



Nine Short Stories

Short Stories

by Rex Stout

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An Officer and a Lady

Bill Farden had had his eye on the big brick house on the corner for some time.

He had worked one in that block—the white frame with the latticed porch farther down toward Madison Street—during the early part of March, and had got rather a nice bag. Then, warned off by the scare and hullabaloo that followed, he had fought shy of that part of town for a full month, confining his operations to one or two minor hauls in the Parkdale section. He figured that by now things would have calmed down sufficiently in this neighborhood to permit a quiet hour's work without undue danger.

It was a dark night, or would have been but for the street lamp on the corner. That mattered little, since the right side of the house was in deep shadow anyway. By an oversight I have neglected to place the scene of the story in the vicinity of a clock tower, so Bill Farden was obliged to take out his watch and look at it in order to call attention to the fact that it was an hour past midnight.

He nodded his head with satisfaction, then advanced across the lawn to that side of the house left in deep shadow.

Two large windows loomed up side by side, then a wide expanse of brick, then two more. After a leisurely examination he chose the second of the first pair. A ray from his electric flash showed the oldfashioned catch snapped to.

Grinning professionally, he took a thin shining instrument from his pocket, climbed noiselessly onto the ledge and inserted the steel blade in the slit. A quick jerk, a sharp snap, and he leaped down again. He cocked his ear.

No sound.

The window slid smoothly upward to his push, and the next instant his deft accustomed hand had noiselessly raised the inner shade. Again he lifted himself onto the ledge, and this time across it, too. He was inside the house.

He stood for a time absolutely motionless, listening. The faintest of scratching noises came from the right.

“Bird,” Bill observed mentally, and his experienced ear was corroborated a moment later when the light of his electric flash revealed a canary blinking through the bars of its cage.

There was no other sound, and he let the cone of light travel boldly about the apartment. It was a well-furnished library and music room, with a large shining table, shelves of books along the walls, a grand piano at one end, and several comfortable chairs. Bill grunted and moved toward a door at the farther corner.

He passed through, and a glance showed him the dining room. Stepping noiselessly to the windows to make sure that the shades were drawn tight, he then switched on the electric chandelier. There was promise in the array of china and cut glass spread over the buffet and sideboard, and with an expectant gleam in his eye he sprang to open the heavy drawers.

The first held linen; he didn’t bother to close it again. The second was full of silver, dozens, scores of pieces of old family silver. In a trice Bill flew to the ledge of the window by which he had entered and was back again with a suitcase in his hand.

When the silver, wrapped in napkins, was safely in the suitcase, Bill straightened and glanced sharply around. Should he leave at once with this rare booty so easily gathered? He shook his head with decision and returned to place the suitcase on the window ledge in the library; then he came back, switched off the light in the dining room, and entered the kitchen.

By unerring instinct he stepped to the refrigerator. A flash of his pocket-lamp, and he gave a satisfied grunt. He turned on the light. From the recesses of the ice-box he brought forth a dish of peas, some sliced beef, half a chicken, some cold potatoes, and part of a strawberry shortcake. In a drawer in the kitchen cabinet he found a knife and fork and some spoons.

From a common-sense viewpoint the performance was idiotic. Having broken into an inhabited house in the dead of night, rifled the silver drawer and deposited the loot on the window sill, I for one would not be guilty of the artistic crime of tacking on an anticlimax by returning to the kitchen to rob the refrigerator and grossly stuff myself.

But Bill Farden was an old and experienced hand, thoroughly versed in the best burglar tradition. Also, perhaps, he was hungry. He ate as one who respects food but has no time for formalities.

He had finished the meat and vegetables and was beginning on the shortcake, when all of a sudden he sprang noiselessly from his chair to the electric button on the wall. A tiny click and the room was in darkness. He crouched low against the wall, while the footsteps that had startled him from above became louder as they began to descend the back stairs.

There might still be a chance to make the door into the dining room, but he decided against it. Scarcely breathing, he pulled himself together and waited. The footsteps became louder still; they halted, and he heard a hand fumbling at the knob of the stairway door. The noise of the opening door followed.

Bill's mind was working like lightning. Probably some one had been awake and seen the light from a slit through the window shade. Man or woman? He would soon know.

The footsteps sounded on the floor, advancing, and his eyes, accustomed to the darkness, caught a dim outline. Noiselessly his hand sought the side pocket of his coat and fumbled there. The figure approached; it was now quite close, so

close that all Bill had to do was rise swiftly to his feet and close his fingers in their viselike grip.

A curious penetrating odor filled the air and a sputtering, muffled cry came from the intruder. A short, sharp struggle, and the form sank limply to the floor. Kneeling down, Bill pressed the damp sponge a little longer against the nostrils and mouth until the body had quite relaxed, then returned the sponge to the pocket that held the chloroform tube.

He switched on the light and surveyed his prostrate anesthetized victim. It was a powerful-looking woman in a blue flannel nightgown; feet large and red, face coarse in feature and of contomr Scandinavian; probably the cook. Bill wasted little thought on her. The point was that his blood was up now. He had had the taste of danger and his eyes gleamed. He shot a glance at the open stairway door.

A moment later his shoes were off, strung from his belt by their laces, and he was on his way up—silently, warily. The eleventh step creaked a little and he stopped short.

Two minutes and no sound.

He went on to the top of the stairs and halted there, standing a while to listen before risking his electric flash. Its rays showed him a long wide hall with two doors on one side and three on the other, all closed, so he moved noiselessly on to the farther end, the front of the house, listened a moment at the crack of a door and then cautiously turned the knob and entered, leaving the door open behind him.

His ear told him instantly that he was not alone; the room was occupied; he heard some one breathing. His nerves were drawn tight now, his whole body alert and quivering with the pleasurable excitement of it? Like a thoroughbred at the barrier.

A faint reflection of light from the street lamp came in through the window, just enough to make out the dim forms of furniture and the vague lumpy outline under the covers on the bed. He heard a watch ticking; it became less audible when he had moved swiftly to the dressing table and transferred the timepiece to his own pocket. He turned as by instinct toward the door of the closet, but halted sharply halfway across the room.

