from coop*)

Has anybody here seen Clarence?

EUSTACE (*aside*)

This is terrible. (*To* MARTHA.) Madam, you have my profoundest sympathy.

MARTHA (*firing up*)

What impertinence!

EUSTACE

Ah, Madam! If only it were! I respect your endeavors to shield your husband.

MARTHA

Shield him! The best husband in the barnyard, so loving to me—every time I see him. With all your guile, you hawk in dove's clothing, *you* will never be able to alienate my affections from him.

(*Slams shutter as* CLARENCE *re-enters from right, picking colored feathers from his wings and blowing them gaily in the air.*)

EUSTACE

How can you, Clarence?

CLARENCE

It's the easiest thing in the world, my boy.

EUSTACE

And to think that before I began my labors, you were the leader of the barnyard— You! (*He swells visibly with indignation.*) You, you pullet hound. You leering libertine!

CLARENCE (*swelling up with pride*)

You said it.

EUSTACE

And you have no shame. You glory in it. Four years old and what have you done for the barnyard?

CLARENCE

You have no delicacy, Eustace.

EUSTACE

I state the ugly fact.

CLARENCE (*complacently*)

Well, old topknot, what's your egg record?

EUSTACE (*terribly*)

Egg record!

CLARENCE

Well, pardon my strutting, but a

fowl who learns from his wife only this morning that six eggs—five of them unprecedentedly large—grace his nest, may be excused a slight crow!

EUSTACE (*incredulously*)

Six eggs?

CLARENCE (*complacently*)

An even half dozen.

EUSTACE

Incredible. All laid this morning?

CLARENCE

All this morning.

EUSTACE

I never heard of such a thing.

CLARENCE

There are lots of things you never heard of.

EUSTACE

What a responsibility! Six innocent, unhatched chicks. Does not the mere thought stir you to emulate my noble ideals?

CLARENCE

Your noble ideals! Why, I wouldn't trust you with a wooden decoy. (*As fourth chicken enters from right.*) Ahem!

EUSTACE (*horrified*)

And yet another!

CLARENCE (*condoling him*)

Yes, it's hard. I'd rail too if I were in your fix. Forty-nine chickens in the barnyard and only one duckess. I don't blame you for your single standard stuff. Necessity makes a beautful virtue.

EUSTACE

Necessity! Necessity! Sir, if there were a thousand bewitching waddlers in the barnyard, I should still support that standard there.

CLARENCE (*following the chicken*)

Yes you would—not!

MARTHA (*as* CLARENCE *and fourth chicken get to edge of stage*)

Oh, Clarence!

CLARENCE (*stopping and thinking an instant*)

An important business engagement, Martha. I shall be back later. (*He exits.*)

EUSTACE (*looking worriedly at the standard*)

A virtue of necessity! Sinister thought.

MARTHA (*proudly*)

There's ambition for you. You tortuous worm.

EUSTACE (*clasping his forehead*)

Worm. Ah, a dirty stroke.

MARTHA (*as she turns away from* EUSTACE *and sees* CLARENCE *reentering, still stalking the fourth chicken. Horrified*)

Ah! (*As they exit she rushes out of her coop and stands flapping her wings after them.*) Oh, the speckled hussy! My Clarence. My dishonored eggs. (*Weeping.*) Oh, I beg your pardon, Eustace. Forgive me my harsh, unhenly words. The things you told me, alas, they are only too true. If you ever were a friend of mine support me now. (*She faints on his bosom.*)

(*Enter* GERTRUDE *from left.*)

GERTRUDE

Eustace, a hen upon your wishbone. Martha, unwing him at once,

EUSTACE

Quick, bring some garlic, some smelling roots.

GERTRUDE

Not a root until you explain.

EUSTACE (*holding* MARTHA *with melancholy gaze*)

Only the long expected, my dear —Clarence—

MARTHA (*wailing*)

Oh, I saw him! The speckled hen! I saw him myself! My Clarence! (*She bursts into sobs, and they calm her.*)

GERTRUDE (*striding up and down*)

She must get a divorce at once.

MARTHA (*coming to*)

But I couldn't live without Clarence, the only rooster in the barnyard. What I want is to have him all to myself!

(GERTRUDE *flaps her wings in disgust and turns away.*)

EUSTACE

Then you must make him respect you, Martha. Make him feel the need of your companionship. Share all his interests. (*At this instant* CLARENCE *comes in with fourth chicken, but goes hastily out.*) Go where he goes, do what he does.

MARTHA (*wiping her eyes*)

But what will become of my eggs?

GERTRUDE

You must share them fifty-fifty as Eustace and I do.

MARTHA

Well, I shall try to be that kind of wife. It will be hard at first, but perhaps I shall get used to it. For Clarence's sake I shall try. (*She goes toward her coop sadly, repeating in lower tones.*) I shall try. (*As she closes the coop and goes in her voice is a whisper.*) I shall try.

GERTRUDE (*as* MARTHA *closes the coop*)

And without my husband's assistance. (*Turning to* EUSTACE.) Well, and how long have *you* been off the eggs?

EUSTACE (*confused*)

Why, I—I—

GERTRUDE

Don't duck, Eustace. I shall take their temperature. (*She takes out a large thermometer, pulls aside the burdock leaf that leads to the nest at left, stares an instant, and then gives a blood-curdling scream.*)

EUSTACE

Great seaweed, what has happened?

GERTRUDE (*wildly*)

Gone, they are gone! Gone! Gone! (*Turning to* EUSTACE.) What have you done with our poor. unhatched children?

EUSTACE

Gone?

GERTRUDE

Vanished, flown, disappeared! (*Angrily.*) While you quack empty theories before their neglected nest.

EUSTACE (*firing up*)

You mean while you agitate free puddles for the public.

GERTRUDE

Better than holding strange hens on your wishbone.

EUSTACE (*contemptuously*)

Or investigating the Rabbit Warren Underworld.

GERTRUDE

Rabbit Warrens, never! Only today I drafted final plans for the communal incubator, and appointed

nineteen committees to O. K. them.

EUSTACE (*derisively*)

Communal incubator, hah! When the single standard is yet to be settled. (*He laughs.*)

GERTRUDE

Laugh, but that is where your eggs have gone.

EUSTACE (*startled*)

But how do you know that?

GERTRUDE

By intuition, you stupid. How else would you expect me to know it? Ah, it just had to come! I have been predicting it all along.

EUSTACE

But why should they experiment on your eggs?

GERTRUDE

Nonsense! Think what it will mean to them! They will be hatched scientifically, eugenically, their personalities allowed to expand, and when they are grown up they will be free females. They will enjoy the happiness of motherhood without its drudgery.

EUSTACE

If there is a communal incubator.

GERTRUDE

If there is! Come, we shall find it now. (*As they go out at left,* GERTRUDE *catches sight of* CLARENCE *coming in at right, and whispers to* MARTHA *in the coop.*) Now, Martha, here's your chance.

CLARENCE

Oh, gosh, what a blond pullet she was! Oh, gosh! And how blond! (*As* MARTHA *looks out.*) Why hello, wifie dear!

MARTHA (*with forced pleasantness*)

Why, how do you do, Clarence? I want to have a talk with you.

CLARENCE (*lifting one foot in surprise*) .. ..

Huh?

MARTHA

I have been thinking things over very seriously, and from now on I intend to be a very different kind of wife to you. In the past I have not shared your interests as I should have. But in future I shall make myself your companion in everything.

CLARENCE (*leaning on the coop*)

Well, I'll be plucked!

MARTHA

I shall always be at your side. Where you go, will I go!

CLARENCE (*angrily aside*)

This is Eustace's work. (*To his intense surprise, a duckling comes from under his coop.*) What, a duckling from my coop! (*He staggers back in astonishment.*)

MARTHA (*as he does so*)

Wait Clarence, I feel them hatching. The happy moment has arrived.

CLARENCE (*as another duckling and then another appears from the coop, in a savage tone*)

Happy moment!

MARTHA

They are all hatching, Clarence.

CLARENCE (*terribly*)

Five ducklings.

MARTHA (*looking out for the first time and seeing them*)

Dear me!

CLARENCE

Dear me! Is that all you have to

say, faithless wife? Go, leave my coop forever. Never let me see your beak again, and take your web-footed brats with you.

MARTHA (*coming out of coop*)

Oh, but I am innocent. I swear to you, Clarence. I really do not know how it happened.

CLARENCE

Ha, do you expect me to believe that, you sparrow?

MARTHA

Revile me, peck me, stop loving me, if you will, but, oh, do not drive me away from my nest.

CLARENCE

Go! You are not fit to grace the nest of an honorable rooster. (*He flaps his wings and drives her out.*) Go! (*She takes a step and stops.*) Go! (*This is repeated until she exits, followed by five ducklings. Then* CLARENCE *takes a flint out of his pocket and sharpens his spurs.*) And now for that villain of a drake!

(*Enter* EUSTACE *right.*)

EUSTACE (*anxiously*)

Where is the communal incubator?

CLARENCE

Are you referring to my wife?

EUSTACE (*not hearing, and peering around among the burdock leaves*)

We've searched for it everywhere.

CLARENCE

Come out of those burdock leaves, you waddling hypocrite. You sleek betrayer! You whited sepulchre!

EUSTACE

Why, why, what do you mean?

CLARENCE (*brandishing his claws*)

Leering libertine, eh! You single standard seducer!

EUSTACE (*who has given a little jump of surprise, then horror, and finally anger, as the different epithets are hurled at him*)

Shut your bill, you liar! (*He throws off his silk hat and rushes at* CLARENCE, *just as* GERTRUDE *from the right, rushes up in back of* CLARENCE *and honks in his ear, so that he swings completely around in his surprise.*)

GERTRUDE

Stop, you big boob!

CLARENCE (*stopping dead*)

Boob?

GERTRUDE

Certainly. Martha never laid those eggs. She only hatched them.

CLARENCE (*staggered*)

Hatched them?

GERTRUDE

She only sat on them. She would sit on anything. She was only their hot nurse. Stand back, Eustace. Here comes Martha now! I'll prove it. I'll make her sit on that stone there. (*Enter* MARTHA *weeping, followed by the five toddling ducklings in single file.*)

CLARENCE

Shameless creature with her trail of guilt.

GERTRUDE (*as* MARTHA *passes the rock, pleasantly*)

Pardon me, Martha, but you just dropped an egg.

MARTHA (*wiping her eyes, flustered, but grateful*)

Oh, did I? Thank you for telling me. I am so bewildered that I hardly know what I am doing. Ah, the poor little thing is all cold.

GERTRUDE (*triumphantly*)

You see?

CLARENCE

Well, I'll be fricasseed!

(*Sundry inhabitants of the barnyard begin to enter in little couples, ignoring* CLARENCE *and bowing to* EUSTACE, *who has gone after his silk hat, and is polishing his halo, preparatory to putting it on.*)

FIRST GUEST

Are we a little early?

SECOND GUEST

I understood it was to be at sunset. (*They peer at the sign.*)

CLARENCE

Get up off that stone, Martha. Don't make yourself any more ridiculous than you are already.

MARTHA

Stone? (*She looks at the stone in intense surprise.*)

CLARENCE

Rock!

MARTHA

But what shall I do? Where shall I go?

CLARENCE

Go? Go any place out of sight, into your coop.

MARTHA (*blissfully*)

Oh, may I? (*She goes into her coop. More guests are arriving now for the meeting of the Better Barnyard Association.*)

THIRD GUEST

Such a lovely bird.

FOURTH GUEST

I love to hear him quack.

CLARENCE (*who has finally succeeded in sweeping all the five ducklings out of sight, aside*)

Foiled, but not defeated. I'll get that damned drake yet. (*Exit.*)

OLD GANDER

Let's go over here out of this gang of hen folks.

TURKEY

Have a chew of spearweed.

GANDER

Thanks. Say, I heard a good one the other day. There was a young pullet and she had never laid an egg—

(*The rest is lost in the shuffle of the crowd as they settle in their places, four pigeons bringing in an old feed box for a rostrum for* EUSTACE *and place a battered tin pail, which he drinks from and polishes his glasses. Two chickens fight with each other over a long rubber, pulling it until it snaps in the face of one, and until* GERTRUDE *finally silences everyone in their places. Evening is falling.*)

EUSTACE (*taking a drink from the pail, clearing his throat, settling his halo, and throwing out his chest*)

Denizens of the barnyard, members of the Purity for Poultry Movement, now that we have abolished capital punishment for obesity, we come to the matter of the single standard. Ah, my fellow denizens! Ah, my dear fellow denizens! Only to-day a most lamentable case—

TREMENDOUS VOICE OFF STAGE

Here chick, chick, chick, chick, chick! Here chick, chick, chick!

(*There is a great stir in the assemblage. One or two hens leave. Everyone looks nervous.*)

OLD GANDER (*fitting on an ear trumpet*)

What's the disturbance? What are they going for?

YOUNG CHICK

Didn't you hear it, Uncle? Supper call.

OLD GANDER

Bless my soul!

(*He rushes off faster than any.*)

EUSTACE (*louder than before*)

Fellow denizens—

TREMENDOUS VOICE OFF STAGE

Here chick, etc.

(*Whole assemblage rushes out, overturning water trough and rostrum.*)

EUSTACE (*sadly*)

Thinking only of their craws! Their crops in the dust!

GERTRUDE

Well, aren't you coming?

EUSTACE

I, with my mission? Never!

GERTRUDE *exits in disgust.* EUSTACE *alone on the stage, after looking around to see if he is observed, moves the box and suddenly seizes the head of a long red worm, which he pulls from the ground until it is nine or ten feet long, whereupon it snaps from his mouth back into its hole again, and although he rushes to the spot it has vanished.*)

EUSTACE (*dolefully*)

The paths of glory lead but to the gravy!

(CLARENCE *comes in stealthily from left and sees* EUSTACE *alone with his head sunk on his chest.*)

CLARENCE

Sst! Sst!

(*He beckons off stage. Enter* PHYLLIS, *a young white duck.*)

CLARENCE (*aside*)

The only duck in the barnyard, eh! We'll see what an extra one will do.

PHYLLIS (*turning to* CLARENCE *after a long look at* EUSTACE)

That?

CLARENCE

That's him. Old angel wings. Leader of the Purity for Poultry Movement.

PHYLLIS

Well, the prigger they are the harder they fall.

(*She makes good use of her vanity case for a moment, and then begins to vamp* EUSTACE *while* CLARENCE *takes up his place behind burdocks at left.*)

EUSTACE

As I live, a new duck in the barnyard. A golden-webbed goddess. Can I believe my eyes? How she moves like a queenly galleon! What a snowy whiteness! Her paddling feet scarce seem to leave the ground.

CLARENCE

Oh, boy!

EUSTACE

Who are you, fair stranger?

(*He takes off his halo casually as she looks down.*)

PHYLLIS

I am Phyllis.

EUSTACE

What a beautiful name!

PHYLLIS

I thought it was when I took it.

EUSTACE (*aside*)

There is a soft rasp in her voice

that thrills me to the gizzard. (*He stuffs the halo into his pocket.*) Where did you come from?

PHYLLIS (*sighing*)

I came from a far distant barnyard.

CLARENCE (*from hiding*)

Don't tell him I imported you.

PHYLLIS

I was kidnaped.

EUSTACE

Kidnaped? But was there no one to defend you?

PHYLLIS (*in tears*)

No one.

EUSTACE

There, little one, don't cry, don't cry.

CLARENCE (*disgusted, aside*)

The great big simp.

PHYLLIS

I was subjected to the most cruel indignities. I, who had always been treated with particular care! And regaled with special dishes — of mush.

EUSTACE

Oh, if only I had been there!

PHYLLIS

You're very comforting! I was lonely and homesick, but your sympathy makes me forget everything. Now, I am not even sorry.

EUSTACE (*placing arm about her*)

Do you really mean it?

PHYLLIS

Oh, in that other barnyard there were no other drakes as high-minded and chivalrous as you.

EUSTACE

But, perhaps I am not really all you think I am.

PHYLLIS

Why, I have heard you spoken of as a great leader—almost as a great prophet.

EUSTACE

True, and I should fly from the fascination of you, but I cannot! You seem to hold me with a magic spell. Love, tempestuous, convention-defying love is sweeping me off my webs.

(*He tears down the Better Barnyard sign in the ecstasy of his emotion.*)

CLARENCE

I didn't know the old bird had it in him.

PHYLLIS (*as* EUSTACE *comes back to embrace her*)

Oh, you must not.

EUSTACE

Oh, those wax cherry lips of yours. Phyllis!

(*They embrace.*)

PHYLLIS

Eustace!

(*Again they embrace.*)

CLARENCE

I seem to be missing something.

EUSTACE

But we cannot linger here. We must fly.

PHYLLIS

Then we shall be exiles together, dear.

EUSTACE

Ah, my duckie! We shall paddle out on the pond of love, side bone by side bone. We'll seek out some friendly wild, where we may build our nest, far from the madding cackle.

PHYLLIS

In a land of milkweed and honeysuckle.

(*She takes his watch.*)

EUSTACE

My nightingale, my dove!

PHYLLIS

My kingbird.

CLARENCE

My fathead!

EUSTACE

A nook of rushes underneath the bough,
A bug or twain, or toothsome frog, and thou
Beside me in the wilderness
O Wilderness were Paradise enow!

CLARENCE (*rushing out from the burdock leaves and crowing*)

Ur-er-er-er!

EUSTACE (*in dismay*)

Discovered. We must fly!

CLARENCE (*driving in the five ducklings from the nest*)

Too late, you coop wrecker!

PHYLLIS

What are these?

CLARENCE

His children. Ask Dad—he knows! (*To* EUSTACE.) My Buzzard!

PHYLLIS (*staggering back*)

Your children!

EUSTACE

It's a lie! I never saw them before!

(*Turns to fly in other direction but collides with* GERTRUDE, *just entering.*)

CLARENCE

Did you ever see her before?

EUSTACE

Great Corngiver! My wife!

PHYLLIS

Your wife!

GERTRUDE

So this is your high mission!

(*Barnyard gathers ad lib gossip.*)

PHYLLIS (*tauntingly*)

He even denies your children!

GERTRUDE

My children! What! (*She looks at ducklings.*) They are found! My lost eggs! Oh, joy!

EUSTACE (*dismally*)

Say what you will. I go to become a hermit—

GERTRUDE

Well, I guess not! You'll stay here and look after the ducklings!

(*She leads him by the ear toward the burdock nest, while* CLARENCE, *whose eye has been caught by a brand new chicken, goes over to his own coop and pulls down the shade.*)

CLARENCE

Like every good drake should! (*He puts his wing around the new chicken.*) It never pays to ruffle the only rooster there is in the barnyard.

Smoke

By Lily Wandel

The black art of blackmail—and a black eye

SHE had put Baby Bobby to bed but not as usual, not with a shower of kisses, merry gurglings and the great peace of happiness in her heart. Mechanically she had undressed the little fellow, like one in a trance pressed her cold lips to his warm little cheek, then went to her room to pace the floor and stare into blankness with dry frightened eyes.

Out of a serene sky the telephone call of an hour before had brought a meteor, suspended over her head by a single, lacy thread.

"Will you arrange to be alone at 8 o'clock, Mrs. Turner? It is very important."

"Who is talking?" she had inquired amused, slightly interested.

"Porter Galen." Click.

For a moment or two the name meant nothing to her, then came memories, vague but disturbing.