There was something queer about that breathing. He listened tensely. Most irregular. Surely not the respiration of a sleeper—and he was an expert on the subject. Suspicious, to say the least.

Like a flash he was at the bedside, and his sharp gaze detected a shuddering movement all over the form that lay there under the sheets. His hand flew to the side pocket of his coat, then he remembered that the chloroform tube was empty. In a fit of rashness he pressed the button of his pocket-flash, and there on the pillow, in the center of the bright electric ray that shot forth, he saw the face of a man with mouth wide open and eyes staring in abject terror—a man wide awake and petrified with fear.

Bill had seen such countenances before, and experience had taught him to waste no time in taking advantage of the wideopen mouth. So, moving with swift sureness, he filled that gaping aperture with the corner of a sheet, stuffing it in with conscientious thoroughness. Then, while the man made feeble attempts to get loose, which Bill impatiently ignored, he tied his hands and feet and made the gag secure.

Gurglings barely audible came from the victim's nose; our hero made a threatening gesture, and they ceased. He proceeded calmly and methodically to rifle the room and closet. When he finished ten minutes later, he had deposited in various places about his person two silver cigarette cases, three scarf pins, five rings, a jeweled photograph frame, and ninety-four dollars in cash.

He looked to see that his captive was securely tied, scowled ferociously into his face, tiptoed out of the room and closed the door behind him. He had been in the house not more than thirty minutes, and already two of the enemy had been rendered *hors de combat*, a bag of booty was waiting for him below, his stomach was full, and his clothing was loaded with money and jewelry. His chest swelled with pardonable pride. On with the dance!

Inflated and emboldened by success, he flashed his light impudently up and down the hall, finally deciding on the next door to the right on the opposite side. He advanced, noiselessly turned the knob and entered. The light from the street lamp did not enter on this side, and the room was pitch dark.

For a moment he thought it unoccupied, then the sound of faint breathing came to his ear—quite faint and regular. He took a step toward the bed, then,

magnificently scorning danger, turned to the wall near the door and felt for the electric button. He pushed; a click, and the room was flooded with light.

On the instant Bill sprang toward the bed, to forestall any outcry of alarm from its occupant. But he halted three paces away, with his arms half outstretched, at the sight that met his gaze.

There, under the silken coverlet, in the glare from the chandelier, he saw a sleeping child.

It was a girl of eight or nine years; her little white arm was curved under her head, and her soft brown hair spread in glorious curled confusion over the pillow. Her breast moved regularly up and down with her gentle breathing, and her sweet red lips were opened a little by the smile of a dream.

Bill stood still and gazed at her. He felt all of a sudden big and dirty and burly and clumsy and entirely out of place, and turning slowly to glance about the room, he saw that it was well suited to its occupant.

There was a small dressing table, a chest of drawers, a writing desk, and two or three chairs, all in dainty pink with delicately figured covers. On one corner of the desk stood a silver telephone instrument. The wall was pure white, with pink flowers and animals scattered in profusion along the border. A low wide bookcase, with full shelves, stood at one end. A pair of little white shoes were in the middle of the floor; on a chair near by were the stockings and other garments.

Bill looked at them, and at the beautiful sleeping child, and at the child's beautiful room, and he felt something rise in his chest. Slowly his hand went to his head, and off came his cap.

"My little girl would have a place like this," he muttered half aloud.

The fact that Bill had no little girl or big one either, that he was indeed quite unmarried, is no reason to suspect the sincerity of his emotion. Some fathers might argue that it is in fact a reason to believe in it; but we are interested only in what actually happened. Undoubtedly what Bill meant was this, that if he had had a little girl of his own he would have wanted for her such a room as this one.

He moved close to the bed and stood there looking down at its occupant. What

he was thinking was that he had never before realized that a creature could be so utterly helpless without thereby incurring the contempt of a strong man. There was something strangely stirring in the thought. Perhaps after all physical force was not the only power worth having. Here was this little child lying there utterly helpless before him—utterly helpless, and yet in fact far more secure from injury at his hands than a powerful man would have been.

No, force was not made to be used against helpless beings like her. What would he do if she should awake and cry out? He would talk to her and quiet her. According to the best burglar tradition, it would even be allowable to take her on his knee, and if a tear or so appeared in his eye it would be nothing to be ashamed of.

But what if she would not be quieted? What if in her fright she should persist in spreading the alarm? Force, then? No. In that case he would simply beat it. He would drop a kiss on her soft brown hair and make his escape. He did? in fact, bend over the pillow and deposit an extremely clumsy kiss on a lock of her hair, probably in order to have that much done and over with.

He turned away, for he felt one of the tears already halfway to his eye. A shiny something on the dressing table caught his attention and he moved across to inspect it. It was a tiny gold wristwatch with enameled rim. He picked it up and looked at the name of the maker, and his eyes widened with respect.

Expensive trinket, that. Absurd to trust a child with it. No doubt she was very proud of the thing. He put it down again, spared even the impulse to put it in his pocket. He knew it would be useless to debate the matter with himself. What burglar would take anything from a sweet helpless child like—

“Hands up!”

The words came from behind him. They were uttered in a thin treble voice, as crisp and oommanding as the snap of a whip. Bill wheeled like lightning and stood petrified.

The sweet helpless child was sitting up straight in bed, and in her extended hand was a mean-looking little revolver, with the muzzle directed unerringly one inch above the apex of Bill’s heart.

“Lord above us!” ejaculated our hero, as his jaw dropped open in astonishment.

There was a short silence. The burglar's attitude of stupefaction became less pronounced, and his jaw came up again to take part in an amused grin as he relaxed, but the steady brown eyes facing him were unwavering in their direct and businesslike gaze.

"I would advise you to put your hands up before I count ten," said the sweet, helpless child calmly. "One, two, three—"

"Really, now," Bill put in hastily, "I wouldn't advise you to shoot, little girl. You might scare someone. I won't hurt you."

"I don't shoot to scare people. I see you don't take me seriously. It may interest you to know that yesterday at the gallery at Miss Vanderhoof's Academy I got nine straight centers from the hip. I am much better with the eye. I am Major Wentworth of Squadron A of the Girls' Military Auxiliary, and I am the crack shot of our regiment. Four, five, six—"

Bill was speechless. He calculated the distance to the bed. Easily ten feet. That revolver barrel was certainly aimed level. Nine straight centers from the hip, and much better with the eye. Coldish business. He hesitated. The brown eyes held his steadily.

"Seven, eight, nine—"

His keen eye saw the muscles of the little wrist begin to tighten. Up went his hands above his head.

"That's better," said the sweet, helpless child approvingly. "I would have pulled the trigger in another half second. I had decided to get you in the right shoulder. Now turn your back, please, but keep your hands up."

Bill did so. Almost immediately came the command to turn about again. She had clambered out of bed and stood there on the rug with her pink nightgown trailing about her feet and her soft brown hair tumbling over her shoulders. She looked more tiny than ever. But the muzzle of the revolver wavered not a fraction of an inch as she stepped sidewise to the wall and pressed her finger against a button there. Nothing was said while she repeated the operation three times. More silence.

"Look here, little girl," Bill began earnestly, "There's no use gettin' your arm all

tired with that toy gun. I ain't going to hurt you."

"You may call me Major Wentworth," was all the reply he got.

"All right, major. But come, what's the use—"

"Stop! If you move again like that I'll shoot. I wonder what's the matter with Hilda. She sleeps very lightly." This last to herself.

Bill looked interested.

"Is Hilda a big sort of a woman in a blue nightgown?"

"Yes. Have you seen her?" The brown eyes filled with sudden alarm. "Oh! Where is she? Is she hurt?"

"Nope." Bill chuckled. "Kitchen floor. Chloroform. I was eatin' strawberry shortcake when she come in."

The major frowned.

"I suppose I must call my father. I hate to disturb him—"

"He's incapable, too," announced Bill with another chuckle. "Tied up with sheets and things. You see, major, we're all alone. Tell you what I'll do. There's a suitcase full of silver down on the library window sill. I'll agree to leave it there —"

"You certainly will," the major nodded. "And you'll leave the other things too. I see them in your pockets. Since my father is tied up I suppose I must call the police myself."

She began to move sidewise toward the silver telephone on the desk, keeping the revolver pointed at Bill's breast.

I transcribe Bill's thought: the little devil was actually going to call the police! Action must come now if at all, and quickly. He dismissed the idea of a dash for freedom; she would certainly pull the trigger, and she had a firm eye and hand. Bill summoned all his wit.

“My little girl’s mama is dead, too,” he blurted out suddenly.

The major, with her hand outstretched for the telephone, stopped to look at him.

“My mother isn’t dead,” she observed sharply. “She’s gone to the country.”

“You don’t say so!” Bill’s voice was positively explosive with enthusiastic interest. “Why didn’t you go along, major, if I may ask?”

“I am too busy with the Auxiliary. We are pushing the campaign for preparedness.” She added politely: “You say your wife is dead?”

Bill nodded mournfully.

“Been dead three years. Got sick and wasted away and died. Broke my little girl’s heart, and mine, too.”

A suggestion of sympathy appeared in the major’s eyes as she inquired:

“What is your little girl’s name?”

“Her name?” Bill floundered in his stupidity. “Oh, her name. Why, of course her name’s Hilda—”

“Indeed!” The major looked interested. “The same as cook. How funny! How old is she?”

“Sixteen,” said Bill rather desperately.

“Oh, she’s a big girl, then! I suppose she goes to school?”

Bill nodded.

“Which one?”

It was a mean question. In Bill’s mind school was simply school. He tried to think of a word that would sound like the name of one, but nothing came.

“Day school,” he said at last, and then added hastily, “that is, she moves around, you know. Going up all the time. She’s a smart girl.” His tone was triumphant.

Then, fearing that another question might finish him, he continued slowly:

“You might as well go on and call the cops—the police, I suppose. Of course, Hilda’s at home hungry, but that don’t matter to you. She’ll starve to death. I didn’t tell you she’s sick. She’s sick all the time—something wrong with her. I was just walkin’ past here and thought I might find something for her to eat, and I was lookin’ around—”

“You ate the strawberry shortcake yourself,” put in the major keenly.

“The doctor won’t let Hilda have cake,” Bill retorted. “And I was hungry myself. I suppose it’s no crime to be hungry—”

“You took the silver and other things.”

“I know.” Bill’s head drooped dejectedly. “I’m a bad man, I guess. I wanted to buy nice things for Hilda. She hasn’t had a doll for over ten years. She never has much to eat. If I’m arrested I suppose she’ll starve to death.”

The sympathy in the major’s eyes deepened. “I don’t want to cause unnecessary suffering,” she declared. “I feel strongly for the lower classes. And Miss Vanderhoof says that our penal system is disgraceful. I suppose little would be gained by sending you to prison.”

“It’s an awful place,” Bill declared feelingly.

“You have been there?”

“Off and on.”

“You see! It has done you no good. No, I might as well let you go. Turn your back.”

Bill stared.

The major stamped her little bare foot.

“Turn your back, I say! That’s right. I do wish you wouldn’t make me repeat things. Walk forward near the dressing table. No, at the side. So. Now empty your pockets and turn them inside out. All of them. Put the things on the

dressing table. Keep your back turned, or—as you would say in your vulgar parlance—I’ll blow your block off.”

Bill obeyed. He could feel the muzzle of the revolver pointed directly at the back of his head, and he obeyed. He lost no time about it either, for the anesthetized Hilda would be coming to soon.

Methodically and thoroughly the pockets were emptied and their contents deposited on the dressing table: a gentleman’s watch, two silver cigarette cases, three scarf pins, five rings, a jeweled photograph frame, and ninety-four dollars in cash. The articles that were obviously Bill’s own she instructed him to return to the pockets. He did so.