The first five years of Neda's married life had been but a continuing of her girlhood days. After the honeymoon Robert, with dismaying soberness had turned to the necessary art of money-making. An endless series of tiresome business trips to coal regions and oil fields aroused Neda's wrath. Her nature, she declared, demanded a certain amount of attention and romance. For awhile she moped, then looked around for some form of amusement.

She was more vivacious than pretty, more clever than flirtatious and perhaps that accounted for her popularity at the summer and winter resorts she visited. It was amusing to rob a bevy of young buds of their best dancer, or share the roadster of the only millionaire bachelor in the hotel, but Porter Galen had also thrilled her.

South American in type, slight of build, surrounded by a certain fascinating cloud of mystery, he had not failed to be the most sought young man in the hotel. There was a report that he had given up a title and somebody said he owned the biggest racing stables in Cuba.

That summer there was a particularly smart set of girls at the seashore hotel, one or two real beauties and Neda found the competition rather exciting. The arrival of a popular actress brought things to a climax and Neda remembered in a vague, mortified way of having spent a couple of horrid days. A telegram from Robert asking her to meet him in a certain city put an end to the silly flirtation and in

two weeks she had forgotten all about Porter Galen.

The maid announced that a gentleman was waiting on the porch and Neda without as much as powdering her nose or glancing in the mirror hurried with feverish haste downstairs. It flashed through her mind as she reached the hall that Porter Galen must have timed his call well for only that morning her husband had left on an extended business trip.

The frightened look had entirely left her eyes, determination and anger replaced it. How dared anything of the past come back and threaten her happiness? She was through with those silly years that practically belonged to another Neda, not this mother of Bobby who had found in her husband exactly what she wanted—a Daddy for her boy. If Robert, senior, was not very attentive, too absorbed in his business, Neda never noticed it; he was a kind, quiet father, that sufficed.

"Well?" she asked frigidly, stepping out on the porch.

A slim, dark, young man rose instantly to his fet. His pale, flabby skin spoke of ill health and his clothes though not exactly shabby had not that smooth look of prosperity.

He recognized her at once though his glance revealed his surprise at her changed appearance. Four years had developed Neda, there was no trace of the dashing, slim young woman Galen had known. Maternity had made her plump and her ever-increasing domestic happiness had lessened her interest in modes; she was neat, comfortable-looking, but not stylish.

"Neda—"

"Mrs. Turner!" she corrected sharply.

"Mrs. Turner," he obliged with a slight sneer in his smile, "will you not sit down? What I have to say will take a few minutes."

She sat down on the edge of a chair and he took his place again. "Mrs. Turner," he began with mocking emphasis, "my call is evidently inopportune, I regret that necessity forces me to intrude. Four years have changed us both, you have acquired prosperity and a happiness that you wish to keep at any price, am I not correct? And I have experienced reverses." Neda made a motion of great impatience. "I will not detain you long," he continued suavely. "You are a bright woman, perhaps you can guess my mission."

A numbness came over Neda but she managed to shrug her disinterest.

"Then," he concluded abruptly, "you have forgotten the letters you wrote to me at St. Clair Hall."

She had forgotten but now like treacherous icebergs out of the fog came the memory of silly little notes she had written to him under the stress of an imagined jealousy—it seemed ridiculous to her now.

"Where are they?" she asked calmly.

"I haven't them with me," he

returned frankly, "but to-morrow evening I will bring them in exchange—"

"So you are nothing but an ordinary blackmailer," she quivered in a sudden rush of comprehension, rage and loathing almost choking her voice, "enacting the rôle of a cheap villain!"

He was on his feet. "I did not come here to be insulted. I am giving you a decent chance, it is immaterial to me. I can go to your husband and get twice the amount. Do just as you choose, Mrs. Turner, I, for my part, am in desperate need or I would not take these measures to raise money. Two thousand dollars is the amount. I will be here to-morrow evening at the same time. It's up to you. Good evening."

"Wait!" She was up to, though her knees shook, with one arm outstretched. "You must be mad! I have no private income—"

"Neither have I," he interrupted lightly. "I would not be here if I had. How you raise the money is quite immaterial to me. I will bring the packet of rather interesting letters to-morrow evening and I consider that you have an option on them till then. If you do not care for them at that price—very well."

He was gone. She allowed herself to fall back in the wicker chair. How could she prevent this catastrophe about to crush her? She was surprised that even in her agony she could think clearly and be practical. She thought first of her check book; she had balanced her account that morning and it was unusually low, not more than a hundred dollars to the good. Next she carefully cataloged her friends and business acquaintances, but there was no one from whom she could casually borrow $2,000 or even $1,000 on such short notice. Her jewelry—there was not much, an engagement ring, a locket, a few trinkets—perhaps she could raise $1,200 on that.

She got up and began to walk the length of the porch thinking how she would explain the disappearance of all her jewelry to Robert, what a commotion it would cause and how poor she was at lying.

Then she fell to torturing herself as to what she had so idly scribbled in those wretched letters. She did not even know how many there were, perhaps two or three, maybe four. Suppose Galen kept one or two back, they would be as good as $1,000 bills to him. She was caught in a trap.

All night she paced the floor of her bedroom, suffering intensely and before dawn she was completely dressed for the street. She ran up to the maid's room and told her that she was called unexpectedly to town and gave instructions regarding Bobby. Then laden with a heavy suitcase she caught the first train to town.

At sundown she returned with sagging steps and deep circles under her eyes, minus the suitcase. In the privacy of her room she counted the money—exactly $2,000. Her fur coat, and a small Persian

rug had helped make the amount.

She felt horribly abased. When Robert would come home she must face him with lies. And henceforth it would be lies, lies. It was against her nature, contrary to every principle she had cherished through her life. How could she bear it? She had been silly, foolish the first years she was married, but always truthful. For one slender moment she thought of not seeing Galen, of hurrying to Robert, to let him judge. But she knew her husband too well to be guided by this impulse.

Had he been lavishly affectionate she might appeal to his emotions but Robert was not one to be won over by kisses and soft entwining arms. He prided himself on his principles, he never wavered from his convictions. She had often heard him say that where there is smoke there is fire. And now there was much smoke, an ill-smelling cloud.

Neda bathed and dressed, partook of some of the dinner the maid set before her and then put Bobby to bed. There was nothing to do now but wait. She was tired, nearly exhausted from the humiliating day in the city. True, she had raised the money to buy her happiness, yet at the same time, she realized that she sold herself into bondage. Years stretched ahead, years of lies, of fear, of constant watching. She wondered with a shudder why a woman must pay such a horrible price for idle frivolity.

On the arm of her chair lay the little bag of money, beside it the Colt Robert had given her for protection. She asked herself if she had the courage to leave little Bobby forever.

There were steps downstairs. Now they were coming upstairs and they were not the heavy treads of the maid. She listened, half paralyzed with terror. They stopped in the hall as though undecided which direction to take. Her hand closed firmly over the small revolver as she waited.

The door of her room ajar, swung wide open.

Neda jumped to her feet, the little Colt clattering to the floor. "Robert! You!" And then only one overpowering thought. She must get rid of him at once. She must! There was the little bag of money lying conspicuously on the chair arm and the revolver at her feet. What must he think? "Robert," she stammered helplessly, "I—" and caught the back of the chair for support. "You were not coming home for two weeks." Oh, how could she get him away? Galen would be here any minute.

Robert came over in his calm, deliberate manner and picked up the revolver, placed it on the mantel as though she had dropped a book or a flower and then without a word helped her to a chair.

He fumbled in his pocket and fished out something, put it in her lap. A little packet of letters.

After a moment of torturing silence she murmured brokenly. "You

—bought them." It was over, finished—a battle lost. After all, Galen had decided to get the bigger price and the frantic work of raising the money had been for nothing. Very soon her husband would speak and she wondered in dull almost painless way if he would let her have the baby.

"Yes, I bought them," he acknowledged, "bought them with my fist! Have you forgotten, Neda, that I was a fairly good amateur boxer? I came home unexpectedly last night and overheard your conversation with that fellow. I'd have knocked him down on the spot and saved you the wretched night that you must have had—but he hadn't the letters with him and I wanted them, so I waited until he appeared again in the garden to-night with them."

She stared at him only beginning to understand.

"I gave him a trouncing that he'll remember to his dying day. And as for these—" he threw the little packet in the empty grate, stooping struck a match and fanned them to a swift flame shooting up high in licking tongues, dying out suddenly, completely, without as much as single curl of smoke.

Of Course He Knew

By Josephine Sesnan Cronin

SHE fluttered toward him on a breeze of expectation.

He came, dull-eyed, weary.

"Darling," she cooed close to his ear in tender reproach, "July fifteenth, don't you know what day that is?"

He took off his hat, sought counsel of the heavens, and in another instant flashed back, jubilant, "St. Swithin's Day."

So perished romance on the third anniversary of their wedding.

A Lady of Logic

By Fred B. Mann

When Alicia's husband failed her, Alicia interviewed her conscience. And as it was a kind conscience—

ALICIA DELAINE had a husband who neglected her. In fact, he did worse—he spent much money and most of his leisure time in the company of other ladies to whom he was more firmly, though not so legally, attached.

Confronted by such a situation, Alicia did not adopt any of the usual old, run-down-at-the-heel, sprung-at-the-gusset methods for relieving it, such as divorcing him, putting arsenic in his coffee or making him jealous by getting goo-ey with some other male.

To divorce a husband was so common these days that no one with an ounce of originality would think of doing it; and the arsenic system for removal of a mate always gave the meddling authorities grounds for entering a complaint; and as for starting an affair with some other man, it was the worst scheme of all—one generally wound up by falling in love with number two and thus having a couple of the inferior sex to wonder what to do with.

Instead, Alicia decided to apply to the problem a method of reasoning that was old, it is true, but one that was seldom used by anyone because it required some gray matter to carry it to a conclusion.

The method was invented by an old gentleman named Socrates, and patent applied for, in the year 450 B. C. in Athens, Greece. In those days the Greeks were interested in a great many problems besides how to get money enough to come to the United States and start a corner candy store or a restaurant, and Socrates used to stand on the public square in Athens every afternoon and apply his method of reasoning to whatever problem folks brought him—and never but once did he fail to solve the matter called to his attention.

Even the one time that he was treed by a situation it wasn't the fault of his method; the old man was so full of hemlock, the wood alcohol of those times, that he was unable to ask questions. For it was by asking questions, and then having his client or some capper in the crowd or himself answer them, that he was always able to get the right answer.

But to return to Alicia. She had made up her mind to learn the best way of handling this situation by asking herself questions. So she went to her boudoir one day, disrobed, and stood before the long mirror there.

Now don't get the idea that because Alicia's husband preferred other ladies to her, she was not a beauty. As she posed before that pier glass, it actually tilted forward and piered and piered.

"Do not all desirable females have dimples—somewhere?" asked Alicia of her twin self in the mirror.

The lips of the vision in the glass moved slowly in reply, but the answer was emphatic. "Invariably."

"Have I any anywhere?" Alicia asked.

"You have them almost everywhere," replied her twin self. "If they were any more abundant you would be just as good as hollow."

"Do not the chosen of my sex always have curves?" continued Alicia.

"Foolish question, write your own number. Of course," spoke her twin.

"Perhaps I am not so fast as many of the chosen," said she before the glass, "but am I not there when it comes to all the necessary curves?"

"Your assortment of the same would make Helen of Troy look like a bush-leaguer," acknowledged she in the mirror.

"Do not all delectable ladies possess flesh that is pink?" questioned Alicia.

"It is the favorite color of those who burst into the magazines about them," said her double.

"What is the color of mine?" Alicia sent a blush all over herself as she asked this.

"It is the prettiest shade of pink known to the human eye," replied Alicia's reflection. "Mine is the only shade I had ever seen that could even tie it."

"Are not the pulse-stirring creatures of fiction occasionally called 'lissome'?" asked Alicia next.

"Occasionally!" exclaimed the vision in the glass. "Every author has the word on a rubber stamp so as to avoid writer's cramp when describing his heroines."

"How about me?" anxiously inquired the cross-examiner. "Am I lissome?"

"Yes, you are some lissome," declared the witness, emphasizing the word "some." "You are the sum of all the lissomers I have ever seen or read about."

"Have I the red lips that seem an absolutely necessary part of every beauteous female?" went on Alicia.

"You have the red, red lips—one red for each lip—that are mentioned so often."

"How are the lines of my figure?"

"Oh, boy! They are indeed there!" ejaculated Alicia's twin. "You could draw a drowning man out of the sea just by strolling along the beach in a bathing suit."

"And my face, is it passable?" said Alicia, her manner modest, but inside her pretty head full knowledge that in a beauty contest she would never have to break out in perspiration to finish first.

Her double threw up her hands in admiration. "My dear," she an-

swered, "everything about it and upon it is calculated to make a man come running to be in your neighborhood."

"And am I cold?" asked Alicia.

"We both will catch our death of it, if you don't close that window," replied the other.

Alicia went to lower the window and to pull down the shade, she having forgotten until just now that the chimney on the house next door was being repaired. The ring of trowels on bricks was heard again as she returned to the mirorr.

"I meant my manner, not my body," she said, when once more in position.

"I should say you are a happy medium," announced her twin, after a moment of reflection. "Why should you get excited?"

"Summing up all of your evidence to date, then, does it not seem conclusively proven that I fulfill all of the specifications laid down by the experts as necessary in the composition of a beaut?"

"Q. E. D.," replied Alicia's vis-a-vis.

"How do you account then for my husband's preference for other la—well, maybe not exactly ladies—for others?"

"On the firm belief that he is *non compos mentis*. Any jury of peerers at you would declare him insane without leaving the seats."

"My husband being thus incompetent, should I not begin to look around for a means of supporting myself?"

"Oh, yes, indeed."

"Is there not one career for which I am undoubtedly most fitted?" As she asked this, Alicia gazed admiringly at her reflection, who nodded her head vigorously.

"Is it not a stage career?"

"A stage career, by all means," answered her twin self.

"And while gaining an honest livelihood, would I not also be a blessing in disguise inasmuch as I would probably uplift the stage?"

"Forget that part of it," quoth the twin. "You must remove your disguise as much as the censors will permit; then all mankind will call you blessed."

"Being so favored by the gods, is there not also another reason why I should permit some theatrical manager to pay me a good salary, namely, to wit, that I will bring joy to audiences of hundreds while now I am unappreciated by an audience of one?"

"You have said a mouthful," agreed the other.

So having arrived at a definite conclusion by this Socratic, democratic discourse with herself, Alicia put on a bewitching costume, which showed off to advantage the lines of her lissome figure, unlimbered her dimples, saw that her curves were working smoothly, made sure that her complexion was in the pink of condition, fixed her red, red lips so they were even redder, and then started for the office of one who selected beauties for the stage.

At the gentleman's place of busi-

ness Alicia was handed the usual bromide— "He is in conference and cannot see you." But she was a sulphite and did not take any stock in bromides. Her inference was that the conference was a "con." Taking out ten of her calling cards, she wrote a note upon them, shuffled the pack, and sent the ten in to the manager.

"I, also, have just come from an important conference. As a result I have something of great value to call to your attention."

The manager was puzzled even before he was able to make out the contents of the note—Alicia had given the cards a good shuffling—so after piecing the puzzle together on his desk, he was curious to see what kind of a game this was. He ordered the office boy to admit her forthwith.

As she sat in a chair opposite him, with her legs crossed in the conventional manner, Alicia found little need to utter but the fewest of words to convince the manager that she would adorn his stage. He engaged her on the spot.

Tripping gaily homeward, Alicia packed up all of her belongings, and those of her husband that she thought she could use, telephoned for a truck, and went to live elsewhere. She had deserted her husband.

When he divorced her, a few months later, she had already advanced far in her profession, and the divorce gave her an additional shove up the heights. In two years she was a star, with the figures on her weekly pay check almost as beautiful as her own.

And how did this lovely creature fare amid the perils that are supposed to surround a lady making her way upward to the realms of stardom? In this reel we will give but a hint—she never married again, although dozens sought her with such intent. But how about the rest of the hunters, those who shoot with the left barrel only? The grand double exposure follows in the next reel.

The scene shows a luxurious apartment on Park Avenue. Alicia, now at the very pinnacle of success, has recently returned from her nightly portrayal of the part of "Apetitea" in the gorgeous spectacle of that name. She has slipped off her costly furs and changed to pink silk pajamas, which blend so perfectly with the color of her satin skin that it is impossible to tell where Alicia leaves off or the garment begins.

As she emerges from her boudoir and enters the library, she is lovelier even than on the day when she stood before her mirror and employed the logic of the ancient one. Her red, red lips are slightly moist, as though a rosebud refreshed itself with dew, and in her beautiful eyes there shines the light of happiness. Lissomely she crosses the room and stands before the square-built male figure that pays no attention to her approach. The bronzed features do not soften as Alicia throws

a dimpled arm about his neck, yet she doesn't seem to mind his coldness a single whit. Raising her red, red lips until they graze the ear of the great head upon its square column, she whispers: "Old Soc, you made me what I am to-day; I hope you're satisfied. I certainly am."

But Alicia is never to get a reply from Socrates. He's been on a bust ever since he got that hemlock jag in Athens, and his voice is gone.

The New Malady

By H. C. Thompson

IT has only been within recent years that the mark of the "B" has been prevalent. Its victim, once he has discovered the dread mark upon his person, seldom if ever consults a physician, for the stigma that would be attached to the patient's fair name would be almost as bad as though he had some dread disease.

The new disease is no respecter of persons. The mark of the "B" has been found on clean and unclean—rich and poor alike.

Tessie Footlights, the well-known actress, awoke one morning to find the dread mark upon her breast, just above the mark made by the middle stays of her brocaded silk corsets. Bill Bankroll, well known about the various golf links, discovered the mark on his right thigh. George Silversheet, the movie idol, carried the mark for several days upon his left breast, while Carrie Traymore the waitress had it upon her shin bone.

In all cases the mark was of about the same size and was a sort of a red bruise. It lasted only a few days, unless it had been aggravated and its appearance has only been made since the war.

After looking into the trouble thoroughly, a committee, who claim they know from experience, say that the trouble is caused by the neck of a bottle pressing into the skin.

Upside Down

By Rose Pelswick

Deviltry, purity or mystery. Which does modern man seek in his dream-woman?

THE dinner was a gloomy affair. Pearson knew that something was coming—he had suspected it from the moment that his father had sent word and insisted that they have dinner together. So, with the wisdom of a wise generation, he did not force the issue, answered his father amiably, and acted entirely unconcerned.

Finally it was over, and Pearson Hartledge, Senior, led the way to the library. He settled himself in a comfortable armchair, lighted a large cigar, and motioned his son to the chair beside him. Pearson, Junior, lighted a cigarette and waited.

"Son," began the older man, "I've been thinking quite seriously about you lately, and there is one thing I want to know. I'll put the case briefly. You're thirty-four, considered good-looking; healthy, educated, rich—you've had your share of fun, and now you're head of the Hartledge factories. You've been places, and seen things, and you yourself admitted that you're thinking of settling down. And, I see, you're still thinking. So, what I want to know is, when do you intend to get married?"

Pearson, rather taken back, flicked the ashes from his cigarette, and laughed. Why, Dad," he began, "life's pretty jolly as it is, and I—"

"All right," agreed the older man, "we'll concede that. But that isn't getting to the point. What I want to know is, do you intend to get married? And if not, why not? Be frank with me—I'm curious. Things seem to be different now than they were before. If your mother were living, I suppose she would know. You realize as well as I that this house needs a hostess. So what's wrong? You've met plenty of girls, I presume. None of them suit you?"

"Well," answered his son slowly, 'you say that you want me to be frank? Then, the truth of the matter is, Dad, I've met plenty of girls —more than plenty—and yet—"

"Well, why don't you finish? What's the matter with them?"

"That's exactly what I'd like to know," answered Pearson, Junior. "What *is* the matter with them?"

His father stared at him. "I don't understand you," he admitted.

"Of course not. Things in your days were different. You can't understand, Dad, things have changed. Now, they're upside down."

"Granted. But son—just what do men want these days?"

Sylvia De Courtney of Fifth Avenue stood in front of the large triple mirrors in her bedroom, and surveyed herself carefully, and thoughtfully. She was dressing with more than her usual deliberation, because to-night she was going out to dinner with Pearson Hartledge, the season's handsomest, richest, and therefore, most desirable bachelor.

She wore a crimson lace evening gown, sophisticated and challenging, with one narrow, jet-beaded shoulder-strap, and a large rope of jet beads practically comprising the waist; her very tight and very short skirt disclaimed all pretense at concealing an underskirt, and showed a daring length of silver hose and slippers.

A silver wreath was placed on her dark hair, which had been drawn up very high on her head, and away from her ears. Her flushed face gave evidence of cheeks that were reddened, eyebrows and eyelashes that were darkened. And, as she stood there, she put on the finishing touch with her lipstick.

Her mother, passing by her room on her way out to some social function, stopped in. When she saw her daughter's attire, she stopped short.

"Sylvia," she exclaimed, "you've been dressing in a very extreme manner right along, and I never said anything, because all the other girls seemed to be doing the same thing, and I appreciated the fact that you couldn't be backward. But when it comes to the way you've fixed yourself up now—you, a De Courtney—I feel that the line has to be drawn somewhere. Where are you going in that outfit, and with whom?"

Sylvia drew back from the mirrors sullenly. "I'm going to dinner with Pearson Hartledge."

Her mother gasped. Opportunities like this were rare and far between. There seemed to be a dearth of eligible bachelors—and especially such as Pearson Hartledge.

"But Sylvia," she objected, "you can hardly expect a man like Pearson to entertain serious intentions towards a girl dressed like—like a dancer!"

Sylvia turned passionately upon her mother. "That's just it, mother—that's just why I'm dressing like this—to look like a dancer. I'm doing this for—for competition!"

Her mother stared at her. "Competition?" she repeated.

"Yes," raged Sylvia, in another passionate outburst. "Pearson's been running around with a dancer from some roof garden, and if I want to count with him, I've got to hand him the same line he gets from her. Otherwise he wouldn't notice me at all. It's competition, that's what it is. Competition!"

And with a defiant toss of her head she turned back to her mirror, and inspected her rosebud lips critically.

Her mother stood watching her for a moment or two, and then, with a sigh, left the room and went out.

Just what do men want these days?

MIMI DE SANTREY of Second Avenue stood in front of the small cracked mirror in the family bedroom, and surveyed herself carefully and thoughtfully. She was dressing herself with more than her usual deliberation, because to-night she was going out to dinner with Pearson Hartledge, the nicest young fellow that ever came up to the roof garden. All the girls on the roof were crazy about him.

She wore a plain dark crepe dress, girlish and simple, with a small string of imitation pearls around her neck. Her tight, but not too short, skirt revealed a charming, black stockinged foot, in pretty black strapped pumps. Her dark hair was drawn away from her forehead and puffed out demurely over her ears. Her face, flushed with excitement, did not reveal a single trace of make-up. It had been put on too cleverly.

Her mother, passing by her room on her way to the kitchen, stopped in. When she saw her daughter's attire she stopped short.

"Mary Smith," she exclaimed, "you've been dressing awful funny these last few weeks, and I ain't never said nothing, because I thought maybe you wasn't feeling well. But now—the way you're fixing yourself up—you, the best dancer on the roof—I think I got something to say about it. Nobody would ever know you had any style or chick. Where you going, dressed like a Salvation Army rescue mission?"

Mary drew back from the mirror wearily. "I'm going to dinner with Pearson Hartledge."

Her mother gasped. Opportunities like this were rare and far between. There seemed to be a dearth of nice men willing to take out a nice, good, working girl.

"But, Mary," she objected, "you can't expect a swell like Pearson to take to a girl dressed so plain—with no style—why don't you wear your red-beaded silk with the black jet trimmings? You look just like a schoolgirl in this."

Mary turned passionately upon her mother. "That's just it, mother—that's why I'm dressing like this—to look like a schoolgirl—I'm doing this for—competition!"

Her mother stared at her unbelievingly. "Competition?" she repeated bewildered.

"Yes," said Mary with a bitter outburst, "Pearson only knows the best class of girls—the refined sort—real society girls; and if I want to count with him I've got to act like the girls in his set. Otherwise he wouldn't notice me at all. It's competition, that's what it is. Competition!"

And with a knowing toss of her head she turned back to the cracked mirror and removed the tiniest trace of crimson from her lips.

Her mother stood watching her for a moment or two, and then, with a sigh, left the room and went down to wash the dishes.

Just what do men want these days?

The Deviations of Dorothea

A SERIES

By J. U. Giesy

III—Simple Stuff

"IT'S like this," said the girl, seated in the café manager's little office: "I was with th' Pink Crepe Company which went to smash here, and while most of our folks went back to New York, I thought I'd stay awhile. I'm sort of tired of being always on the move. I can play and sing. I worked in a shop called th' Jazz Joint, before I was on th' stage."

She did not add that before that she had clerked in a little art store six days in the week, and gone to church on Sunday, and taught a juvenile Sunday School class, until —when she was past eighteen, a restless yearning for a wider experience —what she herself had come to denominate "temperament" had led her, first to clandestine dances— later into the escapade of posing for an artist, with the result that a committee of scandalized churchmen had recommended her excommunication for so flagrant a "deviation" from a rigid secular code.

Nor did she explain that she had run away from home after that to join the defunct theatrical aggregation, whose manager had found poor business and expenses a combination with which he could no longer cope.

Gene Waller eyed her after she paused. She was a blond glory of a girl—a thing to turn men's heads— of dimples and tinted flesh of honey-colored hair, blue eyes, and crimson lips. He let his glance stray slowly from her face to the tapering calves and ankles cased in shimmering silk, the slender little feet in modish shoes. He called his place "Green Gardens" and was noted for the "peaches" in his cabaret, which isn't saying that Gene was a horticulturist.

"Well, Miss Merton," he said, "you got th' looks an' if you been on th' stage— Come on into th' main room where there's a piano an' I'll try you out."

He rose and led the way into the "Gardens"—a region of tables, chairs, some potted palms and plants, some overhead artificial flowers and vines on painted trellises, an orchestra stand where was a piano, more chairs, a bass drum and trap accessories, triangle cymbals, bells.

"Dance?" he suddenly asked.

"A little," Dorothy Merton said. She signed it Dorothea, but had been

christened Dorothy in the little gray stone church from which she had been cast out.

Waller nodded. "Our girls dance with th' crowd you know. Well—play somethin' an' sing it." He sat down on a chair while she took her place at the piano.

She played—a late song, sang it with a syncopated catch in the words.

Gene Waller nodded again. "Pretty good. Your voice ain't so strong, m'dear, but it's sweet. All right. I can use another girl, I guess—if she's a looker. Got th' clothes?"

"Some of my stage dresses," Dorothea told him.

"Light stuff, low-necked, short. Th' less th' better," he summarized. "I'll put you on at six this evenin'."

There was a little room back of the café where the feminine portion of the cabaret garbed themselves for work and put powder on its nose, between numbers.

Here Dorothea met her working companions that night: Dolores Mains, who had a voice she could break in the middle when she wanted to sing a "Blues," and a pair of nimble feet and legs to fit any sort of dance or extemporize steps all her own; Marian Larkin, slender and languid in her movements, who sang languid ballads and affected clinging gowns; and the "ponies," who merely sang in chorus and danced and generally helped out the entertainment with their looks. Of the lot, Dorothea, putting on her makeup at a little dressing table, felt attracted to Dolores more than any other.

Besides the female corps and the band, there was Hal Fleishman, slender and dapper and dark, who sang songs largely of his own extemporization in a way that was always good for a laugh. He had a droll expression he habitually used at such times and generally clowned it a bit when he was on the floor. And he rattled a wicked lot of keys at a separate piano, whereon he sometimes performed to no more than a vamped accompaniment from the band.

He was seated in front of it, waiting to explode that sort of burst of syncopation when Dorothea wandered out on the floor for her first song. He gave her one glance and sat up and began to take notice, like the average widower the second summer—or sooner.

That started it. Dorothea made good with her song and she appeared to hit Fleishman between the eyes.

She took an encore, and thereby assured her job.

Hal beat a harmless bit of jazz into absolute submission with merciless and facile fingers and strolled back toward the dressing room after he had finished. He frequently did that between spasms, so to speak. The girls all liked him and didn't mind having him around. He was that sort.

Dolores was out with the ponies, staging a song and dance, and Marian was languidly darkening the shadows beneath her eyes.

"Hello," Hal said, eyeing the latest addition to the Green Garden's entertaining staff. "I knew Gene was

springin' a new one, but I didn't look for anything like this."

"Was I as bad as all that?" Dorothea quirked her crimson lips.

"Bad?" Hal grinned. "You was all right and you know it, don't you? Sure you do. But—you're new to it, just th' same, ain't you? Now don't get mad, Kid, but—you look sort of fresh."

Dorothea regarded him in speculative fashion. There was a spark in her blue eyes. "There's different sorts of freshness, ain't there?" she drawled.

"Huh?" Fleishman's grin widened. "There is—but I ain't pullin' th' second sort. I—" he let his eyes wander over her perfect little figure half covered but not concealed. "On th' level I fell for you th' minute I saw you. I says to myself—she's simple."

"Meanin' half-witted?" Dorothea smiled.

Fleishman grimaced. "Nothin' of th' sort. You know what I mean all right. I says—there's a right little chick. You know I help Waller a lot workin' up th' entertainment in this joint. I size 'em up. I'm goin' to work you up an act."

"Ye-s?" Dorothea knew he spoke the truth—that he had appraised her, could have made a close guess at the size of her shoes, the circumference of her waist. She wondered if she should feel offended and decided she should not. There was a good-natured, friendly, inoffensive something about his comically smiling face that disarmed—something that reminded her vaguely of the advances of a half-grown Newfoundland pup she had owned as a child. She smiled back directly into his watching brown eyes.

"Yep." He nodded. "I told you, you looked fresh. School-day stuff. That catches th' crowd—makes 'em remember—hits 'em where they're still a little bit soft. Somethin' simple. That's th' racket. You in a short skirt—like only kids used to wear before grandma swiped 'em, an' me in knee pants. You with your hair in a pig tail. We'll pull some kid lovemakin' an'—I'll carry your books, an'—maybe we'll fight—"

"Like as not," Dorothea giggled.

Fleishman's eyes twinkled. "But we'll make up, eh, Peaches and Cream?"

"Maybe. What's your name?"

"Fleishman." He bowed exaggeratedly with a hand upon his heart—clowning. "It gives me confidence. Like the yeast cake of the same family name, I feel I've got it in me to rise."

Dorothea laughed. "I'm Dorothea Merton." She put out her hand.

Hal took it, and—kept it.

Dolores and the ponies came trotting in.

"Here, Hal—quit holdin' hands an' beat it," she admonished. "I've gotta change for my next number."

Fleishman swaggered out.

Dolores gave Dorothea a glance. "Great guy. Gotta keen eye for a shape," she advised, as she deftly stripped her own.

"Most men do have, haven't they?"

Dorothea questioned out of her growing experience.

"Ouch!" Dolores eyed her with a quickened interest. "Well—my Gawd—did you hear that, Marian?"

"What?" Miss Larkin languidly inquired.

"Why—she says all men've got an eye for a swell figger, an'—I was writin' her down as sort of green."

There it was again. Dorothea frowned. She looked fresh—simple to these people. "I've been on th' stage, an' before that I played jazz in a song shop, an'—posed for an artist," she explained on combative impulse.

"Posed—how?" one of the ponies broke in.

"Oh—for the figure," Dorothea returned with a level stare and an equally level voice.

"My Gawd," said Miss Mains again. "Where you roomin', you deceptive shrimp?"

Dorothea mentioned a small hotel.

Dolores nodded. "Whyn't you bunk with me? I got plenty of room."

Dorothea met her eyes and her smile of invitation. "Why—I'd like to," she accepted, feeling she had found a friend.

Dolores mentioned an address. "Bring your trunk over to-morrow." Sounds of music drifted in from the main room. "There's your number, Marian."

"Thanks—I hear it." Miss Larkin strolled languidly out.

True to his promise, Hal worked up the School Days act. He devised both music and costumes, made maudlin love to Dorothea, once they were on the floor, and staged a childish spat between them, to be finally reconciled. The thing went "big." In the parlance of the entertainers, the Green Garden patrons "ate it up." Fleishman was pleased and so was Waller. Gene was pleased at anything that drew business.

"Honest to beeswax," Hal declared, "you're there—you fit th' part. You gotta face like you see on a magazine cover or in th' choir of a village church—sort of—ignorant."

"Thank you for nothing at all," Dorothea flashed.

"Well—maybe I don't mean ignorant either," Fleishman conceded. "Maybe I mean innocent—though nowadays it's pretty hard to accuse a girl of bein' that."

"Think so?" Dorothea regarded him from between narrowed lids. Her heart was pounding a bit, even though she knew Hal had no idea how near he had come to the truth—about—well everything—about her being innocent—really—about her looking more like her place was in church, than on the Green Gardens' entertaining staff.

But Dolores and the ponies had not been slow in letting it be known she had been an artist's figure model. She sighed. Anyway she was not ignorant at least. She had deviated enough from the straight and narrow paths of her former life to have gained in knowledge, even if she had promised herself that she would never deviate past a point consistent with self-respect.

Hal grinned. "Not bein' foolish or—blind," he asservated. "Never mind. I'm a chicken fancier myself. That's why you knocked me for a goal the night I lamped you. You looked like you was in th' wrong coop. I'm glad you wasn't. I got another idea about—us. What would you think of goin' on th' road in a vaudeville act?"

"Why—I don't know." The suggestion was rather sudden. It opened up possibilities of various sorts in Dorothea's mind. "Just how d'ye mean?"

"You an' me," Fleishman rattled ahead. "Open and close in one. Song or two and a dance—maybe—an' some good cross-fire. Simple stuff. Layin' aside our argument, you *look* simple, my dear, an' most of 'em don't. I know a feller could write it for us, maybe. You've been on th' stage, an' I've told you I was like my namesake—thought I could rise if I got a chance. With your looks an' my dam' foolishness, we oughta make a team."

"You think we could get a bookin'?" Dorothea reverted to the argot she had picked up while with the Pink Crepe troupe.

"Bookin'?" Hal repeated. "We could if the act is any good. Simple stuff. That's what get's 'em every time, no matter how wise they are. Look how this thing of ours is goin' in this food foundry. Give 'em somethin' simple. They're fed up on pretty much everything else."

"We-ll," Dorothea considered; "you might see if this friend of yours thinks he could write up something."

She told Dolores about it that night after they were in bed.

"Hal's had th' vaudeville bug for some time," Miss Mains sniffed. "I ain't sayin' he wouldn't make good. He's got a funny face, an' funny ways, an' he's pretty nearly harmless, I guess."

"How d'ye mean—harmless?" Dorothea mumbled.

"Why—he ain't apt to pull anything very rough. Trouble with this team business is first thing you know your partner is wantin' to save expense on room rent, like as not. Then there's liable to be a bust up. It depends on how far you're willin' to go in that sort of a deal. Of course, you posed for that artist—"

"Lorrie!" Dorothea had taken to calling the older girl by the nickname. "Frederick Brent was a gentleman—all the way. Why—Lorrie!"

"Oh—all right, kid," Miss Mains accepted. "Let that go. I ain't squeamish. You can't be if you're buckin' the world on your own. Hal's a nut on a pretty face, like I told you. I don't blame him for falling for you. I would myself if I was a he-male, I guess. Just as a girl, you're th' goods. But—I wouldn't count too much on him if I was you."

Subsequent events rather ran to prove her judgment true. Things went on pretty much the same for some weeks, and then Gene Waller

engaged still another new peach for his Gardens. Marian Larkin took her languid way to another city and a new scene of employment as entertainers frequently do, and Gene dug up this girl to do her ballads.

You knew she was soft the minute you saw her. Her hair was soft brown and her eyes an almost violet blue. And her lips were pink and soft and crinkly, with little striations like the petals of a rose. And her voice was a sweet, true soprano, with queer little occasional subtones like the piping of a flute.

She was just—girl, and furthermore her work was new. She walked out on the floor in a simple gown and sang her simple song—simply. Patrons of the Gardens, unaccustomed for years to seeing a woman essay a song with a throat covered by anything more than rice powder and skin, seemed caught by the innovation—by hands clasped almost nervously together and downcast eyes.

"She's making good," Hal breathed to Dorothea, standing beside him to watch Mazie Denton's first appearance. "Whad'd I tell you—they like this simple stuff. They're like Jiggs goin' down to Dinty's for corned beef and cabbage an' leavin' Maggie her *paté de foie gras,* an' *fromage de brie.* Simple stuff. That's th' cheese."

And it really seemed that it was, because Mazie ran back to them in a burst of ready applause.

And Hal caught her, turned her around. "Go back—they want you," he hissed, and gave her a shove. Then he grinned at Dorothea. "Some girl, eh? Some dewy-eyed kid. Li'l' Kewpie caught nappin' in th' clover, I'll tell th' cross-eyed world."

Dorothy glanced at him quickly, but he did not notice. His eyes were following the new girl, taking her encore. And when she ran back again, he smiled into her shining eyes.

"They—liked me—didn't they?" she questioned, breathing a bit fast.

"Sure!" he nodded. "You got 'em goin', Mazie." His glance ran with her as she went on to the dressing-room door and disappeared.

"She's green," said the girl beside him. "Dolores and I had to make her up. She don't know a lip-stick from a rabbit's foot."

Hal grinned. "Maybe. But she can sure put over th' simple stuff. Say—maybe I could have a third part wrote into that act of ours."

"Why bother?" Dorothea flashed from a hotly impulsive resentment of the words. She breathed deeply. "Why not let her take mine?"

"Huh?" Fleishman appeared startled. His grin faded and came back again, slowly. "Holy Smoke—you ain't jealous, are you, Dot?"

"Jealous?" she repeated, and curled her lips a trifle. "If you want that answered, go gaze in a looking-glass."

Despite which taunt she mentioned the matter to Dolores.

Unsympathetically, Miss Mains chuckled. "Remember what I told you. She's new an' pretty an'—sort

of fluffy like a kitten about th' time it opens its eyes. Hal's eyes are always open for anything like that. I wonder where Gene got hold of her. I'm an Indian if she ain't from the country."

By degrees Mazie answered that question herself. She *was* from the country. *Everybody* had told her she had a voice. She had run away from home to get it trained and make it earn her a living at one and the same time. She had broached Gene for a chance, about the time Marian Larkin left. When she had saved a little money and gained experience, she was going on the stage.

That settled it with Hal Fleishman. He appeared to think the occasion made to order, and announced a few days later that he was having a part for her written into the act on which his friend was engaged.

Dorothea said nothing, because she suddenly felt that if she said anything at all, it was apt to be too much. Brent, when he painted her, had called her temperamental—and instinctively she knew he had spoken truth. It flared up in her at his voiced intention. He had been so markedly attentive, so manifestly taken with her, until Mazie Denton appeared on the scene, that his equally manifest defection filled her with an embarrassed sort of hotly smouldering rage.