“There!” said the major briskly when he had finished. “You may turn now. That’s all, I think. Kindly close the front door as you go out. I’ll attend to the suitcase on the window sill after you’re gone. I wouldn’t advise you to try any tricks on me. I’ve never got a man on the run, but I’d love to have a crack at one. That’s all.”

Bill hesitated. His eye was on the neat roll of bills reposing beside him on the dressing table. It traveled from that to the gold wristwatch he would not take because it belonged to the sweet, helpless child. Would he take it now if he had a chance? Would he!

The major’s voice came:

“Go, please. I’m sleepy, and you’ve given me a lot of trouble. I shall have to revive Hilda, if it is possible. I have doubts on the subject. She refuses to keep herself in condition. She eats too much, she will not take a cold bath, she won’t train properly, she is sixty-eight pounds overweight, and she sleeps with her mouth open. But she’s a good cook—”

“She is that,” Bill put in feelingly, with his memory on the shortcake.

“—and I trust she has not expired. There is my father, too. To put it mildly, he is a weakling. His lack of wind is deplorable. He sits down immediately after eating. It is only three miles to his law office, and he rides. He plays golf and calls it exercise. If you have gagged him scientifically he may have ceased breathing by now.

“In one way it would be nothing to grieve over, but he is my father after all, and the filial instinct impels me to his assistance against my better judgment. You do not seem to be in good condition yourself. I doubt if you know how to breathe properly, and it is evident that you do not train systematically. There are books on the subject in the public library; I would advise you to get one. You may give my name as reference. Now go.”

Bill went. The door of the room was open. He started toward the back stairs, but the major halted him abruptly and made him right about; she had switched on the lights in the hall. Down the wide front staircase he tramped, and from behind came the major’s voice:

“Keep your mouth closed. Head up! Arms at your side. Breathe through your nose. Chest out forward! Hep, hep, hep—the door swings in. Leave it open. Lift your foot and come down on the heel. Turn the corner sharply. Head up!”

She stood in the doorway as he marched across the porch, down the steps, and along the gravel path to the sidewalk. A turn to the right, and thirty paces took him to the street corner. Still the major’s voice sounded from the doorway:

“Hep, hep, hep—lift your feet higher—breathe through your nose—hep, hep, hep—”

And as he reached the street corner the command came sharply:

“Halt! About face! Salute!”

A glance over his shoulder showed him her nightgown framed in the doorway. There were trees in between. Bill halted, but he did not about face and he did not salute. It was too much. Instead, after a second’s hesitation, he bounded all at once into the street and across it, and was off like a shot. And as he ran he replied to her command to salute by calling back over his shoulder, as man to man:

“Go to hell!”

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The Rope Dance

It was on a bright October afternoon that Rick Duggett got off at Grand Central Station, New York, with eight hundred dollars in the pocket of his brand new suit of clothes. But first of all it is necessary to explain how he got there and where the money came from.

He was one of those men who never do anything by halves. He ate prodigiously or fasted, he slept eleven hours or not at all, he sat in a poker game only when it was expressly understood that the roof was the limit and you might blow that off if you had enough powder.

Whatever he did he went just a little farther than any one else, so it was only natural that he should reach the top of his profession. He was the best roper in Eastern Arizona, which is no mean title even in these days when good ropers are as scarce as water holes in a desert.

When a prize of one thousand dollars cash was hung up in the great roping contest held at Honeville last October everybody expected Rick Duggett to win it, and he did not disappoint them. He roped and tied ten steers in fourteen minutes and twenty-eight seconds, seven full minutes better than the nearest competitor.

There had been considerable speculation as to what Rick would do with the money. Of course he would entertain the crowd at Ogilvy's, but even a gang of thirsty ranchmen can't drink a thousand dollars' worth of whisky. The rest would probably find its way into a poker game; but then Rick Duggett was a surprising sort of fellow and you couldn't tell. He might get married, or even take a trip to Denver.

As a matter of fact, Rick bought one round of drinks at Ogilvy's, made arrangements for his horse to be returned to the ranch, and entrusted a comrade with the following note to the foreman:

Dear Fraser:

I won the big prize all right. I'm going to take a month off for a little trip to New York. I've never been there. Yours truly,

R. Duggett

Even from Rick, that was amazing. Denver or K. C., yes. People did go to those

places, and sometimes even to St. Louis. Indeed, it was understandable that a man might conceivably undertake, for pleasure, a journey to Chicago.

But New York!

Absurd.

You might as well say Constantinople and be done with it. However, it was just like Rick Duggett. Having decided to visit a big city, you might know he would choose the biggest. He never did anything by halves.

Thus it was that Rick arrived in New York, with a roll of bills amounting to eight hundred and eighteen dollars in his pocket, about two o'clock of a sunny October afternoon.

Having stopped off in Chicago to buy a suit of clothes, his outward appearance, as he emerged from the Grand Central Station onto Forty-second Street, was not as startling as you might have expected of the champion roper of Arizona. But he had not thought of discarding the floppy broad-brimmed Stetson, and the ruggedness of his brown countenance and the flashing clearness of his eye were patently not of Broadway.

So it was that before he had even reached Times Square, threading his way through the throng westward on Forty-second Street, he was accosted by a dapper white-faced person in a blue serge suit who murmured something, without preamble, concerning "the third race at Latonia," and a "sure thing," and "just around the corner."

"Listen, sonny," said Rick, not unkindly. "I don't bet on horses unless I can see 'em. Besides, if I'd wanted to gamble I'd of stayed in Honeville. I came to New York to see the sights, and I guess you're one of 'em. Much obliged. Here's two bits "

And he thrust a quarter into the hand of the astonished "runner."

After he had tramped around for a couple of hours and got his eyes full he took a taxicab to the Hotel Croyville, which had been recommended to him by some one on the train.

It is too bad that I can't describe his timidity on entering the cab and his novel

sensations as the engine started and the thing shot forward. The trouble is that the owner of the ranch on which he worked was also the owner of two automobiles, and Rick was a pretty good hand at driving a car himself. Yet he was indeed impressed by the chauffeur's marvellous dexterity in threading his way through the maze of whirling traffic down Fifth Avenue.

Rick ate dinner, or supper, as he called it, at the Croyville, and a little later sallied forth for a look at the town by electric light. He had a sort of an idea that he might go to a show, but, having perused the amusement columns of an evening newspaper, found himself embarrassed by the superabundance of material. His final decision rested between a performance of *Macbeth* and a Broadway dancing revue, and about halfpast seven he dropped into a cafe to consider the matter over a little of something wet.

It was there that he met a person named Henderson. One thing Rick must admit, it was he himself who addressed the first words to the stranger. But then it is also a fact that the stranger, who was standing next to Rick at the bar, started things by observing to the bartender and whoever else might care to hear:

"We don't use those nonrefillable bottles out West, where I come from. We don't have to. We know the men that sell us our drinks, and by —, they know us. But that's the way it is in New York. You got to watch everybody, or you'll get your insides all filled up with water."

Rick turned and asked the stranger—a ruddy-faced, middleaged man in a gray sack suit and soft hat—what part of the West he came from. That was enough. Ten minutes later they were having their second drink together.

Mr. Henderson, it appeared, was from Kansas, where he owned an immense wheat farm. He was much interested in what Rick had to say about Arizona. They discussed the metropolis, and Rick, by way of comment on Mr. Henderson's observation that "you got to watch everybody in New York," told of his encounter with the poolroom runner on Forty-second Street. Then, as it was nearing eight o'clock, he remarked that he was intending to see the revue up at the Stuyvesant Theater, and guessed he would have to trot along.

"That's a bum show," declared Mr. Henderson. "I saw it the other night. Lord, I've seen better than that out in Wichita. Why don't you come with me up to the Century? A fellow at the hotel told me it's the real thing."

So after Mr. Henderson had paid for the drinks—despite Rick’s protest—they left the cafe and took a taxi to Sixty-second Street, where Henderson allowed Rick to settle with the chauffeur while he entered the theater lobby to get the tickets.

Rick liked the man from Kansas. He appeared to be an outspoken, blunt sort of fellow who liked to have a good time and knew where to go for it. Lucky thing to have met up with him. Mighty pleasant to have for a companion a chap from the right side of the Mississippi.

The show was in fact a good one, and Rick enjoyed it hugely. Pretty girls, catchy music, funny lines, clever dancing. Rick applauded with gusto and laughed himself weak. The only drawback was that Mr. Henderson appeared to have an unconquerable aversion to going out between the acts. It was incomprehensible. The man actually seemed to prefer sitting in the stuffy, crowded theater to stepping out for a little air. But then he was a most amusing talker and the intermissions were not so very long.

After the final curtain they pushed out with the crowd to the sidewalk. Rick felt exhilarated and a little bewildered in the whirlpool of smiling faces and the noise of a thousand chattering tongues.

“This is certainly New York,” he was saying to himself, when his thoughts were interrupted by his companion’s voice:

“What do you say we go downtown for a little supper? I know a good place. Unless you’d rather turn in—”

“I should say not,” declared Rick. “I had my supper at six o’clock, but I’m always ready for more. Lead me to it. This is on me, you know.”

So they found a taxi at the curb and got in, after Mr. Henderson had given the chauffeur the name of a cabaret and supper room downtown. A little delay, and they were out of the crush in front of the theater’ a minute later the cab turned into Broadway, with its glaring lights and throngs of vehicles and pedestrians, and headed south.

Suddenly Mr. Henderson pulled himself forward, thrust his hand into his hip pocket and brought it forth again holding something that glistened like bright silver as the rays of light through the cab window reflected on it. Rick’s curious

glance showed him that it was a nickel-plated whisky flask. He watched with a speculative eye as the other unscrewed the top, turned it over and poured it full of liquid.

“Some stuff I brought with me from Kansas,” explained Mr. Henderson. “The real thing, this is. I always keep it in the sideboard. If you’d care to join me, sir —”

Rick hesitated. Then he blushed for the base thought that had entered his mind. It was all right to be cautious and all that, but it was carrying it a little too far to be suspicious of a man like Henderson. Still—

“Sure,” said Rick. “After you. I’d like to sample it.”

The other proffered the tiny nickel-plated cup.

“After you,” Rick repeated with a polite gesture.

“Here’s how, then,” replied Henderson, and emptied the cup at a gulp. “Nothing to rinse with, you know,” he observed as he filled it again from the flask. “The stuff’s too good to waste it washing dishes.”

“That’s all right.” Rick took the cup, brim-full, in his fingers. “Here’s looking at you.”

And, following the other’s example, he swallowed it with one draught.

About three hours later, a little after three o’clock in the morning, the lieutenant at the desk of the Murray Hill Police Station was conducting an investigation. The chief witness was a taxicab chauffeur, whose face was flushed with indignation at the iniquity of a wicked world, and whose tone was filled with injured protest.

“I was in front of the Century,” said the chauffeur to the police lieutenant, “when two guys took me. One of ‘em, a short, red-faced guy, told me to hit it up for Shoney’s cabaret. I got ‘em there as quick as I could, of course bein’ careful, but when I pulled up in front of Shoney’s the red-faced guy leaned out of the window and said they’d changed their minds and guessed they’d drive around a little. ‘Maybe an hour,’ he said, and told me to go up the Avenue to the Park. So I beat it for the Park.

“I drove around till I got dizzy, nearly two hours, and it seemed funny I wasn’t hearing sounds of voices inside. They had the front curtains pulled down. Finally I slowed down and took a peep around the corner through the side window. I couldn’t see no one. I stopped and jumped down and opened the door. The red-faced guy was gone and the other guy was sprawled out half on the seat and half on the floor. I yelled at him and shook him around, but he was dead to the world. So I brought him—”

“All right, that’ll do,” the lieutenant interrupted. “You’ve got a license, I suppose?”

“Sure I have. I’ve been three years with the M. B. Company—”

“And you don’t know when the red-faced man left the cab?”