Wherefore she contented herself with a withering glance, although tempted to declare that when the third part was written, he could scratch hers out. The worst of it was that she knew in the ensuing days, while Hal devoted himself more and more to the new girl, that Dolores was quietly and watchfully amused. There was an "I told you so" look at times in Dolores' eyes.

Then one night Mazie failed to appear at the Gardens, and about ten o'clock Gene called Dorothea into his office and told her someone wanted her on the telephone.

Two minutes later she knew that Mazie was sick, had promised to go to her rooms when her last turn was finished, and had taken down the address. She went back and told Dolores the news.

"I'll go with you," Miss Mains volunteered, and Dorothea accepted with a nod.

Between one and two in the morning, the two girls climbed the stairs to a lodging house room and found Mazie burning up with fever, and swollen-eyed.

"Oh, Dorothea-a!" she whimpered. "I'm so hot—an'—my throat's sore, an'—my head aches!" She began to weep in Dorothea's arms.

Dolores gave the cheap room one glance, walked into the hall and gave a vicious jerk to the hook of a messenger call.

"What we gotta do," she announced, coming back to Dorothea and the tear-dissolved Mazie, "is get her out of this. We'll take her over to our place an' call a doctor—"

"I—I didn't know what to do, an' so I—sent for Dorothea. I've

—always liked her," Mazie sobbed.

"Yeah—I've noticed you was close friends," Dolores began rather wickedly, just as a rap came on the door. She jerked it open and handed the youth outside it some change. "Here—get me a taxi. Make it snappy." She shut the door. "Now let's get some rags on this baby doll."

Ten minutes later, Mazie completely resigned to the ministrations of her friends, was carried down to a cab and transferred to their room. Fifteen minutes afterwards she was again in bed.

Dorothea viewed her with a strange expression in her sky-blue eyes. Sick and helpless, the girl was become oddly more than ever like some ailing and uncertain child. "See here—do you know what's the matter with you?" she suddenly inquired.

"I'm sick," Mazie reiterated in a plaintive wail. "Oh, Dorothea—dear—I'm awful sick, really. I—I sent for you so's you could tell my people if—if I—died. You know I got a father, an' mother, an' sister—but—they don't know where I—am-m!"

Dorothea nodded. Her soft lips quirked. "You're sick all right—an' you're lonesome. What you need more'n anything else is your mother to give you a mustard foot bath an' some good hot lemonade. You'd like to have her sittin' right here now with her hand on your head. You're sick for th' sight of your own room—th' feel of your own bed, an' a familiar noise—like th' whine of your pet pup—or—th' laugh of one of th' home town boys."

Mazie regarded her in a wide-eyed silence. "Why — Doro — thea — how did you know?" she quavered at last.

Dorothea drew a somewhat unsteady breath. "How'd I know," she burst out with what seemed unwarranted vehemence. "Why—I—I ran away from home myself, 'cause things were so dreadful tame an' I—I wanted excitement."

"Well—my Gawd! Two of 'em or I'm an—Indian!" Dolores gasped.

Dorothea turned to her. She had never told Dolores what she had just now voiced. Now, however, she met her glance and smiled. "I guess so, Lollie. I—I used to clerk in a shop an'—an' teach a—Sunday school class. Mazie's as much homesick as anything else."

Dolores scowled and nodded.

"If you've never felt it," Dorothea ran on.

"Say—how do you get that way?" Miss Mains exploded. "D'ye think I never had a mother—that I was—hatched? I've picked peas an' shooed hens as a kid, myself."

Dorothea grinned somewhat wanly and turned back to the girl in the bed. "Why don't you go back?" she demanded swiftly. "Why don't you go home an'—an'—give yourself a rest?"

"I—oh—I'd like to," Mazie confessed, and began once more to weep.

"An'—you're going to," Dorothea said, her face again a speculative mask.

"If I—don't—die," Mazie agreed.

She didn't. She was sick for a week. Dorothea mothered her, babied her, petted her during those days—talked to her of her home and seemed to gain a vicarious pleasure from such chats. Mazie literally hung upon her. Dolores viewed the whole proceeding with a look of understanding for the homesick pair in her eyes. And yet at times there was something about Dorothea which she did not fully understand—times when it seemed to her that her roommate was in some quiet way considering something back and behind anything of which she spoke.

Once she heard her discussing Mazie with Fleishman: "She isn't very strong, Hal, you know. An' th' life was strange to her, an' she was half scared all the time, an' homesick. She's just a simple little kid."

"I—I'll go up an' see her any time you say," Hal said.

"Well—I'll let you know when," Dorothea promised.

Three days later Mazie was sitting up.

The next day Fleishman appeared. He shook hands rather awkwardly, sat down and eyed the invalid, in what seemed amaze. She was charmed. Some of these acute illnesses take it out of one in a surprising fashion. And she was so manifestly glad to see him that he found it hard to play up. He remained through what he deemed a decent interval and got himself out.

Dorothea followed him into the hall. "We're going to send her home day after to-morrow," she announced.

He nodded. "Better—I guess. Gee—she musta been awful sick. Well—see you to-night, Dot."

Dorothea watched him scamper away down the stairs with a peculiar expression about her mouth and went back.

"Hal was funny, wasn't he?" Mazie remarked.

"He's generally funny," Dorothea rejoined dryly.

"I know," Mazie smiled. "But—he didn't act funny a bit. He—he acted like he didn't know what to do with himself."

Dorothea nodded. "Oh—lots of men are like that."

"He—he asked me to go on the road in a vaudeville act before I got sick. Did you know about it?"

"Oh, yes," Dorothea said.

"But—I'd rather go home." Mazie put out a hand and drew her close. "Oh—Dorothea—you've been so good to me."

That night Gene Waller handed Dorothea a letter addressed to her in care of the café.

Somewhat puzzled she opened it and read:

Dear Miss Merton: The other night I dropped into the café where you are employed. I'm admitting that I admired both yourself and your voice. One of my company is in bad health and would be glad of a release. If you would care to call upon me at the Southern Theatre I believe you could fill her place. It is a small part, but one that would fit you nicely.

Very truly yours,

EDWARD ASHWORTH.

Dorothea put it away in her dress and laughed softly. In the main room Hal was committing a frenzied assault on the keys.

The following day she called on Edward Ashworth. The day after she took Mazie to a train and saw her aboard it homeward bound.

And that night Fleishman spoke to her as she stood waiting for her number:

"That friend of mine's been havin' a lot of trouble writin' a third part into our act. So I told him to cut it out. Anyway, two can get a bookin' a lot easier than three in that sort of stuff."

Dorothea eyed him. "That so?" she questioned softly. "Well—it's too bad Mazie had to leave—for you, that is. But—I 'spose you can pick up someone else."

"Mazie?" he repeated, his eyes on her face. "Say—"

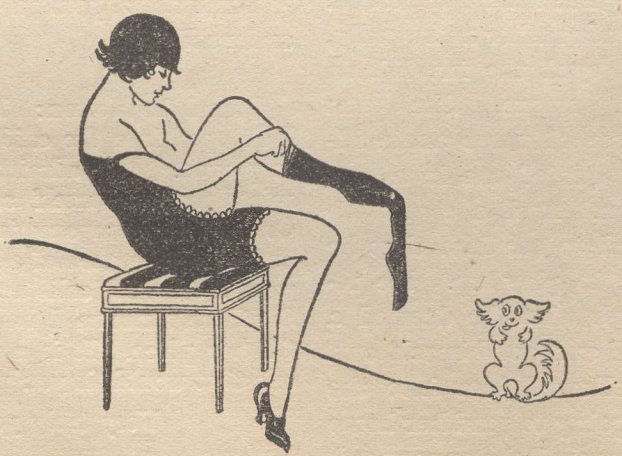
"Why yes. She was so—simple." Dorothea nodded. "She was so simple, that when I suggested goin' home, she—jumped at th' chance."

"Huh? You suggested?" Hal's face twisted into a tentative grin. "Kid," he exploded softly, "you—you ditched her! You was jealous all along. Well—that's rich. But—you was right too. She was just a little hick—just a simp—an'—she didn't fit th' life. On th' level I'm glad she went. Now there'll just be you and me in th' act."

"Not me," said Dorothea. "You'll have to count me out."

"Wha-a-t?" Her companion's grin faded, blankly. "Dot—you ain't throwin' me down?"

"Nobody's throwin' you," Dorothea laughed. "You fell for it yourself. Simple stuff, Hal. Most men are great for it, I guess. But—here's the answer. You'll find out before long, so I'll tell you. Ashworth, th' manager of th' 'College Days' company playin' at th' Southern this week, saw me th' other night an' offered to sign me up. He's like you, Hal—he thinks I can put th' simple stuff over. I'm to play an ingenue part. There goes my music. S'long."



A millionaire is just about the same as the rest of us except that he can choose his wife and his car for their lines.

Good Old Elliott!

By Gilda de la Marr

What is more noble than to risk your wife for friendship's sake?

HER husband was going to Palm Beach without her!

"You see, my dear Muriel," he told her that morning, as they met in the breakfast room, the brittle sunshine of a fair December day making delicate traceries on the wainscoted wall, "you see, my dear, I am going down there on a purely professional errand."

"A professional errand?"

"Yes, I'm going to put that class of persons—the idle rich, the wastrels, the wealthy no-accounts, into my next novel."

Muriel's lips tightened, but her husband affected not to notice. Instead, he stared down into the park through half closed lids and whistled that odious air from "Thaïs" which Muriel disliked. It was one of his most annoying habits.

"You'll not be lonely, I'm sure," he murmured ironically.

"No?"

"Of course not."

She shrugged and he noticed her frown.

"You have your—ah—good friends," he said.

Muriel smiled icily. For, you see, *she knew.*

"So you think you'll—you feel you should go down there alone?"

Allan nodded soberly.

"Can't concentrate when you're along," he remarked with a yawn. "You know how it was at Nice last year. I never did get a bit of local color and we spent four thousand on that little jaunt."

Muriel started to speak, but thought better of it.

"Not going down there with—with any friends, then?" she finally managed to say casually.

Her husband threw her a hasty sidewise glance.

"Friends? What do you mean by that?"

She shrugged carelessly and her long slender fingers drummed idly upon the cloth.

"Nothing. I only asked."

No more was said of his trip to Palm Beach. He himself packed the two Gladstones and carefully cleaned the golf clubs, and did for himself without her help. He did not even ask about his bathing things.

On the morning of his departure he stood upon the threshold of her chintz boudoir—for they maintained separate sleeping apartments. They had always done so. Allan French was queer—that way. He was—well, he was odd in that respect.

"I'm going," he said, as casually as he might have mentioned the time of day. "I'll be back in about three weeks. 'Bye."

And he was gone.

Muriel loved him. That presented the difficulty. Had she not loved him she might have smiled a different sort of smile than that with which she regarded her image in the dressing mirror as she combed her long silver-gold hair that morning. She reached for the little book, bound in red morocco and fastened with mother-of-pearl clasps, the little book in which she had written the thoughts of her brain, the throbs of her heart and the thrills of her soul. Her diary. And as she turned the pages reflectively, a great foolish tear trickled down her smooth, round cheek, but she hastily erased this sign of weakness, of foolish sentiment.

Yet . . . she loved her husband. But she had never known the waters of love to quench the fires of her passion, and try as she might, she could not find the pages, oh, so few of them, in which were entered the precious record of his few kisses.

They were really not married at all. Of course, there had been a ceremony, a churchy affair with the crowd of gapers, the awkward ushers, the tittering bridesmaids, and the nervous best man. And there had been showers of good wishes, and showers of more or less useful or ornamental gifts; and the ghastly wedding breakfast. . . . And there had been an absent-minded, and very casual bridegroom; and a pale, mechanical bride.

The pact had been made on the day after he had asked her to marry him. It was to be a companionship, no more. It was to be an intellectual partnership.

She was to be his inspiration. He loved her hair which, when it did not shine like silver, glittered like gold. He loved her Oriental eyes, deep violet blue eyes strangely framed within long, dark, silken lashes that seemed almost too theatrical, too studied, to be genuine. He loved her sharp, white even teeth. He loved her slender artistic hands, and he loved the trifle too-full figure of her.

But, and he confessed it, he did not love her. He admired her capacity for understanding, and he was even generous enough to say that the strange little verses she wrote in such a facile way were good, mighty good; clever, keen, poignant.

But he did not love her.

So this had been no marriage at all. It was all so manifest that even their intimate friends had a suspicion of it. And among these was Eric Elliott.

Those who disbelieve in the theory of relativity may have some way of accounting for the fact that as Muriel brushed her hair this morning, fifteen minutes after her husband had gone, the telephone tinkled on tiny copper bells and Muriel spoke into the ear of Eric Elliott.

"I say, Muriel," he said, and she wondered absently why he was hoarse, "I say, may I come up to see you?"

She was not surprised.

"Of course. This afternoon?"

"God, no. It's vital—important—urgent. I want to come up now. I'm only a block away."

She laughed quietly.

"You must have seen him go out."

"No, I didn't. But I knew he was going."

Muriel was conscious of a mild sense of surprise at this.

"Did you? Well?"

"It's about that I must see you—this morning."

"Very well, Eric. Come in ten minutes."

She knotted her hair, and when Elliott rang for admittance a few minutes later, he found her in the narrow little drawing room, enveloped in a cloudy lace and silk negligée, satin mules upon her bare feet, and a fashion journal in her hand.

She did not alter the position of lazy ease on the chaise longue, but held out her slim, perfect hand to him.

"Heavens! Why so excited?" she asked gayly.

"For God's sake, don't you know what he's done?"

She nodded slowly, gravely.

"Yes—I know."

"Well, what are you going to do about it? You're not going to let him go on with it?"

She glanced at her visitor keenly.

"Why not?"

"Why not?" Elliott repeated. "Why not? Why, it will be a—be a scandal."

"But does that reflect upon me?"

The man was standing beside the fireplace and at the tone in her voice he turned swiftly and crossed the room. He dropped to one knee and held his eyes close to hers.

"Do you mean it?"

"Of course." The catch in her voice might have meant anything.

"Muriel?" he whispered huskily. "Muriel."

"Well?"

Her eyes were on the fashion journal.

"Look at me—dear."

She turned calm, untroubled eyes up to his.

"Muriel, I've a right to speak now. I've a—"

"Of course you have a right to speak. Any man has a right to speak"—she hesitated, and then finished bitterly—"to a woman who is not—a wife."

"I knew it," he said bitterly. "That rotten cad. I knew it all along . . . Muriel!"

"Yes?"

"Will you—will you be my wife?"

He saw the stain of scarlet rise from her white throat and flood her cheeks.

"Well, dear Elliott, that's scarcely the usual sort of thing to ask a woman already married, is it?"

"Oh, damn the usual sort of thing. That's the trouble, you're not the usual sort of thing, and you're not the usual sort of woman."

She sighed and plucked at the lace of her negligée.

"You're not a wife," he reminded her.

"A divorce—"

He laughed sourly.

"A divorce? What's the use of a divorce . . . yet. Let me love you as I've been wanting to love you for a century, forever. Let me have you, now. Let me—"

"What mad plan have you?" She asked it calmly, evenly.

"We'll go away—to-day."

Her hands fluttered curiously and she sank back upon the chaise longue. Her eyes were closed.

"Isn't that rather like—like they are doing?" she asked softly.

"Well—this is different."

"How different?"

"I love you," he whispered. "I love you, Muriel."

"Perhaps he loves her."

"Faugh! Why, Muriel, she's common. She's a—she's a harlot."

It was a mistake and Elliott sensed this as soon as the epithet had escaped him.

"What shall you—what will they—the world—call me?"

"Do we care?"

"What sort is she—this woman who is going to Palm Beach with him?" Her tone was only impersonally curious.

"Her name is Knight—Jean Knight. She dances. Bobbed hair, carmine on her lips, hard laugh, hard eyes; hard heart, I suppose. You know—the sort that attracts a certain kind of man."

"Do you know her—well?" asked Muriel suddenly, opening her eyes.

"No—but I know all about her."

"How did you know he was going to Palm Beach with her?"

"Oh, this woman is telling it all over town. Boasting that she's captured Allan French the great novelist. Sickening sort of affair. Why the devil didn't he take her abroad?"

There was a long, awkward pause. Finally Muriel spoke.

"Well, what do you ask me to do?"

"Go away with me to-day." He was very stern about it.

She sighed as if in resignation.

"I'll go," she said simply. "Only—I exact one thing. We go to Palm Beach."

The man, rising to his feet, gasped.

"Palm Beach? Why in the world Palm Beach? Why, by gad, we're likely to run right into 'em?"

"Are you afraid of that?"

"Afraid? Don't be absurd. Of course I'm not afraid. I thought, though, you'd not care for that sort of a meeting." He paused and then she heard a violent exclamation. "I see! I see! You want to show him, eh? H'm! Not a bad idea, but a little theatrical. I would scarcely have thought it of you. But, Lordy, I'm for it. It will be a—it will be quite exciting. I see what you mean. You want to show him."

Eric Elliott's back was turned to the woman on the chaise longue, otherwise he might have observed

with surprise, a scornful curl of her red lips and a hard glint, like ice —or fire—in her blue eyes.

"Come for me at two o'clock," she said, suddenly. "I'll just pack as quickly as I can. When is there a train?"

"There's a through train at four o'clock."

"He took—"

"He took the ten o'clock this morning. But it's not a through train." Elliott laughed grimly. "I dare say he had his reason for taking a slower train. Not so many likely to see him go—the Knight woman is rather—rather showy."

"Then we ought to get into Palm Beach—"

"We'll go to Palm Beach on the same train. They hook on at Jacksonville."

Muriel clenched her hands.

"Go now, then, Eric, and come back for me at three. That will give us oceans of time to get to the station."

He stood close beside her and he heard the fluttering of her heart, and he fancied it was for him. He did not offer to kiss her.

"Don't get a drawing room, Eric," she said quietly as he stood, hand upon the door knob. "I'd rather wait—wait till we get there."

"I understand," he said gravely. "But I'll get a drawing room for you. I'll arrange for myself on another car."

Muriel packed feverishly and had completed the task before Elliott returned.

"It will show," she breathed passionately to herself as she drew on the doeskin gloves which, somehow, seemed to enhance the delicate beauty and slenderness of her hands. "It will show—this time." She laughed bitterly at her reflection. "God! What beasts men are." It was not a highly original conceit, but somehow Muriel had never given thought to it before.

Eric was capable. His detailed program dovetailed with beautiful precision and smoothness. On the train below Jacksonville, Muriel's excitement was so near the surface that Eric strolled through the length of the long hideously-yellow East Coast sleeping cars to catch a glimpse of the man with whose wife he fancied himself eloping. He did not discover him.

Her eyes questioned him as he rejoined her.

"Oh, they're probably billing and cooing in a drawing room," said Eric nastily. "Dam' rotters!"

Muriel laughed smoothly.

"At least, they can never say that of us, can they, Eric?"

"My God, I've some sense of the proprieties."

His smug, pious air amused her. . . .

THEY went to the Royal Palms and Eric scrupulously registered for separate suites. He hurried directly to his own rooms to change, he told her.

She strolled out upon the terrace. It all worked out as she had

hoped for. She encountered her husband at once.

She recognized his back as he sat in a great basket chair, the girl with the bobbed hair sitting beside him. Muriel heard him speak.

"My wife has never cared," her husband said quietly to the girl beside him. "It was my fault in the first place. I had absurd ideas about what I chose to call my art." He laughed harshly as he said it.

The girl with the bobbed hair looked grave.

"It is odd what silly notions one gets—about their art, isn't it?"

"Damnable," agreed French. "But you see, in my wife's case, it was different. She took it seriously. I would have given my ears to have had her come down here with me and see us actually at work making this picture. Why, do you know, I've never even hinted that I am writing screen stuff. It would shock her to death." He laughed grimly. "She'd fancy it wasn't art."

"Oh, well." The girl with the bobbed hair sighed. "The best thing to do, old chap, is to tell her flat. . . . I guess I'll be toddling up to bed. Jimmie crawled into the hay hours ago. He's a dear, but he is too darned conscientious. If he wasn't my husband, I'd say he's the greatest picture director in the world. And if he wasn't my director, I'd swear he's the darlingest husband that ever lived. But—well—"

"We've got to shoot that sea stuff to-morrow," yawned French.

"Yes, and—"

As the girl with the bobbed hair rose to go, Muriel escaped into the hotel.

THE funny thing about it is that French had never cared much for Elliott. But now he counts him his best friend. What else, since Elliott saw how things had been going and simply made Muriel come to see it was as it was?

Good old Elliott! It was awfully jolly and friendly of the fellow. And so modest and decent of him. He never waited for French to thank him for persuading Muriel to come down.

Busy chap, probably.

. . . Good old Elliott!

The hand that rocks the cradle seems to be getting tired of it.

Queen Takes Jack

(An Uncritical Review)

By Thomas Grant Springer

IN one manner or another, women usually have had their own way in their relations with men. Most of the time they have had to go at it in a roundabout way, but in a position of authority they come straight to the point with a tyrannical directness that makes the sterner sex seem soft by comparison. Queen Elizabeth was an example, and even more so was Catherine of Russia. These two, having matters in their own hands, came out in their true colors, which, to say the least, were lurid. When they went after a man they got him, and they got him quick. They lost no time in beating about the bush, they just beat the man.

The only reason in my mind that their more conventional sisters use subtler methods is because they are not in a position to be rough and ready. They have to lead, instead of drag, men to their lair, and I am sure, regret the loss of time that these methods impose upon them. Given the chance, it is a poor woman who would not take it. In "The Czarina," Melchior Lengyel and Lajos Biró's picture of the amorous Empress of All the Russians, we have an example of a wild woman on the loose.

Doris Keane returns to us after "Romancing" lo, these many years, and as the Czarina, is as delightful as of yore, nay, more so, and leaves naught to be desired in the desiring, and desirous, Queen of Hearts. So let us sit in a game where hearts are trumps and the Queen is high, and see the high old time she had of it lording it over the supposed lords of creation.

We are asked to step into the Inner Audience Chamber of the Imperial Palace at St. Petersburg on a spring afternoon in 1765. It has been a busy day and the Czarina is now taking a nap, which means that the palace is taking a rest, for with her Imperial Highness awake the whole palace, yes, and the kingdom too for that matter, is liable to be likewise. Prince Soltikoff, the old Chancellor, is trying to get a few things over on the Czarina for the government.

The first is a French treaty which he has lined up and is only awaiting Vicomte de Roncourt, the French Ambassador, who has just arrived. Now the Czarina has been loveless and loverless for over a week, having just gotten rid of her last favorite who tried to boss her. Knowing her Highness, the Chancellor is anxious to see what sort of Ambassador the French Court has sent. The Vicomte being presented, the Chancellor looks him over with

approval, for he is young, handsome, and most evidently a squire of dames.

If the Czarina falls for him the treaty will be over, for she is a person who frequently combines business with pleasure, and just now she has had an overdose of business unrelieved by pleasure. Yes, the Chancellor hopes the Vicomte will do, but he wishes he had arrived the day before, and taxes him with a layover of one night in Warsaw, brought about by a little dancer.

However, there is yet time, for the Czarina's attentions are as yet unengaged, and so the wily Chancellor bids the Ambassador attend upon her pleasure, yes, in more ways than one.

But scarcely does the Ambassador retire when Count Alexei Czerny, a Cossack officer of her Majesty's battle front, forces his way into the chamber. The Count is the Chancellor's nephew, and insists that he has something for her Majesty's ear alone, and demands an audience, staking his life, if need be, on the outcome. The Chancellor, finding he can get nothing out of the young man himself, sends for the Czarina, and lingers in the offing to get an earfull.

The Czarina appears in all her Imperial impressiveness of person and costume. She looks the Count over, sizes up his manly beauty with a rakish and experienced eye, and bids him get off his chest whatever it is he has on it. It is a military plot against her rule and person. Catherine immediately signs orders to arrest the plot and plotters, and concludes that as long as the Count is so keen for her interests he had better stay where he will have a better chance to serve them, which is near the royal person. She tells him to report himself for a major's uniform, and having donned that to report himself back to her at once.

The Chancellor takes all this in, and notices that the Czarina has been taking the Count in with a speculative and appraising eye, therefore he thinks to himself that the French Ambassador's night off in Warsaw will give him a lot of nights off in St. Petersburg. The French treaty is laid on the table for the time being as the Czarina retires from the audience, and the Ambassador temporarily retires from the game of court, personal and otherwise.

Now to make it a little more complicated, Annie Jaschikova, one of Catherine's ladies in waiting, is also the lady in waiting for the Count in a court sense. When she finds out that Alexei has seen the Czarina, and worst of all since the Czarina has seen him, Annie realizes that she will have to be a lady in waiting for some time as far as her lover is concerned, for she is close enough to Catherine to know her fondness for handsome young officers, especially a new one at the present time.

As long as the Count has done the Czarina a favor, Annie knows it is liable to be favor for favor, especially since her Imperial Highness

is laying aside her ceremonial dress and Alexei is putting on a new uniform.

And when Catherine and Alexei meet we realize that Annie's fears are all too well founded. The Czarina has on a negligée, one that does not fail to reveal her generous and beautiful figure. Alexei is a bit shy. Catherine has to tell him how lonely she is, how alone she is, how she longs to be just a woman instead of a queen. She wants someone or something to lean on, and as long as he doesn't see it why she just leans.

In fact she has to tell him to kiss her. I thought she would have to kiss him herself, but he did stoop to that. And then he realizes that he is to be the queen's lover, and he falls at her feet, embracing her ankles and exclaiming, "Oh, you wonderful, wonderful woman!" and as the curtain fell we realized that she was all that, in fact, she was fierce, wild and wonderful.

Act two is the same chamber four weeks later. We find out from the Chancellor that the French Ambassador and the French treaty are still waiting. The night in Warsaw was a long lay off for both of them, for the Chancellor doesn't care to present either at this time. The Czarina is a woman who attends to one thing at a time, and at present that is the Count. Then, too, there is trouble. Alexi wants not only to be her lover, which he is, but her confidant in state matters, which he is not. Catherine is perfectly competent to attend to everything herself, even Alexei, and does. All she wants him to do is attend on her, when, where and how she wants him, and she makes this clear to him when he tries to butt into politics. She can run her own kingdom, and him, and tells him so, so all he has to do is to be a good boy and kiss her.

But the only trouble is that everybody else knows that. The officers of the guard, the lackeys, the maids in waiting, all know that the poor Count is no account on his own account, and they let him see it. Worse than that, even his uncle, the Chancellor, pays no attention to him in court matters. His mind is centered on the French treaty and getting it over, but he doesn't ask Alexei's help; no, he is figuring it out for himself, by himself, and hoping for outside assistance.

Now all this peeves the Count. Alexei thought that when Catherine let him into her favor she would let him in on a lot of other things. In fact he thought he was going to be the boss, but instead of that he finds out that he is only a convenience, and not the only one, for gossip whispers to him that while the Czarina was off on a review a handsome peasant was on guard at her tent and they talked a long, long time.

This makes her poor favorite jealous, for he sees that he is not the prime favorite. He is just a little house pet, something to fill in the time with, but not all the time. To

make it worse he runs into Annie, who is all that a woman should be, submissive, docile, admiring, clinging. She throws herself into his arms and weeps that he has been taken from her. Alexei makes her confess all she would do for him, which is everything Catherine won't, and so decides that he has made a mistake, and just then the Czarina comes in to find them in each other's arms.

This is exit for Annie. In spite of her defiance the Czarina has her packed off to a nunnery, then she gives Alexei a dressing down. If there is going to be any infidelity in their family, Catherine is going to have a monopoly on it. All he is to do is to do as she says. She made him, and she can unmake him and she will. He is to be a good boy or he will be spanked, or knouted. Then she orders him to kiss her, yes, orders him, for she is the boss and she'll make him see it.

This is the last camel on the straw's back. Alexei, left alone, rages. Then the officers of the guards, nobles all, find him an easy prey for a conspiracy they are hatching against their ruler. With him on their side and on the inside it will be easy. He is to open the castle to them when he has Catherine alone, for the regiment on guard in the courtyard is theirs.

Once let them seize her and they will make her come to time. Rather, Alexei insists *he* will make her come to time. They are to capture her, but he is to be the one to handle her. He will betray the palace to them, but they are to leave Catherine to him. He'll show her then who is boss. Oh, yes, Alexei has it all fixed up to fix Catherine. If she is queen she will find out that he is king, and not a dirty deuce.

As soon as Catherine comes back Alexei tells her that she is going to be ruled by him from this on. He has stood all of her nonsense he intends to. He is a man, her man, but she is his woman, and the queen stuff isn't going to work between them any longer. There should only be one boss in any family, royal, regular, irregular or otherwise, and Alexei is going to be it. At this she flies into a tirade. She will have him whipped. She will put him in his place, which is under her feet.

She calls the guard, but instead of answering her no one comes. Then Alexei goes to the window and waves his handkerchief and there is a yell from the courtyard below, a yell of approval. It is rebellion. Not only has he rebelled, but the nobles have too, and Catherine the Great is not so great as she thought she was.

Then, womanlike, she has to beg. For once, Alexei has her where he wants her, on her knees. But not for long, for there is the sound of fighting without, and in bursts, not the rebellious guard, but a regiment the Chancellor has taken the liberty of ordering in instead.

Catherine immediately rises in righteous wrath. She has the whole

bunch clapped in irons. She breaks the officers' swords, and we are quite sure, and so are they, that she will wind up by breaking their necks as well.

As for Alexei, well, he is going to have a worse time of it than if he had never been her lover; for as soon as a woman stops loving a man she has quite the opposite feeling for him, and, to say the least, Catherine's feelings were decided. So as the curtain falls we know that Alexi has fallen with it.

The last act is eight days later. Catherine is now the Czarina, not the woman, but the ruler . . . well, of course, she was the ruler even as the woman . . . but anyway she is just the queen, if you get what I mean. She is back on the job with the Chancellor, who is too old to be anything but an official, which possibly is the best thing for both of them. She has had a busy week exiling, knouting and executing conspirators, and has had time to think Alexei over, and also he has had time to think her over . . . and a few other things, including Annie.

Nor has the Chancellor been idle mentally. He has put Catherine under obligations to him for saving her life, and has put his nephew in his place, which just at present happens to be jail. But the Chancellor figures that Alexei is better off there than in Catherine's boudoir, and safer. Catherine likes a change, and it is time she had it. Alexei likes a woman who is submissive, which Catherine is not, and Annie is.

Besides, there is the matter of the French treaty and also the young French Ambassador who might have gotten a few things over with the Czarina, including the treaty, if Alexei hadn't butted in and engaged her attention. The Chancellor had been holding the Ambassador off, and up his sleeve as it were to spring as a trump card and take the queen when it came to a diplomatic trick.

Now Catherine, being a woman as well as a queen, cannot resist the temptation of trying to make Alexei regret his rash attempt to grab the reins and drive her. She has him brought before her, hoping to make him kneel, at least figuratively, and acknowledge that, even in their private relations, she was the dominant factor.

But Alexei comes before her defiant and unrepentant. Even though he has lost he is not beaten. He has had time in jail to think over the submissive qualities of Annie as against the domination of Catherine. As a woman he realizes that Annie would be his, but he was Catherine's at all times or he was nothing, and frequently he was both. Now he is a Russian Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty or give me death," and only one of those two gifts will he accept from his sovereign's hand.

Catherine recognizes in him a fighter, one who would die for her rather than live with her, except on his own terms. Well, if he wants to fight, she and Russia have many enemies; so she sends him back to

the front to fight her foreign, instead of her domestic wars, and as long as he must have a submissive woman he might as well have Annie, and that will rid the Czarina of both of them. She is done with him and he with her, and so he is dismissed, transferred, but not executed, and not wholly pardoned. For what woman ever pardons a man who does not accept her terms?

Perhaps Catherine realized that marriage is a social death in a way and was merely lengthening his punishment. At any rate Alexei is disposed of and the Czarina is ready to turn to affairs of state instead of those of the heart.

Now the Chancellor has held back not only the French treaty but the Ambassador for just such an opening. With the Czarina sighing for a lost lover she will welcome a handsome diplomat with other things on his mind beside the affairs of his country. Also, since his night off in Warsaw, he has been under the Chancellor's eye so that he has had no chance for a night off in St. Petersburg. Get two lonely people together discussing state affairs and the state of their feelings will usually lead to other affairs.

Immediately the Czarina sizes up the young and handsome foreigner with an appraising and speculative eye. His own does not falter under her gaze, for he is a man of affairs, many affairs, and this is a long way from Warsaw, to say nothing of Paris.

He presents his treaty and sets forth the advantages of an alliance, with just a hint that it might be personal as well as diplomatic. He plays up to her under the Chancellor's instructions, remembering that he has much to gain, not only for his nation, but for himself.

The Czarina is impressed with him and his diplomacy. She realizes almost immediately the advantages of closer relations with the French. Yes, she will look into the treaty, she will study it carefully and give him an almost immediate answer. She asks him to retire while she discusses it with the Chancellor. The French Ambassador is not to leave, he is to merely wait and she will give him his answer—to the treaty, of course.

Left alone with the Chancellor he sees, and so do we, that her mind is already made up. She will sign the treaty, which will mean an alliance. The Chancellor confirms her decision. It will be a great thing for Russia. The state will appreciate it and out of it will come much mutual good. With this Catherine agrees. She will re-receive the Ambassador. She will merely change first and he is to return and the Chancellor retire.

Once she has left for her tiring women the Chancellor calls in the Ambassador. His work is done. The treaty is a law and he leaves the Ambassador to thank Catherine—in the manner most pleasing to her.

Again the Czarina appears, not as the Queen, but as the woman, not in her robes of state but in the simple

negligée in which she had received the now retired Count. Again she confides to a man her desire to be merely a woman, to lean upon a strong shoulder, to let the cares of state slip from her like a garment.

This time she has one who needs no urging—who wishes to make St. Petersburg even more delightful than he found Warsaw; who, having served his country, would serve the one who made that service possible. "Oh, you wonderful, wonderful woman!" he cries, kneeling at her feet. And the curtain falls on the game won . . . but, by whom?

The Girl Speaks

By Strickland Gillilan

WHEN you sat near me wondering if you should,
I, sitting near you, wondered if you would!
Each heart throb o'er anticipated joy
From arm 'round waist—I shared it with you, boy!

The while you sat and wondered if I'd care,
I sat and wondered whether you would dare.
Yours was the quandary over my defense,
Mine only thrills and maddening suspense.

For maiden modesty must be sustained
And maiden impulses must be restrained
At any cost in terms of aching heart,
Wondering if you're game to play your part.

The Creed of Sin

A TWO-PART STORY—PART II

By Thomas Edgelow

WHAT HAS HAPPENED

Clementine and Michael were sweethearts in the little old-fashioned New England Village, but they both ventured to New York in search of fortune, Michael that he might marry Clementine, who was a golden nymph beautiful enough to delight the eye of a god, and Clementine because she had a touch of the modern woman beneath her spun gold hair.

Michael finds that all his efforts to save Clem from the perils of the city are in vain, for he quickly antagonizes her, she is very jealous of her independence and proud of her judgment, and in spite of his repeated warnings makes a friend of Penrhyn Welles, a cosmopolitan millionaire, whose fondness for beautiful women is known on two continents and whose fame for conquests is exceeded only by his fame for cruelty.

Clementine becomes even more determined to continue her friendship when she discovers Michael at a masked ball with a very beautiful and rather famous South American divorcee.

Michael has become infatuated with this Guenna Biarritz, who at one time was the victim of Penrhyn's arts, and is about to be drawn into an affair with her when he sees Clementine at the ball and realizes that she is the woman he really loves and if he is to save her he must keep himself clean. He leaves Guenna's apartment and goes out to walk through the night and get back the perspective he has lost in this beautiful woman's arms.

V

PENRHYN WELLES, as he sat beside Clementine on the way home from the charity ball, sighed a little theatrically.

"Why so sad?" she asked, looking at him.

"Beauty always impresses me with its sadness. 'All that is beautiful is fugitive!'" he quoted whimsically. "I'm afraid you will be fugitive. If only—if only you could mean more to me."

Clementine smiled. "You always say such nice things. It is an art with you, Penrhyn. 'All that is beautiful is fugitive.' Where did you get that?"

For answer his arm encircled her supple waist, and he drew her close to him. Clementine knew that he was about to kiss her. With rapidity of thought, for one second she hoped that he would kiss her. Then something, some inner fineness, some inextinguishable fastidiousness, suddenly made her determine that Penrhyn Welles should not kiss her at that moment. She drew back.

"Please, Penrhyn, at least try to pretend that you can behave decently. I know you think you have a reputation, but you must really practice it somewhere else."

Inwardly he was offended. Young girls did not refuse his kisses as a rule. But outwardly he smiled.

"The little girl is growing up! Look in what a grown-up way she talks! And you are such a childish darling in that jockey costume."

She sat in silence until the

brougham drew up before her little studio apartment. The footman sprang down and held open the door.

"May I come up and smoke a cigarette, little jockey-girl?" asked Penrhyn softly.

"Good night, Devil," was her answer, "and thank you for such a delightful evening."

"Home," growled Welles, as the footman closed the door, and as his spirited horses merrily clattered their iron hoofs on the asphalt of Fifth Avenue, Penrhyn Welles leaned back against the soft cushions, and his expression was not good to look upon.

It was a day or two later that Penrhyn called up Clementine. Would she dine with him that evening? Early—at a quiet little restaurant which Penrhyn had recently discovered?

He met her at the appointed hour and drove her in his carriage to the restaurant which he had mentioned.

She smiled at him across the table. "How have you been behaving yourself, Penrhyn? You know, you were very foolish the other night when you drove me home from the Charity Ball. I do wish," and here her voice grew tender, "that you would do something with your life. Underneath that pose of yours I'm quite sure there is something worth while. Penrhyn, why don't you do something?"

"I do," he laughed at her. "I love you all the time, and that takes every moment of my day."

Clementine smiled adorably.

"I know that you think I am better than I am," played up Penrhyn, eager to be reformed. "There is no knowing what your sweet influence might do for me, oh, little Clementine!"

As Clementine had an early business appointment the following morning, she insisted upon going home to bed as soon as dinner was over, although she consented to linger over the coffee for an hour. Penrhyn left her at her studio, his passion doubly increased.

He drove back to his house on East Sixty-eighth Street, but the book which he was reading failed to grip his interest. It was only half-past ten when, quite suddenly, Penrhyn decided that he must see Guenna that evening. He called her number on the telephone.

"I'm so lonely and bored, and even a little hungry," he told her. "Won't you take pity on me—a lonely bachelor—and ask me to come round and have supper with you?"