“No. Unless it was at Sixth Avenue and Forty-second Street. They was a jam there and we was held up a long time. He might of ducked then—”

“All right.” The lieutenant turned to a policeman. “See if that man is able to talk yet.”

As the policeman turned to obey, a door leading into an inner room opened and Rick Duggett, champion roper of Eastern Arizona, appeared on the threshold. His face was pale and his eyes were swollen and dull, like those of a man roused from a long sleep; his necktie was on one side and his hair was rumped into a tangled mass.

“Here he is now,” said the policeman.

“Oh, so you’ve come to.” The lieutenant looked the newcomer over. “What’s the matter with you? What kind of a game is this?”

Rick Duggett approached the desk.

“Listen here,” he said, gazing at the lieutenant with a melancholy eye. His voice was slow and labored, but he made it distinct. “Listen here,” he repeated. “I see by the clock yonder that it’s after three. So I’ve been knocked out for three hours. I came to in there fifteen minutes ago, and they told me where I was. I guess I’m straightened out now. A gazebo named Henderson gave me a drink of something from Kansas, and when I closed my eyes because I enjoyed it so

much he lifted a roll of eight hundred dollars and a return ticket to Arizona from my pants pocket. You got to watch everybody in New York. It was Henderson said that. Perhaps he meant—”

“Wait a minute.” The lieutenant arranged the blotter and dipped his pen in the ink. “What’s your name?”

Rick achieved a weary smile. “My name is Billy Boob. Write it down and let me see how it looks. That’s all you’ll get, because I’m not exactly anxious to get myself in the papers in this connection. My name is Billy Boob, and I come from Ginkville on Sucker Creek. If that’s all I guess I’ll trot along.”

“I guess you won’t,” said the lieutenant sharply. “How do you expect us to get your money back for you if you don’t tell us anything? What kind of a looking man was this Henderson? Where did you meet him?”

“Nothing doing.” Agauh Rick smiled wearily. “Strange to say, I forgot to brand him. He wore a gray suit of clothes, and he had a red face and white teeth, and I met him somewhere talking about nonrefillable bottles. No use writing anything down, because I’m not making any holler. I’ve always had a theory that if a man can’t take care of himself he’s not fit to have any one else do the job. The boys would run me off the ranch if they heard of this. I guess I’ll trot along.”

The policeman grinned. The lieutenant expostulated and argued. But Rick was firm.

“No, Cap, nothing doing on the complaint. You wouldn’t catch him, anyway. I’m going home and get some sleep. So long and much obliged.”

He made for the door. But on the threshold he hesitated, then turned.

“There’s one thing I’d like to know,” he said slowly. “Henderson took a drink just before I did, and it didn’t seem to make him sleepy. Is it a general practice around here to carry two kinds of booze in one horn?”

At that the lieutenant grinned, too. “Oh, that’s one of our eastern refinements,” he explained. “You see, the flask is divided in the middle. If you press the button on the right side you get Scotch and if you press the one on the left you get something else. Men like Mr. Henderson have them made to order.”

“I see,” said Rick. “Much obliged.”

And with a farewell nod he turned again and disappeared into the street.

It was noon when he awoke the next day in his room at the hotel. He first felt a vague sense of depression, then suddenly everything came back to him. He jumped out of bed, filled the washbowl with cold water and ducked his head in it, then washed and dressed. That done, he descended to the dining room and ate six eggs and two square feet of ham. After he had paid the breakfast check he went into the lobby and sank into a big leather chair.

“Let’s see,” he said to himself, “that leaves me fourteen dollars and twenty cents. Thank heaven Henderson didn’t look in my vest pocket, though he did take my watch out of the other one. That watch would have got me back to Honeville. The fare is fifty-eight dollars. I’ll starve before I’ll telegraph Fraser. Well, let’s see.”

He spent the entire afternoon loitering about the hotel, trying to get his mind to work. How to make some money? The thing appeared impossible. They don’t hold roping contests in New York. He considered everything from sweeping streets to chauffeuring. Could he drive a car around New York? No money in it, anyway, probably. But surely a man could do *something*.

By evening he had decided on nothing. After dinner he strolled up Broadway and bought a ticket for the revue. He was determined to find it amusing, for Mr. Henderson had said it was a bum show. It really bored him to death. But he stayed till the final curtain. Then he found himself on Broadway again.

Just how he got into Dickson’s is uncertain. He wanted a drink, and he wandered into the place and found himself in the presence of “the most famous cabaret in America.” Rick sat at a small table at one end of the immense, gorgeous room, watching the antics of the dancers and singers and other performers on the platform, and it was there that his idea came to him. Before he went to bed that night he had decided to give it a trial the very next day.

Accordingly the following morning he sought out a hardware store on Sixth Avenue and purchased thirty yards of first grade hemp rope and a gallon of crude oil. The cost was eight dollars and sixty cents. These articles he took back to the hotel, and for three hours he sat in his room rubbing the oil into the rope to bring it to the required degree of pliancy and toughness.

Then he spliced a loop in one end, doubled it through and made a six-foot noose—the size of the room would not permit a larger one—and began whirling it about his head. A sigh of satisfaction escaped him. Ah, the nimble wrist! And the rope would really do very well; a little limbering up and he would ask nothing better.

He pulled his traveling bag from under the bed, dumped out its contents and put the rope, carefully coiled, in their place. Then, with the bag in his hand, he descended to the street and made his way uptown to Dickson's. At the entrance he halted a moment, then went boldly inside and accosted one of the young women at the door of the cloakroom.

"I want to speak to the manager of the show," said he, hat in hand.

"You mean the headwaiter?" she hazarded.

"I don't know," replied Rick. "The man that runs the show on the platform. I saw it last night."

"Oh," she grinned. "You mean the cabaret."

"Do I? Much obliged. Anyway, I want to see him."

"It ain't so easy," the young woman observed. "The boss tends to that himself. I'll see. Come in here."

She led the way down a narrow, dark corridor to an office where stenographers and bookkeepers sat at their desks and machines, and turned Rick over to a wise-looking youth with a threatening mustache. The youth surveyed the caller with ill-concealed amusement at his ungraceful appearance, and when he finally condescended to speak there was a note of tolerant sarcasm in his voice.

"So you want to see Mr. Dickson," he observed. "What do you want with him?"

"Listen, sonny." Rick was smiling, too, quietly enough. "No doubt we're having a lot of fun looking at each other, but my time's valuable just now. I'm Rick Duggett from Arizona. Report the fact to your Mr. Dickson."

Thus did Rick make his way into the presence of Lonny Dickson, the best known man on Broadway and the owner of its most famous cabaret. He was a

large, smiling individual, with a clear countenance and a keen, penetrating eye. As Rick entered the inner office where he sat at a large flat desk heaped with papers, smoking a long thin cigar, he got up from his chair and held out a hand in greeting.

“Jimmie just told me,” he observed genially, looking Rick in the eye, “that a wild guy from the West wanted to see me. I’m kind of wild myself, so I don’t mind. But Jimmie didn’t get the name—”

“Duggett,” said Rick, taking the proffered hand.

“Glad to meet you, Mr. Duggett. What can I do for you?”

Rick hesitated.

“It’s this way,” he said finally. “I’m from Arizona. I’m a son of misfortune. Two days ago I had a roll big enough to choke a horse, but night before last I let it out to pasture, as though I wasn’t green enough myself. So I’m broke, and it’s a long, long way to Arizona. Last night I happened in here and saw your show, and an idea came to me. It’s a new stunt for the show, and it ought to be pretty good. So I thought I’d—”

“What is it?” interrupted Mr. Dickson, whose cordiality had rapidly disappeared as he became aware of the nature of the visitor’s errand. This was just some nut looking for a job.

“Something new,” said Rick placidly. “I can’t tell you very well; I’ve got to show you. It’ll take five minutes. All I want is a room with plenty of space, say twenty feet on each side, and a high ceiling—”

“But what is it?” the other repeated impatiently.

Rick looked at him.

“Gosh, you’re not wild,” he observed with a twinkle in his eye. “You’re just plain sassy. Didn’t I say I had to show you? Haven’t you got a room around here somewhere of the general size I indicated? Haven’t you got a pair of eyes to look at me with?”

The frown left Dickson’s brow, and he laughed.

“Well, you’re wild enough for both of us,” he declared. “I guess you’ll get back to Arizona all right, some way or other. As for your stunt for the cabaret, it’s a thousand to one that it’s rotten. Naturally you can’t be expected to know anything about cabarets. However, I’ll take a look. Come on, we’ll go up to the banquet room on the next floor; I guess you’ll find it big enough.”

“Much obliged,” said Rick.

He picked up his traveling bag and followed the restaurant proprietor out of the office.

The evening of the following day the patrons of Dickson’s of Broadway were treated to a surprise.

Do you know the main room at Dickson’s?

The first thing you notice about the place is the light—dazzling, glaring, bold; a perfect riot of light, whitish yellow, that comes from four immense chandeliers suspended from the ceiling and innumerable electric lamps on the marble pillars, attached to the walls, on the tables, everywhere.

Then your ears are assaulted, and you hear the clinking of glasses, the muffled footsteps of waiters, the confusing hum of conversation from half a thousand tongues, and mingled with all this a sound of music, now suppressed, now insistent, that comes from the orchestra on the rear of the raised platform at one side. On the front of this platform, of which a fair view may be had by each of the hundreds of diners and drinkers packed in the immense room, the cabaret performers appear in turn.

It was the height of the dinner hour, a little after seven. A young woman in a low-necked blue dress with cowlike eyes had finished three verses and choruses of a popular sentimental song, and the orchestra had rested the usual three minutes. Then they struck up again for the next “turn,” and a girl appeared on the platform, followed by a man.

The girl—a lively little black-haired creature with sparkling eyes and a saucy, winning smile—was no stranger to the habitués of the place; she had been dancing there for several months. But always alone. Who was this fellow with her? They opened their eyes at his strange appearance.

He was a tall, ungainly chap, wearing the costume of a moving picture cowboy, and in his hand he carried a great coil of rope. There was an expression of painful embarrassment on his brown face as he glanced from side to side and saw five hundred pairs of eyes looking into his from all parts of the large, brilliantly lighted room.

The girl began to dance, swinging into the music with a series of simple, tentative steps, and the man roused himself to action. He loosened the coil of rope and began pulling it through a loop at one end to form a noose. Then slowly and easily, and gracefully, he began whirling the noose in the air. It was fifteen feet in diameter, half as wide as the platform.

The girl, quickening her steps with the music, swerved suddenly to one side and leaped into the center of the whirling coil of rope. Then the music quickened again and the rope whirled faster, while the dancer circled round and round its circumference in a series of dizzy gyrations. Suddenly the man twisted to one side, with a quick and powerful turn of the wrist, and the rope doubled on itself like lightning, forming two circles instead of one. The girl leaped and danced from one to the other.

The music became more rapid still, and the rope and the dancer, whirling with incredible swiftness in the most intricate and dazzling combinations, challenged the eye to follow them. The nooses of the rope, which had again doubled, came closer together, until finally two of them encircled the girl at once, then three, then all four, still whirling about her swiftly revolving form.

All at once the orchestra, with one tremendous crash, was silent; simultaneously the man gave a sudden powerful jerk with his arm and the dancer stopped and became rigid, while the four nooses of the rope tightened themselves about her, pinning her arms to her sides and rendering her powerless. One more crash from the orchestra, and the man ran forward, picked the girl up in his arms and ran quickly from the platform.

The applause was deafening. Dickson's had scored another hit. All Broadway asks is something new.

Back of the platform the man had halted to place the girl gently on her feet and unwind the coils of rope. That done, she took him by the hand to lead him back to the platform for the bow. He hung back, but she insisted, and finally she

dragged him on. They were forced to take another, and a third. When they returned from the last one they found Lonny Dickson himself waiting for them at the foot of the platform steps.