She gave him permission, and a few minutes later Penrhyn, who never considered servants, had had Amid Alli telephone to his coachman to bring around the carriage.

He was shown into the dining room where Guenna, beautiful in a negligee which suggested the bizarre colors of South America, was busy with a chafing dish.

"I'm in a domestic mood," she laughed at him over her shoulder, "and my 'supreme of chicken' is really a dish for the gods!"

He stepped quickly behind her, and his hot lips were kissing her shoulder.

"Ah—my Guenna! Think of Guenna being domestic!"

Quickly she swung 'round from him. "Thank you, Penrhyn, but I don't want you to make love to me—even if I am domestic!"

"It is delightful to see a woman of the world playing at domesticity," he said, but his eyes had assumed that intense sapphire blue at her repulse.

"Domesticity—you like that? How absurd, Penrhyn! Domesticity suggests marriage, and I cannot see Penrhyn Welles as a married man!"

He shrugged his shoulders. "God forbid!" he whispered. "I can conceive anything except marriage. I really think that if I were offered the choice of the electric chair or the wedding ring—I would choose the former. And you, Guenna—I am surprised that you should talk of such a thing. After supper—you are going to be kind to me?" He had possessed himself of one of her hands, and kissed her arm from wrist to shoulder.

"Please don't do that, Penrhyn." Her voice was quite serious.

"Guenna—why this prudery? Am I repulsive? Most women don't find me so. That is not conceit when I say it. I cannot draw or paint or write or sculp or make music, but I have made an art of love. Why are you like this?"

She walked away from him. She opened a gold box of cigarettes that was lying on the table, and selected one.

"A light, please, Penrhyn."

She smoked for a moment before she replied to him, and when she did, it was in a voice vibrant with suppressed feeling.

"Penrhyn, I don't know if you will understand, but I am in love."

"With that boy?" He flung the question at her, and his tone was full of mockery.

"And why not? Aren't you as much in love as you are capable of being with a girl younger than he is? Why should not a woman feel the same towards a boy? I think I want this boy more than I have ever wanted anything before."

They supped. By every art that was known to him, Penrhyn tried to reawaken within Guenna that feeling for him which he had once inspired, but she only smiled at him in a friendly manner!

As he realized that he could make no impression on Guenna that evening, it was with some little display of temper that he left her half an hour after supper.

"I'm sorry that I've bored you," he said as he took her hand.

"You haven't bored me," she said quite kindly, and Penrhyn Welles went out to his waiting carriage in the worst of humors.

Guenna went up to her room. She prepared to go to bed, and then an irresistible longing overcame her. She must see Michael before she slept. She picked up the telephone and soon she was talking to him.

"I want you to come round and see me at once. I have something to say to you, and I cannot wait until tomorrow."

"But—" fenced Michael, "it is half past twelve."

Now a woman of Guenna's disposition is almost shameless if she makes up her mind that she is in love. So Guenna was importunate.

"As a favor I ask you to come round and see me. I ask you to see me now."

There was no help for it. Michael went out. Securing a passing taxi, he had himself driven to the house on Murray Hill. It was Estelle who admitted him and who showed him straight up to Guenna's boudoir.

Michael entered, his mind fully made up. It would be unpleasant, and Guenna had placed him in a horrible position. It is difficult for a man to refuse the advances of a woman. But Michael's mind was made up.

"You sent for me? What can I do?" His tones were of ice.

Guenna came towards him with both hands extended.

"Michael! I was wrong. When you wanted me I refused to give myself. Let us end this horrible pretense."

"Please, Guenna," Michael stayed her. "I realize that you are only playing with me," he added in an attempt to save her pride. "And this is just as well, Guenna, because—because—"

"Because you are in love with that white-faced, silly chit of a girl!" she flung at him, disregarding all pride.

"Yes, I'm in love with what you call that chit of a girl! Please forgive me if I have been too frank. And believe that I know you are really only playing with me," Michael added.

Without a word he turned and left the room, and a moment later the front door closed upon his exit.

VI

THE following afternoon, which was Saturday, Guenna was driving across Central Park. The afternoon was crisp and bright, and Guenna had instructed her chauffeur to drive slowly that she might enjoy the Park in its winter garb.

Suddenly she gave a little gasp. She leaned forward and then, a moment later, she sank back with a little moan of pain. Michael was walking with Clementine, and there was that about his bearing and general attitude which told the jealous heart of Guenna Biarritz that indeed he loved this young girl.

And what a fool she had been! Guenna ground her teeth in impotent rage. At one time she had had Michael at her feet, and through caprice she had let him go. Still, Guenna was not of the type lightly to be balked. She swore to herself then and there that she would in some way stop this pretty love affair. Michael again should plead for her favors, and this time she would be kinder to him.

But Guenna would have been still more jealous could she have heard the conversation that was going on between those two young people.

For awhile they had walked in silence. Then Michael stopped suddenly. He took Clementine by the arm and swung her round to him.

"Clementine, will you marry me?"

"Michael, I don't know if I will or not. This much I will promise you—if ever I find—if ever I am sure that I really love you, then I will marry you," and Michael had to be content to let it go at that.

Meanwhile, Guenna had arrived at her house. Penrhyn was coming to tea, and Guenna had a sudden idea that she might incorporate Penrhyn into a scheme which had half formed in her mind since she had seen Michael walking with Clementine in the park.

Penrhyn was a little late. He came into the room—the smaller drawing-room—beautifully dressed, as he always was and sank down beside her on a Chippendale sofa.

"Guenna—Guenna, I wish that you would end all this—suspense. You know that in a play suspense has excellent dramatic value, but when carried out in real life, it may become a little tiring. Why won't you be kind to me?"

Guenna laughed a mocking, tantalizing laugh.

"Do you know, Penrhyn, that I think you are beginning to lose your charm. Yes, really—you are losing charm. I would hate to have a love affair with an amateur."

Penrhyn's laughter was unpleasant.

"I have been called many things, adorée, but never an amateur when it came to an affair of the heart."

But her eyes mocked him. "No? Then you are losing your skill. Really, Penrhyn, you told me that you wanted that pretty little country girl. You do not seem to be making much progress. This afternoon, as I was driving through the park, I saw her with another man. The great—the celebrated—the oh-so-wicked Penrhyn Welles cut out by another man!" So she mocked him.

Penrhyn Welles, outwardly as suave as ever except for a dangerous glitter in his sapphire-blue eyes, was inwardly seething. This mockery—and from a woman for whose moral downfall he had been responsible—cut his pride. Inwardly he vowed there and then that Guenna should pay—and should pay dearly for that afternoon. More he promised himself secretly that he would hasten matters as far as the little Clementine was concerned.

"Have you nothing to say—amateur?"

"I beg you," he smiled, "not to refer to it again. Very soon I will come to you and truthfully tell you that I have won—as I always win—in this delightful game which I am playing with the little girl who wants to reform me. Tell me—will you dine with me to-night? My cook—"

Guenna shook her head. "I'm sorry, but it is quite impossible. I

am dining out. I shall be frightfully bored, but the man is rich. I don't want his money, but he can give me valuable tips as to the way the stock market is behaving itself. Besides, he represents Society with a capital S, and that is always an advantage. I don't know if you know him—it is Daniel Hamlin, the Wall Street banker."

Penrhyn raised his eyebrows contemptuously. "Hamlin — that fat widower? Really, Guenna, I'm surprised that you permit yourself to be bored by a person like Hamlin. A little, fat man with a tummy—fifty-seven if he is a day. Bald—intensely commercial, even if he does represent Family. An impossible person."

"All the same, I am dining with him, Penrhyn."

For a moment or two Penrhyn pleaded with her to change her decision. Failing in this, a little sulkily, Penrhyn left her and was driven to his club.

Guenna was exquisitely lovely that night when she dined with Daniel Hamlin in the palm room of the Hotel Van Astoritz. The great financier's expression was a curious one. His life had not contained many women of Guenna's type, and he was frankly fascinated with all the intensity of which a man of his age is capable.

"Tell me," he said quietly, when after dinner they were sitting over their coffee, "have you by any chance changed your mind? You know, Guenna, that I'm always waiting, always hoping that you may exercise your woman's prerogative and change your mind. At any moment, I am waiting for you."

Guenna dazzled him with her smile. "That is very sweet of you, Daniel. But now let's talk of something else. If ever I do change my mind, I will let you know."

His hand played nervously with a spoon. He felt her repeated refusal very keenly, for he offered marriage.

"By the way," he said casually, "did you not tell me that the bulk of your private fortune is in the Equidore Trust Company?"

Guenna nodded. "Practically everything. I keep out a few thousand to gamble with—and I always have a fairly decent balance at my bank. Then there is my alimony—a wretched pittance of ten thousand a year. Apart from that, all my money is with the Equidore Trust. I did not have enough confidence in my own business judgment. I felt it safer to leave everything in their hands."

The great financier frowned.

"Is anything wrong with them?" asked Guenna breathlessly.

"I would not be alarmed," he replied smoothly. "Unfortunately it is Saturday night. All the same I should go there the first thing on Monday morning and withdraw all your interests. I have heard whispers on the Street. Never mind from where, but Marcus Epplestein is president of the Equidore Trust, and rumor has it that all is not well."

"Oh, what am I to do?" demanded Guenna anxiously, for she could not contemplate life without money, and apart from her alimony, more than which Guenna spent annually on clothes alone, she had no other fortune. Very naturally, then, Guenna was worried.

"Please do not spoil the evening," Hamlin begged her. "I do not think that there is any call for immediate worry. All the same, remain as calm as you can over the week-end, and then on Monday morning withdraw every cent you have."

But Guenna, after she reached her house on Murray Hill, did worry. She hardly slept at all that Saturday night, and the clocks were chiming the hour of six before she fell into a fitful doze.

Guenna was awakened at ten o'clock by Estelle, who brought in the morning coffee and the Sunday morning papers.

As Guenna was sitting up in bed —a bed a mass of rose silk and lace —her eyes happened to fall upon the morning paper. Then, with a little gasp, she fell back upon her silken pillows.

It was Estelle, noticing the effect that the paper had produced, who picked it up and read the shrieking headlines:

FAILURE OF THE EQUIDORE TRUST. MARCUS EPPLESTEIN COMMITS SUICIDE. THOUSANDS RUINED.

Later that day, Guenna came to realize that she was ruined, and ruin for Guenna spelt but one word—marriage. But marriage to whom? Penrhyn Welles was wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice, and Penrhyn had a certain fascination, but then the idea of Penrhyn as a married man was absurd.

Bitterly, Guenna realized that her only salvation lay through marriage to the prosaic, middle-aged, Daniel Hamlin.

VII

NEARLY a month had elapsed since that afternoon when Guenna Bairritz had taunted Penrhyn Welles as to his failure with the little country girl, and then, one Tuesday night, Penrhyn again took Clementine to that quiet little restaurant which he had discovered.

It was after dinner, and Clementine was speaking of the present freedom of women.

"Look how everything has changed since the last generation. It would not have been possible even fifteen years ago for me to keep bachelor hall in my little studio apartment. I tell you, Penrhyn, that the world is growing much better. Girls are no longer afraid to do anything."

Penrhyn's eyes glittered dangerously. "No longer afraid? Oh, yes they are. You are afraid. You are afraid of me. You are afraid to come to my house after the theater and have supper with me. And this in spite of the fact that you think my

wickedness—my celebrated wickedness—is a pose and that you intend to reform me.

"Half a dozen times you have said that you would honor me by dining or supping with me—*chez moi,* but it was only a bluff. Silly little Clementine—you are afraid, and you have no more actual freedom than had your great-grandmother."

Clementine paused for a moment. She had always wanted to see the interior of Penrhyn's house, about which there were so many persistent rumors, but something had always stayed her. But why not go? What possible harm could come to her in a house on East Sixty-eighth Street? To be afraid was absurd, and how could she reform Penrhyn if she allowed him to think that there was anything to fear. So, quite suddenly, Clementine came to her decision. Yes, she would sup that night in the house of Penrhyn Welles.

Halfway through a musical comedy, Penrhyn showed signs of boredom.

"Have you had enough?" he whispered to his companion.

Clementine would have liked to see the end of the play, but with a young girl's vanity, she liked to appear bored and blasé, so she agreed and followed Penrhyn out of the theater.

His carriage was summoned, and soon they were outside the house of which she had heard so much.

It was Amid Alli who admitted them. Penrhyn gave him a rapid order in Arabic, and then turned to Clementine.

"We will have supper upstairs," he suggested. "But first let me show you the house."

With excited intetrest, Clementine followed her host through all those bizarre rooms. She enthused over the Egyptian salon. The marble room, in the floor of which gleamed a great pool, claimed her instant admiration. "I did not know that anything could be as beautiful. That water simply invites one to plunge in," she told Penrhyn.

Then he led her up to a still higher floor. He opened a door and stood aside for her to enter. "This is where we sup," he added.

Clementine entered wonderingly. The entire room was of black velvet. The walls were draped with it. The carpet was of a heavy, black velvet pile. There were no windows, as the room was aired through hidden ventilators. There were deep armchairs and an enormous couch—all of black velvet, while a small supper table was fashioned of some kind of ebony.

There was only one touch of color. A huge silk cushion of vivid, gleaming scarlet was thrown carelessly on the black velvet couch. Even the door which Penrhyn closed noiselessly was covered with rich black velvet.

"What do you think of it?" asked Penrhyn, and his eyes now were gleaming deeply sapphire under the lights which were skilfully concealed somewhere in the ceiling. "What do you think of it?"

Clementine shivered a little. She was dressed in a pale pink chiffon dinner dress, and she glowed in that

room of sable like some exquisite jewel in a perfect setting. Her individuality seemed to fill the whole room, and Penrhyn eyed her greedily, for, vile as the man was, in one way, he was an artist in that he so greatly appreciated beauty.

"I don't like it," Clementine announced, and her voice was a little timid. "Please let us have supper somewhere else."

Penrhyn did not answer. From a box of black jet he took one of his long, slender cigarettes. With great care, he lighted it and then he turned to Clementine with an evil smile.

"I'm sorry to refuse you anything," he said, quietly, "but we sup here."

There was that about the man's voice that frightened Clementine. She made a sudden dash to the door, but the door would not open.

Penrhyn's mocking laughter assailed her. With a tremendous effort Clementine forced down the scream of terror that nearly escaped her. She forced herself to be calm.

"If this is a joke," she managed coldly, "it is a very poor one. Please open that door."

Penrhyn's laughter was devilish in its cruelty.

"Poor little trapped bird!" he mocked her. "You are not the first to try that door. I have the key on me. Why don't you scream? Scream, little one, if it will relieve your emotions. No one can hear you. Besides, the room is absolutely sound proof. Again, only my faithful Amid Alli is in the house. The moment supper is cooked the cook leaves the house, and the other servants only come in, in the daytime to clean.

"You are trapped, little one. Now you belong to me. But don't say that I did not warn you! Did I not always tell you that I was a very, very wicked man? Well, I hope to prove that."

Again his horrible laughter, and Clementine realized suddenly that it would be useless to plead for mercy. Mercy? The man's face was now that of a fiend. If she were to save herself, it must be through her wits. Better, then, to pretend to a calmness which she was far from feeling. Perhaps, a little later, some opportunity of escape might suggest itself.

So very calmly as far as outward appearance went, Clementine sat herself down in one of the low armchairs.

"That's a sensible child!" said Penrhyn, ever mockingly. "I'm so glad that you have not wasted words by futile pleading. I have you and I intend to keep you. But first, supper. Ah!" he broke off, as a bell tinkled musically somewhere in the room.

"That is Amid Alli now. It is no good for him to knock, because nothing can be heard in this room. And do not appeal to him, for his heart is as black as his face—blacker even than my own."

Still laughing unpleasantly, Penrhyn went to the door. He opened it and without the servant entering, Penrhyn received from his Arab a small dinner wagon. He pulled it into the room and snapped to the

door again. He wheeled the dinner wagon up to the ebony table, and with his own hands laid out the supper.

"Come," he invited her, "one must eat even when one makes love, for such is our unpoetic nature."

Clementine, eager to postpone that which she feared lay before her, almost eagerly consented to the idea of supper. She noticed that two cocktails already mixed stood in long, thin glasses, and besides these there were two bottles of champagne. Could it be possible for her to persuade Penrhyn to drink too much? Once his brain was clouded with alcohol it might be possible for her to make her escape. At best, it was a slender chance, but Clementine eagerly seized upon it.

With a forced gayety, therefore, Clementine permitted Penrhyn to draw back a chair for her at the supper table. As he did so, he stooped and kissed the white neck below a little curl that had wantoned from her carefully arranged hair. It was as though a snake had touched her—such a loathing had Penrhyn created in her during the past few minutes. He noticed that she shrank from the touch of his lips, and those cruel eyes gleamed in triumph. But for the moment, he left her alone.

"I drink to the memory of all my pretty victims," he said, as he picked up one of the cocktail glasses. "Come, drink to them, for you will soon be numbered among them."

Hoping to find courage in the liquor and not daring to refuse, Clementine's little hand raised the glass. She drank the contents and set down the empty glass.

Then Penrhyn placed food before her, and mechanically Clementine began to eat. What she ate she had no idea. Fear seemed to penetrate her very bones. Bitterly she asked herself why she had not listened to Michael's pleadings. Again and again Michael had warned her to have nothing to do with Penrhyn Welles. What a little fool she had been! And now it was too late.

And, Penrhyn was talking. He was saying terrible things, and the hot blood of shame suffused the young girl's cheeks.

Then Penrhyn's voice seemed to grow curiously indistinct. To Clementine it seemed as though Penrhyn were speaking from a great distance. What was the matter with her? A great drowsiness enveloped her. But she must not go to sleep. What was the matter? Was it that cocktail. . . ? Clementine seemed to float on a cloud of drowsiness. She must fight this thing off. Her safety lay—if indeed there could be any safety, in having all her mental processes keenly awake. Now her hands seemed to lose all power. They dropped limply to her lap. Her head fell back against the back of the chair. . . .

And now horror upon horror. . . . Penrhyn's hands were boldly caressing her. Then, merciful oblivion. . . .

It was as the cold gray dawn of

that winter morning crept down the city streets that the little Clementine stole tragically away from that house of terror and made her way miserably—shamefully, to her own apartment.

VIII

It was on the morning following the incidents described in the last chapter—and, to be exact, the morning of Wednesday—that the newspapers announced an engagement of some note. They heralded the approaching marriage of Guenna Biarritz to the world-known financier, Daniel Hamlin.

For it had come to that: Guenna had realized that she was entirely ruined save for her alimony. So she accepted Daniel Hamlin's proposal and made up her mind to settle down to the gilded, if boring, surroundings of Hamlin's many palatial homes.

It was as he sat at breakfast that Penrhyn Welles read the notice of Guenna's engagement. A moment before he had been smiling evilly to himself over the delicious memories of the night before. Now he frowned. Guenna had taunted him with being an amateur in the case of the little Clementine. Well, now she could taunt no longer. Penrhyn had finished with Clementine. He never wished to see her again, although without doubt she would probably annoy him for months to come. But the present point of interest was Guenna's engagement.

Penrhyn called Guenna upon the telephone.

"I have to see you at once, *ma chèrie*," he said smoothly into the telephone. "It is a matter of some urgency, so please wait in for me. I shall be at your house in an hour or in an hour and a half."

He snapped back the receiver and then placed himself in the capable hands of Amid Alli. When he was dressed he entered his brougham, and the big, black horses whirled him away to the house on Murray Hill.

Guenna received him in the smaller drawing room. Secretly she was wondering the cause of so early a visit, and without exactly knowing why, Guenna felt a foreboding of coming evil. So she was particularly gracious to Penrhyn as he raised her hands to his lips.

"And what in the world has brought Penrhyn Welles out so early?" she asked when Penrhyn had sat down.

"Only the most charming reason the world could suggest—you," he assured her. "But first I have something to tell you, although it is not the object of so early a visit. You will remember it was not long ago that you accused me of having lost my skill. I remember that the exact term with which you were pleased to taunt me was that of an amateur in affairs of the heart."

"I'm quite certain," Guenna retorted with a smile, "that I never accused Penrhyn Welles of having a heart."

"I admit the point," he conceded to her. "Still, you taunted me with failure in a certain case. Perhaps it is not very gallant of me—yet all the same, the matter has lost interest. I have forgotten the girl."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning?" he shrugged his shoulders. "My dear Guenna, what could it mean when I say that I have lost interest? Naturally it means that—well, that I succeeded." He laughed with malicious pleasure.

Guenna joined in his laughter, although she had put all thought of Michael Kent from her. At the same time it pleased her to think that the pure whiteness of Michael's darling existed no longer. Guenna had not forgotten the night when Michael had refused her favors. All the same, the only thing that counted now was money—the millions of Daniel Hamlin.

"And now to the purpose of my visit," went on Penrhyn. "I read this morning of your coming marriage to this multi-millionaire man."

"And like the good friend you are, you came round to congratulate me! Really, Penrhyn, I deserve your congratulations. I have lost every penny I had in the Equidore Trust smash and, for a time, I faced the possibility of living on my alimony. Imagine me trying to live on ten thousand a year! I really consider that I have been very wise, very prudent indeed, although we are not to be married for some time."

"On the contrary, my dear Guenna," Penrhyn continued smoothly, "I did not come round to congratulate you, but to forbid the marriage. I cannot possibly allow it. It would be so bourgeoise—so very bourgeoise—an artistic crime."

Guenna looked at him in surprise, but her surprise was tinged by fear.

"Don't be absurd, Penrhyn! Of course, it is not a love match on my side, as poor Daniel bores me to screams. His millions will hardly make up for such tristeness. On his side, naturally he adores the ground I walk on. But don't talk about it being bourgeoise—it just has to be. I would much sooner have married somebody else. I might even have married you—but as you have so often pointed out, you would prefer to go to your grave than to the altar."

He laughed at this. "Quite—I can imagine as many horrors as ever did Edgar Allan Poe—but I cannot imagine myself suffering the horrors of matrimony. The idea is almost indecent. So, dear Guenna, I am sorry, but I must positively forbid you to marry. There will for me be some compensation. You know my Creed of Sin—what the world would call my cruel nature. It will be amusing in a way—oh, quite amusing—to watch the exquisite Guenna Biarritz scheming and plotting and trying to live on ten thousand a year."

But now Guenna was angry. "How dare you talk to me like that? How dare you? And what right have you to forbid me? You are making yourself absurd, ridiculous."

"Not quite as ridiculous as it seems —and what is more, you know it, Guenna. I love your poise, but you remember perfectly well that I have certain letters of yours which you wrote to me when you were quite a young girl, and really, for a young girl, I must say that you let yourself go on paper. How young you were so to betray yourself on paper!

"Now you know enough to use the telephone in your more passionate moods. But I have the letters, Guenna, and I know Mr. Hamlin as I know you. Of course, he thinks that you are a beautiful and pure woman, who was more sinned against than sinning and who very properly divorced that brute, Senor Biarritz. If I do not receive your promise to break this engagement, I shall really enjoy showing those letters to old Hamlin. He will suffer so.

"It is certain that, with his traditions, once he knows what the novelists would call 'your dreadful past,' he will at once break the engagement. Quite a pretty situation! But Guenna," and here Penrhyn's tones changed from gentle raillery to bitter earnestness, "I insist upon reading in the morning papers of—let's see, to-day is Wednesday—then I insist on reading on Friday morning next of the broken engagement between you and Hamlin or, well, Friday afternoon it will be very amusing for me and very painful for Mr. Hamlin. And don't think, dear girl, that you can get your letters, because they are safely hidden away."

While Penrhyn had been talking, Guenna's beautiful face had blanched with fear and anxiety. The situation was intolerable. She must make Penrhyn see reason. She must marry Hamlin. It would be better to placate Penrhyn, so it was in beautifully pathetic accents that she replied to him.

"Please, Penrhyn! Please don't be so hard! You know I can't begin to live on my alimony. And if you will be nice about this—well, not long ago you begged me to be kind to you. I will be very kind, Penrhyn —in exchange for those letters, once I am married to Daniel. Marriage need not stop a woman having an *affaire, n'est ce pas, mon ami?*"

"This is quite amusing!" he taunted her, thoroughly enjoying the situation. "Do my ears deceive me, or do I hear the beautiful, the exquisite, the proud and haughty Guenna Biarritz pleading for mercy? Plead on, Guenna—I like to hear you."

And then her Latin temperament swept aside all prudence. Guenna, in a rage, was superb, and now she shrieked and raved and staged such a scene as only an angry and frightened woman of her type could do.

And then from anger she turned to tears. She even knelt at his feet and begged for mercy where no mercy could find a resting place. And through it all he laughed and laughed, until she was sulky again, but had regained something of her composure.

"No," he told her. "All this is very amusing and enormously enter-

taining, but my terms stand. Either I read on Friday morning that the engagement is broken or I go on Friday afternoon with the letters to see Daniel Hamlin."

With a jeering laugh, he was gone, and for the rest of that Wednesday, Guenna Biarritz shut herself up and refused to see anybody. Daniel Hamlin called his fiancée on the telephone, but Estelle, acting on instructions, told him that Madame was prostrated by one of her nervous headaches. Hamlin, with the usual lack of originality peculiar to all business men, sent her quantities of American Beauties, but Guenna could not be consoled by the florists' trade.

All through Thursday, Guenna sat a prey to her fears and anxieties. Dared she defy Penrhyn Wells? Too well she knew his cruel nature to imagine that for one instant he would relent from his purpose were he not to read on Friday morning of the broken engagement. Yet Guenna made no move towards the breaking of that engagement. Thursday afternoon came. Thursday night. Now it was too late, as the news would not be of sufficient importance at that hour to make room for it in the morning papers.

Shortly before midnight, Guenna came to sudden decision. She had sent Estelle to bed, so that she need not fear any spying of her movements.

She sat for a long while thinking. And then she went quickly to the telephone and called Penrhyn Welles at his house.

"Is that you, Penrhyn? Guenna speaking. I must see you. I must see you to-night. Please let me see you, Penrhyn."

Silence for a moment. Penrhyn was thinking. Then:

"All right; come along."

"But, Penrhyn—"

"Yes?"

"Penrhyn—my reputation!"

Over the wire came Penrhyn's mocking laughter.

"That is all a woman ever thinks about—not her virtue—but her reputation! Don't—oh, don't get found out! It's all right. I will let you in myself. There is no one in the house. Even the faithful Amid Alli occasionally has an evening off. Your reputation will be quite safe, and I am the safest man in the world—for you."

There was an insult in his very tones, and Guenna, worried as she was, flushed angrily.

Then she went to her bedroom. She changed into a dark dress—and put on an inconspicuous hat. She stole out of her house without any of the servants hearing her. She walked west towards Fifth Avenue, and then north for a couple of blocks before she found a taxi. She stopped it at the corner of Sixty-fifth and watched it turn and drive away. Then, making sure that she was not observed, Guenna walked down Sixty-fifth Street to Madison Avenue, and then north again until she came to Sixty-eighth Street. Here she turned sharply to the left and, a moment or two later, she was press-

ing the bell of Penrhyn Welles' celebrated house.

He did not keep her waiting long, but almost instantly admitted her.

"Come upstairs," he said quite cordially. "We will talk in the black velvet room. There is something about the black velvet room which always amuses me. I can assure you, you are quite safe. Guenna, you are beginning to show your years."

Intentionally his voice was cruel and his eyes were gleaming in sapphire blue as he led the way up the stairs to the black velvet room.

She turned and faced him, once the door had opened to them.

"Penrhyn, I have come to beg mercy. Listen—I haven't—I haven't broken my engagement, so that you will not read in to-morrow's papers that the marriage will not take place."

He helped himself to one of his cigarettes from the black jet box. Very slowly and deliberately he lighted it. Then he threw himself at full length on the black velvet couch and placed beneath his head the scarlet silk pillow. He smoked in silence, insolently ignoring her presence, as she stood looking down at him.

"Well then, we can dismiss the subject," he said coldly, "although I shall have the fun of taking it up with Mr. Hamlin to-morrow afternoon. How amusing it will be to watch his face as he reads your letters! Do you remember that one where you wrote of a purple night of love? The purple night, Guenna beloved, was spent in my arms. Won't old Hamlin be pleased?"

"Penrhyn! Penrhyn!" Her voice was full of supplication.

"Now don't bore me, Guenna. To be bored is the one thing I will never forgive. Help yourself to a cigarette and dismiss the subject."

"Penrhyn, I'm desperate. Don't you see—don't you realize—don't you understand that this marriage means my salvation? You tell me, you taunt me—you fling it in my teeth—that I am beginning to show my age! Don't you know, Penrhyn, that when a woman begins to show that, then only money and money and yet more money can come to her rescue? And why should you want to torture me? I could be of use to you in a thousand ways as the wife of Daniel Hamlin."

For several minutes, Penrhyn Welles enjoyed the spectacle of the suppliant Guenna. Then, very coldly, and as though she had been talking of ordinary subjects, he asked lightly:

"Have you been to the opera lately?"

The insolence with which he ignored her pleading stung Guenna as though with a whip.

Suddenly, Guenna was pleading no more. . . .

IX

THE train pulled into the Grand Central that cold evening—that same Thursday evening on which Guenna had gone to see Penrhyn

Welles, although this was only about nine o'clock. From out of the depot come Michael Kent. He hailed a taxi and was driven to his room where he deposited his suitcase. Then, getting back in the cab, he gave the driver the address of Clementine's studio apartment.

And Michael was very happy. He had just been up to see his mother, for ever since his break with Guenna Biarritz, Michael had returned to all those old ways and manners that had so characterized his devotion to his mother. More, his uncle had again raised his salary, for Michael's work was now of definite value to the firm. And so, Michael was rushing round to see Clementine to beg her yet again to marry him.

"You must have patience with a young girl, Michael darling," his mother had said to him earlier that day, as he was leaving to catch his train for New York. "Take an old woman's advice and let her see how much she means to you. Go and ask her again, and then if she refuses, continue to ask her. No girl could resist my boy forever."

Arrived at the studio apartment, Michael paid off the taxi, and walked up the stairs. Clementine's apartment was on the third floor. A dim light showed from under her door. Michael tapped at the door. Then suddenly he bent and listened.

From within came the sound of violent weeping. Clementine? And in trouble?

He knocked violently on the door, and yet there was no response except that the sobbing ceased. Then Michael called:

"Clementine! Clementine! Open the door."

Presently the door was opened. Michael looked in. Then, very quickly he walked into the studio. Carefully he closed the door, and the next instant he had gathered the weeping Clementine up into his arms and had placed her on his knee like a child.

"There, there! Don't cry, my darling," he comforted her. "Stop crying, little one, and then tell me all about it."

But Clementine only continued to sob. Her little hands clutched frantically at the lapels of Michael's coat.

Michael looked across the room. Very quickly he stood up. He placed Clementine gently in the chair. Then he walked to the table, for on the table he had seen an ugly-looking revolver. By the revolver lay a letter, and the letter was addressed to Michael.

He glanced back at Clementine. Then he slipped the gun into his pocket. He ripped open the envelope and hastily scanned through the long letter that Clementine had written to him.

"Darling:

"When you get this, I shall be dead. . . ."

So Clementine had determined to take her own life! Michael grew

physically cold at the thought. Then a great wave of thankfulness surged through him. Thank God, he had come in time!

He continued reading the letter, and as he read his face grew stern, and it seemed as though in those passing moments he aged. For little Clementine, hiding nothing, and offering no excuse, had set down for Michael all those horrors which had overtaken her in Penrhyn Welles' house.

Michael read on, and as he read the fingers of his right hand clenched and unclenched in nervous hatred. His Clementine! His snow-white Clementine! Time enough to settle with Penrhyn Welles! His expression changed to one of wonderful tenderness as he paused in his reading and turned and looked at Clementine.

She was sitting in the chair, where he had placed her, with one rounded, childish arm flung across her flowerlike face, and again she had fallen to weeping bitterly. In a moment he would comfort her. Let him finish reading the letter.

"And I want you to know that now it is too late I realize that I love you. Oh, Michael, if only I had listened to you. But now the time draws close. I cannot live. . . ."

Michael read through to the bitter end, and then joy awoke within his heart, for awful as the thing had been, he knew the one—the glorious fact—Clementine loved him!

He thrust the letter into his pocket and then he went and knelt beside the pathetic little figure in the chair. He took one of her hands —pathetic little hand!—and as he knelt there beside her in all reverence, he raised it to his lips.

"Clementine!" he began. "My little Clem! Listen to me, darling. Listen to me! It doesn't matter, sweetheart. Nothing matters. I know now that you love me. Clementine, let us go back—go back to the days of the old orchard. Darling, don't cry so. I love you—I love you so much more than I can expect to express in words.

"There, stop crying, my little one. Tell me that you will marry me. Somehow, I will take from your memory all thought," and here Michael's voice grew hard, "all thought of that—that unspeakable hound. Only look up at me and tell me that you will be happy again."

So he pleaded. Little by little she ceased from her weeping. Then she was sitting on his knee again. Her sweet young arms were about his neck. Now she was calm enough to speak.

"Oh, Michael! How can you go on loving me? I am no longer a good girl, Michael. I am no longer worthy of you"—but here he stopped her mouth with kisses.

For two hours and more he pleaded with her, and although she refused altogether to be comforted, and although she steadfastly denied that there could ever be a marriage between them, although she admit-

ted that, too late, she had learned to love him, at the end of those two hours she had grown calmer.

"And now, you promise me that you won't cry any more? Promise me that you will go to bed, and promise me, above all, that—that you will make no attempt on your life?"

At last she promised. It was Michael who made some cocoa in the tiny kitchenette and who coaxed and fed her until a little color began to come back to her cheeks.

"And now, darling, I must go. But, I shall be around the first thing in the morning. Then, if you won't listen to reason, I shall telegraph to my mother and ask her to come to New York."

"Your mother, Michael?" Clementine's laughter was tragic in its mirthlessness. And at the sound of this, a great hatred and an intense desire for revenge awoke within Michael for the man who had made it possible for a young girl to laugh so bitterly.

"Your mother, Michael? Do you think that your mother, when she knows the truth, will think that a girl such as I is fit to be the wife of her son? Michael, you do not know the hearts of women, if you imagine that!"

"Little one," he answered tenderly, "I may not know the hearts of women—but I do know the heart of my mother!"

Presently he left her, at least assured that she would do nothing rash.

It was after one o'clock when Michael reached the street. But Michael had no intention of going home. First he had work to do. He would not kill this man, but before he slept he would so thrash and beat Penrhyn Welles that he would disfigure him for life. By the time Michael had finished with him, Michael swore that Penrhyn's evil face should be so marked that no woman would ever look upon him again without horror.

Came to Michael the idea of the branding iron. He did not know if this would be feasible, but at least, the thought of such a revenge was pleasing. He walked quickly along the quiet streets. Soon he was on Fifth Avenue, and instinctively he quickened his pace.

Then he ran up the steps of the house on Sixty-eighth Street. Michael was just about to ring the bell to insist on an audience with Penrhyn Welles, when, to his surprise, he found that the door was slightly ajar. It was only a matter of a fraction of an inch, but Michael could see through the crack a shaft of light. All the better, he reflected; it would save an argument with the servant.

Michael entered, taking care to leave the door as he had found it. The house was brilliantly lighted. Michael rapidly went through the downstairs rooms. There was no one there, so Michael mounted the stairs. Someone, he argued, must be at home, or the lights would not be going. Perhaps he was destined to in-

terrupt Penrhyn Welles at one of those whispered orgies? Upstairs and into the marble room, where the placid water in the pool gleamed under cunningly-concealed lights.

And then Michael came upon the door to the black velvet room, which swung half open on its hinges. The room was flooded with light, and he stepped quickly in. Michael had crossed to the middle of the room before he stopped with a little exclamation of horror.

For there on the black velvet couch, and yet resting partly on the floor, lay the murdered body of Penrhyn Welles.

Murdered? Surely murdered, for a dagger still stuck out from that vile heart, while a dark stain spread over the white of his shirt. He looked ghastly, terrible, as he lay there with his face white in death pillowed upon the scarlet silk of that cushion.

Michael advanced across the black velvet pile carpet. He bent over the body which was still warm, although quite lifeless. He placed his hand upon the handle of the dagger, and then a voice spoke sharply from the doorway.

"Put your hands up!"

Turning, Michael saw a policeman with revolver in hand standing before him.

Michael's muscles tensed and his eyes narrowed as, in a flash, he realized the position in which he had placed himself.

Then, as the policeman snapped the steel handcuffs over Michael's wrists, Michael saw, framed in the doorway, the lithe figure of Amid Alli, while on the Arab's face rested an inscrutable expression.

X

It was three months later, and the court room was crowded to suffocation. All of fashionable New York, who could find room there, were present, for the murder of the celebrated Penrhyn Welles had been a nice morsel of gossip—an epicurean feast of sensationalism to the jaded palates of Manhattan's Four Hundred.

And this was the end of the last day of a trial that had dragged through an entire week.

His Honor was concluding his charge to the jury, and the brilliant young attorney, whom Michael's uncle had retained on behalf of the prisoner, looked glum as he listened to the judge's words.

"Too much has been said and written of late years," his Honor was saying ponderously, "about the fallibility of circumstantial evidence. The prisoner's attorney, in his very able defense, has made much of this point, but it is the opinion of many learned judges that very often circumstantial evidence is caused through fact, and fact is a stubborn thing.

"In the case upon which it is now your duty to come to a decision, there is circumstantial evidence of considerable weight, and while on the one hand I will not directly guide

you, on the other, I will point out that there is rarely smoke without fire. The murdered man's reputation has nothing whatever to do with the case. Were he as vile a creature as even the defending attorney has claimed and partly proved, that has nothing to do with the fact that the man was murdered and foully done to death. Even the greatest criminal in the land is entitled to the protection of the law. Again, I will call your attention to the fact that neither the prisoner nor his attorney have entered any plea of insanity.

"Gentlemen of the jury, either you will find that the prisoner is guilty of the foulest crime known on the calendar, the punishment of which is death, or you will find that he is guiltless and entitled to walk out of this court a free man. I charge you that you weigh carefully the evidence which has been submitted to you, so that justice—justice pure and simple, and nothing but justice—may prevail."

Came a hush in court. For a fleeting second or two there was no sound.

The early afternoon had been a cloudy one, but now, suddenly a shaft of sunlight penetrated the gloom of the court room. This lighted up the faces of judge and jury—the faces of the prosecuting attorney and that of his opponent. It lightened, too, the drawn face of the prisoner. Michael sat duly guarded, his arms crossed, his face inscrutable.

Full well he knew the import of the judge's charge to the jury. Again the sunlight played upon the agonized face of the little Clementine, who was sitting well in front of the court.

As though in wanton mood this cruel sunshine played upon the golden wonder of her hair that peeped from beneath her prim little hat. It played, too, upon the white face of Guenna Biarritz. She sat at the back of the court near an aisle. Nervous was the face of Guenna Biarritz. Her great eyes were dark and glowing, but again and again her white teeth bit the sensuous curve of her lower lip. In her hand she held a lacy handkerchief, and it seemed as though she wished that it was all over. Beside her sat Daniel Hamlin. The great financier appeared to be bored by the proceeding, and his attendance there was caused simply by the caprice of his beautiful fiancée, who within a week was to become his wife.

And finally the sunlight played upon the bowed head of the prisoner's mother. A lock of hair had escaped from beneath her old-fashioned bonnet, and it was noted by those who knew her that now her hair was of snowy white. Then she looked up at the sunlight, her old eyes closed. Her lips moved silently. She was praying with all her heart for the salvation of her boy. As she did this, the sun seemed to turn that silver hair to gold. . . .

And now the jury had arisen. They were about to leave the box—to retire to their room to consider their verdict which everyone in court, save

only the prisoner's mother, believed would be that of "Guilty," when from the back of the court suddenly appeared the lean, lithe figure of the Arab, Amid Alli. Earlier in the proceedings he had taken the witness stand. He had briefly stated that on the policeman entering the house, he had followed him upstairs and had seen the policeman arrest the prisoner. His testimony had been of little importance.

But now he advanced slowly down to where the lawyers sat. He looked up at the judge, and when he spoke, his English was fluent, albeit with an accent that was weirdly foreign.

"I will speak, if you, O Judge, will permit, because I have evidence which I did not give. I did not give it because I was not asked, but my religion will not permit me to see an innocent man go to his death."

Followed confusion, but finally Amid Alli was placed on the witness stand.

"Your customs are strange to me, although I have lived among you for several years," he said, and neither district attorney nor the lawyer for the defense interrupted him while he spoke.

"On the night of the murder," the Arab continued, "my late master gave me permission to spend the evening out. At times, I like to tempt the Goddess of Chance with the cards. I was singularly unfortunate that night, and I left my friends earlier than would otherwise have been the case. I returned to my master's house on East Sixty-eighth Street. I looked for my master in the Egyptian salon downstairs. He was not there. I thought that perhaps he had a woman with him, for my master loved women. In the country from which I come, we arrange these matters differently, but that has nothing to do with my testimony. Thinking that I might be of service to him, that he might require something before he sought sleep, I noiselessly ascended the stairs.

"To my surprise, I heard a woman's voice coming from the black velvet room. I say, to my surprise, because my master had rendered the room sound-proof by various devices, and he always closed the doors between himself and his women and the outside world.

"But this night, the door was open. I overheard a conversation. I heard the woman demanding certain letters from him, and I heard my master mock her with his laughter. I stepped to the door and looked in unseen by those two. The woman took from her clothing a dagger. My master was lying on the couch, and with this dagger she leaned over him and struck him down to his death. Then quickly she passed through the door and ran down the stairs.

"I had only just time to conceal myself behind some portières on the stairs. She ran out of the house. I feared that I might be suspected. I went out on the street. The woman

was hurrying away. I followed her. I followed her to her home. Then I returned. I had left the door ajar, and a moment after I was in the house, the policeman entered. You know the rest."

"But the woman, man—who was she?" rapped out the attorney for the defense.

"The woman is in court," the Arab began. He pointed to where Guenna Biarritz sat, deathly white beside Hamlin. "The woman is Madame Biarritz."

With one terrified look about the court, for all eyes were now upon her, Guenna looked her last on life. The next instant she had passed that lacy film of handkerchief across her scarlet lips. The handkerchief fluttered to the floor. One white hand went to her throat and then, quite quietly, she fell from her chair. When the officers of the court reached her, the soul of Guenna Biarritz had passed from its body.

And now, indeed, confusion reigned. The body was carried out. The judge looked bewildered at the turn of events the sensational case had taken.

The judge hammered with his gavel.

"Order! Order in the court! I insist on order!"

But for some time his Honor's commands were disregarded. Everybody was speaking at once. Michael, alone, seemed to be calm, but the face of Michael's mother—the expression on that face was that of a woman whose prayer had been miraculously granted.

She turned to Clementine.

"And who shall say," she said softly, "that prayer meets no response?"

Clementine took the withered hand within her own and patted it.

The judge again demanded silence, and this time he got it. He turned to the jury.

"Gentlemen of the Jury. I think it permissible for you to weigh in your judgment the suicide of the wretched woman which has just occurred, and Amid Alli's testimony. Gentleman of the Jury, you will consider your verdict."

There was a whispered consultation among the twelve good men and true in the jury box, and then the foreman spoke.

"May it please your Honor, we of the jury, without leaving the box, have come to our verdict in this matter. We find the prisoner to be 'not guilty.' "

The judge bowed to the jury.

"You could not do otherwise," he reënforced their judgment.

And after dinner that evening, Michael turned to Clementine.

"I think the time has come, Clem, darling, for you and me to come to an understanding."

With a smile, Mrs. Kent arose from the table.

"And I think," she said, "that it is for me to plead those old important letters that no one ever writes on an occasion like this. I shall go

into my room and rest. Call me when you want me."

Michael rose and held the door open for his mother to pass through. When she had gone, he came and sat on the uncomfortable hotel sofa beside Clementine.

"And now, darling—don't keep me in suspense. We have all of us had enough suspense lately. Tell me, when will you marry me?"

Clementine looked at him. Then she got up and went and stood by the window, and there were tears in her eyes as she did so.

"Michael, dear, you know I love you. This is not fair—it is not fair to test me so. How can I—with that night of horror behind me—come to you as your wife?"

He rose and darted to her. Impulsively his arms went around her slight figure.

"Nonsense, my darling. That night is gone with all the horror of the past.

"But your mother?" she asked, still fighting against her desires.

"My mother shall answer for herself."

Michael knocked on the door that led from the sitting room to the bedroom.

"What? So soon?" asked Mrs. Kent as she entered.

"Mother," Michael said gravely, and yet his eyes were shining with a great love. "Clementine—through some foolish principle—feels that she is not fit to be my wife. I think Clementine imagines that you will not want it. Did you or did you not tell me that you wished your son to protect women? Answer for me, Mother."

She walked across the room towards Clementine, her old arms stretched out towards the girl who came to meet her.

"But what a foolish Clementine," the old woman said tenderly. "Dear child, you were betrayed by a vile man. It will be my son's privilege to take from your memory all trace of past sorrow."

Then, leaving the lovers together, the old woman again went out of the room. She went into her own room. And there, she knelt down by the side of the bed and, for the second time that day, her old lips moved silently in prayer.

When a man marries he locks his wife in his heart, but he never loses the key.

Episode in a Hotel

By Earl King

HE was horribly alone in Detroit.

He didn't know a soul. The beautiful room in the expensive hotel irked him. But he hated movies and he was superstitious about being killed by one of those things in their own home town, so he kept close to his room.

Every night, late, there came through the crack of the door that separated his room from the next one. a soft singing—a woman's rich contralto:

"Oh, I'm so lonely, I'm all alone,
Will no one come and love me,
I'm all alone."

It kept up for three nights.

And so he went to the desk and complained.

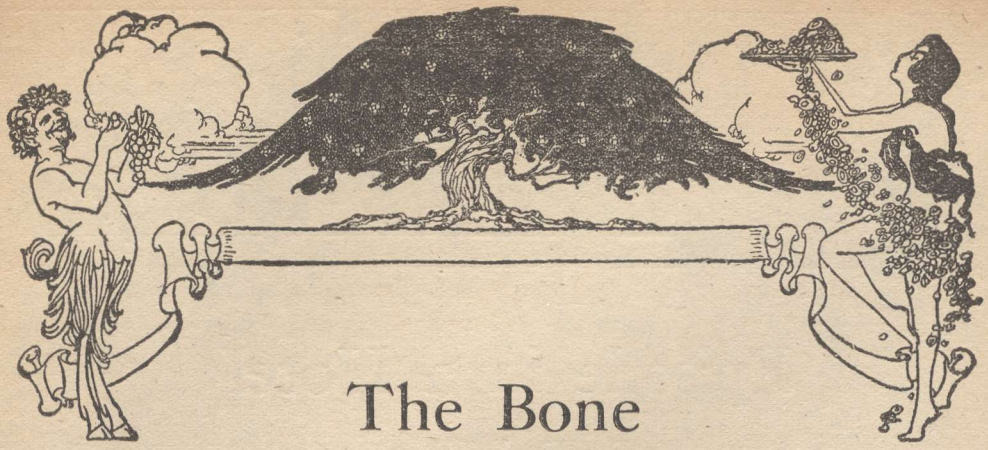
"Some fool keeps the same record on a phonograph and plays it every night about midnight."

The clerk stared at him thoughtfully.

"No, it wasn't a phonograph," he said finally. "That room has been occupied by Lillian Lanyan, the swell baby, playing over at the Temple this week."

With a gasp he fled out into the dark and one of those things ran right up on the sidewalk and knocked him cold.

It served him right, hey?



The Bone

By Katherine Negley

WHEN Old Mother Hubbard found the cupboard bare, the poor dog got no bone. This made it bad for the dog, but no one else suffered.

If Mother Hubbard found the cupboard bare nowadays, she would tell Father Hubbard the cupboard was bare *again* even if it had never been bare before; she would say that was what she got for marrying him and compare her lot with the lot she would have had if she had married one of her other admirers; she would tell Father Hubbard if he had enterprise and tried to work, he could have as much as other men; she would threaten to leave him and go into business for herself; she would enumerate the things she had had to do without since she married him and mention what each of the neighbors had without asking; she would malign men and marriage in general and Father Hubbard in particular; then she would become hysterical; Father Hubbard would go to the grocery store, the street corner or the club; and the dog would forage among the neighbor's garbage cans until he found a nice luscious bone.

The next day there would be a fight about something else and it would end in practically the same way.

Broadway "angel" cake is dangerous to nibble

So this pert little mouse discovered. Yet Cherry wasn't a wicked little mouse—she was just a delicious darling of a girl who wanted desperately to get on as a dancer and who suddenly found herself out of a job—fired because she had balked at the pawing attentions of a cabaret owner.

Out of work, out of luck, out of funds. Stony broke, and stony landlady. Men, men everywhere—but not a dollar that didn't have a string attached.

Then arrived the inexplicable windfall—by express and with her name on the label. But could it really be for her?

Cherry—her plight and her pluck—will utterly win your heart when you read the novelette, "What Can a Girl Do?" C. S. Montanye's best ever—in the First August SNAPPY STORIES.

A studio siren snared her husband.

Laurette wondered what was the matter with her own charms. Her mirror could disclose no reason. She was beautiful beyond the ordinary, had vivacity, magnetism, allurement. She made home all that it should be. Yet, the private detectives reported, Edwin had fallen under the spell of artistic "atmosphere" in Greenwich Village—atmosphere as embodied in Clare Odell.

Should Laurette seek revenge—or consolation? Should she attempt to win Edwin back? And in what way?

Read how Laurette herself turned art-ful, in "Atmosphere," by Victoria Galland, in the First August SNAPPY.

He laughed—Laugh Number Nine.

By this Ricardo Morrisoni (Dick Morrison until he became a movie star) indicated disdain and scorn. "As if I could live on three hundred a week. Hah!"

No prima donna could have allowed herself more temperament than did this spoiled darling of the screen, who hardly felt in form unless he received at least thirty mash notes a day.

The private life of this professional heart-breaker is revealed with a frankness and drollery that will tickle you, by Laurel Gray, in a keenly clever story entitled, "As the Fashion Changes." It's in the First August SNAPPY—which contains also "Marigold," a story that we'll keep a dark secret till you read it—except to whisper that it's by the inimitable Thomas Edgelow.

Buy the First August **SNAPPY STORIES** Out June 29

The girl he loved —put up at auction!

Gregory gasped as he entered the notorious Hibiscus Club in San Manuel, to behold his beautiful Carminella exposed upon the block, offered to the highest bidder.

A heartrending scream—and the brutal auctioneer's "Sold to Wong Foo Lee for twelve hundred gold."

What could be done to save her? Gregory was just a young wireless operator on leave from his ship and wandering in the mazes of a Central American underworld. One man against a mob, a sinister system. For her sake he took a chance.

How the cunningly laid net enmeshed Gregory and Carminella, and how . . . The breath-taking succession of surprises is unfolded in the novelette, "Beauty on the Block," by John Hanlon, in the JULY LIVE STORIES.

Reynolds was a love pirate.

He had a way with women and he thought he would while away the time on shipboard by capturing a pretty innocent. An easy game for him.

But did he get away scot-free? The answer lay waiting for him in uncanny India, as you will learn to your astonishment when you read "The White Bat," by Annette Thackwell Johnson.

Thirty South Sea Sweeties.

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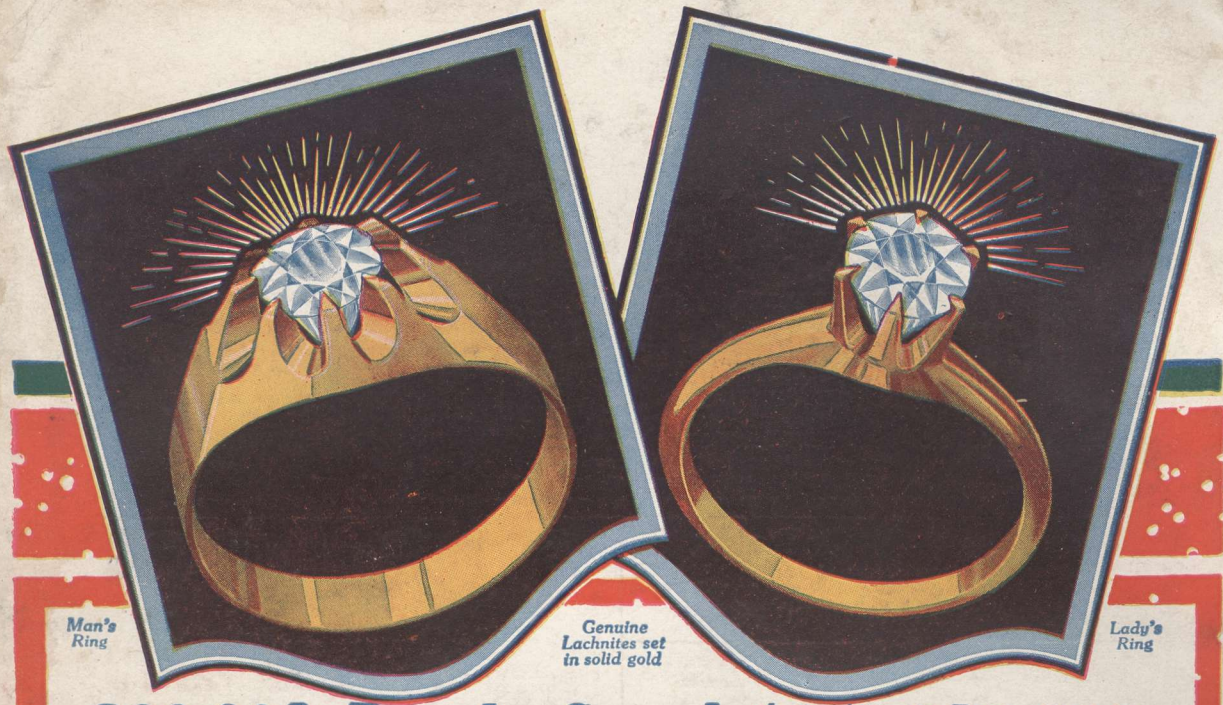
A widow is only a rebuilt sweetheart.

The Wages of Sin is usually alimony.



Man's Ring — *Genuine Lachnites set in solid gold* — *Lady's Ring*

300,000 People Saved $150,000,000 by Sending this Coupon

A few years ago an important discovery was made by the world famous scientist, M. Verneuil. While studying the effects of the terrific temperatures at which diamonds vanish into vapor, Verneuil accidently created a new and unknown gem stone. His associates examined the new gem and declared the secret of making diamonds had been discovered. Scientists and jewelers scrutinized the new gem in every way, put it to every test and pronounced it a diamond! Verneuil alone was undeceived. The new gem he said, flashes like a diamond, acts like a diamond in the chemical tests, and will last forever, but the composition is not identical. The new diamond-like gem stone was given a new name—Lachnite.

Already over 300,000 Americans wear them in place of diamonds. The cost of a Lachnite is nominal. These 300,000 people have probably saved over $150,000,000.00.

For your convenience the same coupon that they used is now published at the bottom of this page.

Diamonds and Lachnites Resist Tests

This table shows the astounding similarity between Lachnites and diamonds. They defy the same corrosive acids. They resist the same fiery temperatures. They flash with equal brillance. No wonder men can not distinguish them, even when they are placed side by side. Knowing that Lachnites are produced slowly and so have never been plentiful, a number of firms have attempted to take advantage of the Lachnite reputation. You will find the Lachnite name and advertising extensively copied. But Lachnite quality you will find only in the original genuine Lachnite itself, sold in America by Harold Lachman Company alone.

Tests	Diamonds	Lachnites	Imitations
Hardness	10 (highest known)	9.4 (next highest)	3 to 4 (very soft)
Resistance of Hydrofluoric acid	100% (not affected)	100% (not affected)	0 (easily dissolved)
Melting Point	4970F.	5050F. (platinum melts at 3187 F.)	850F. (quite low—melts as easily as lead)
Chemical Composition	contain no lead nor glass	contain no lead nor glass	contain both lead and glass
Color	variable—brown to blue white	blue white only	transparent white
Refractive Index	2.417 (very high)	2.105 (very high)	1.98 (only when new)
Reflective Index	.942 (very high)	.921 (very high)	.381 (very low)
Cutting	56 facets (hand cut)	56 facets (hand cut)	28 facets (machine cut)
Permanence	everlasting	everlasting	a few weeks
Value per Carat	$500 (good quality)	$14.50 (unmounted)	10c to 60c

Wear a Lachnite Ten Days at Our Expense

Why buy a diamond, when a Lachnite will give you the same beauty and permanence for but a few cents a day? Lachnites are cut by the diamond cutters of Europe. They are guaranteed to keep their radiance forever. When subjected to laboratory tests, they re-act so like diamonds (see chart) that the two are interchangeable.

You need not take anybody's word for the beauty of a Lachnite. Just mail the coupon below and we will send you a Lachnite in a solid gold ring for a ten-day test at our expense.

Imitations Fail

To show how common "imitation diamonds" fail to withstand the diamond tests, we have added a column to our chart. See how the imitation diamonds fall short in hardness, dissolve in the acids, melt in the heat test, and fade in brilliance. Buy **Genuine** Lachnites.

If You Can Tell a Lachnite From a Diamond, Send It Back

Send the coupon and only $1 deposit. When the Lachnite arrives wear it for ten days. Then if you or your friends can tell it from a diamond send it back. We will refund your deposit at once. If you decide to buy send only $2.50 a month until $18.75 has been paid.

$1 DOWN

Mail this Coupon

Harold Lachman Co., Dept. B190, 204 S. Peoria St., Chicago

I enclose $1.00. Send me prepaid on 10 days' free trial Ladies' / Men's solid gold ring set with a genuine Lachnite as pictured above. If I can tell it from a diamond, I will send it back by registered mail and you agree to return my money at once. If I keep it more than 10 days I will send you $2.50 a month until the balance has been paid. Total cost to me $18.75. **I enclose my finger size.** (Cut a strip of paper that will just meet around knuckle of ring finger).

Name _____ *Size* _____

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