“Great stuff, Duggett,” he said enthusiastically. “You put it over fine, especially with only one day’s rehearsal. It’ll improve, too. I’ve been paying Miss Carson fifty a week. I’ll make it a hundred and fifty for the turn, and you and she can split it fifty-fifty.”

“Much obliged,” replied Rick calmly. His face was flushed and his brow covered with perspiration. He turned to his partner.

“Shall we have a drink on it? Miss Carson?”

They found a table in a corner back of the platform Miss Carson, a rarity among cabaret performers, was even more pleasing to look at when you were close to her than on the stage. Her sparkling eyes retained all their charm, and the softness of her hair, the daintiness of her little mouth, the fresh smoothness of her cheeks, became more apparent. She was panting now from her exertions, and her flushed face and disarranged hair made a lovely picture.

“Really,” she said, as she sat down, “I ought to ask you to wait till I go to the dressing room and repair damages.”

“Oh, that can wait,” declared Rick. “If you knew how nice you look right now you wouldn’t want to fix up anyway. I suppose we ought to drink to each other with a bottle of champagne, but to tell the truth I was kind of hungry this evening and I’m afraid I about finished my little stake. I’ll corral Dickson for an advance tonight and we’ll have the wine later.”

But Miss Carson protested with a gay smile that she never drank anything stronger than mineral water, so that was all right. More, a little exclamation of horror escaped her when she saw Rick swallow three fingers of whiskey straight, after clinking glasses with her.

“That awful stuff!” she exclaimed. “It’ll kill you. I thought you mixed water with it or something.”

“I haven’t got that low yet,” Rick declared. “But there’s a funny thing, I was thinking just then that I’ve been drinking too much since I came East. Out home

I don't touch it oftener than once in two months, though I do fill up pretty well then. You know, he hesitated—and blushed! “You know,” he went on, “I'm glad you don't drink.”

“Yes? Why?”

“Lord, I don't know. I'm just glad.”

“Well, so am I. I never have. But listen, Mr. Duggett. Mr. Dickson said he was going to give us a hundred and fifty and we could split it fifty-fifty. I won't do that—divide it even, I mean. I was only getting fifty alone, so it's quite evident that the hundred belongs to you.”

“You don't say so,” Rick smiled at her. “Now, that's just like you.” (How in the world could he have known what was just like her, having met her only twenty-four hours before?) “But you've got it wrong. The hundred is yours. I wouldn't be worth two bits without you.”

“Mr. Duggett, the increased value of the turn is due entirely to you, and you must take the extra money. I insist.”

“Miss Carson, you really ought to have the whole thing, only I need a stake to get back home, so I'll agree to take one-third. Not a cent more.”

They argued about it for twenty minutes, and at the end of that time compromised on an even split.

“It must be terribly exciting out in Arizona,” observed Miss Carson after a pause.

Rick lifted his eyebrows.

“Exciting?”

“Yes. That is—well *exciting*.”

“Not so as you could notice it. Oh, it's all right. I don't kick any. Plenty to eat, a good poker game whenever you're loaded and a dance every once in a while. And of course lots of work—”

“But I didn’t mean that,” Miss Carson put in. “Working and eating and playing cards and dancing—why, that’s just what the men do in New York. I meant Indians, and things like that.”

“Yes, the Indians are pretty bad,” Rick agreed. “You’ve got to keep your eye on ‘em all the time. They’ll get anything that’s loose. Worst sneak thieves in the world. But I don’t call that very exciting. In fact, I guess I’m having the most exciting time of my life right now.”

“Oh, so you like New York?”

“I should say not. That is, I didn’t mean New York. I meant right now, here at this table.”

“My goodness, I don’t see anything very exciting about this,” the girl smiled.

“Of course not. You’re looking in the wrong direction. You’re looking at me and I’m looking at you. You know, it’s a funny thing about your eyes. They look like the eyes of a pony I had once, the best that ever felt a saddle. The only time I ever cried was when he stumbled in a prairie dog hole and had to be shot.”

This was not the first compliment Rick had ever paid a woman, but you may see that he had not practiced the art sufficiently to acquire any great degree of subtlety. It appeared nevertheless not to be totally ineffective, for Miss Carson turned away the eyes that reminded Rick of his lost pony. She even made inquiry about the pony’s name and age, and why his stumbling in a prairie dog hole necessitated his death; also what is a prairie dog and a hole thereof?

At their next appearance on the platform they repeated their former success. There seemed little doubt that they were to be talked of on Broadway, and that meant profitable popularity. Miss Carson was delighted, and Rick found himself echoing her pleasure. Besides he was pleased on his own account, for two reasons: he was going to have no difficulty getting back to Arizona without revealing his disgraceful adventure to the boys, and he was going to get back from Broadway itself at least a part of that which Broadway had taken from him.

After this second performance they would not be needed again for more than two hours, and Rick changed into his street clothes and went out for a walk. It may as well be admitted that his thoughts during this long stroll were mainly of his cabaret partner, but there was another idea in his mind at the same time. He

did not leave Broadway, and his eye ran ceaselessly over the faces of the passersby; also he stopped in every caf, though he drank not at all. He was hoping that he might run across Mr. Henderson.

At eleven o'clock he was back at Dickson's. Miss Carson found him in front of the dressing room and informed him that their call would be at 11:24. The immense dining room was filling up rapidly with the supper crowd from the theaters.

Waiters and omnibuses trotted swiftly up and down the aisles, there was a continuous line of new arrivals streaming in from the doors at both ends, and corks were beginning to pop. Two numbers of the supper cabaret had already done their turns, and the sentimental soprano was standing at the rear of the platform squeezing the bulb of an atomizer and half choking herself.

When the time came for the Rope Dance, as Lonny Dickson had decided to call it in his advertising copy for the following day, Rick Duggett was surprised at the ease with which he walked out on the platform, bowed and began loosening his coil of rope.

Miss Carson was daintily performing her short opening dance to the music of the orchestra. Rick got his noose arranged, stepped forward to his position in the center of the platform and started the rope slowly whirling. This was easy. He got it a little higher and went a little faster. There would still be at least a minute before the music cue came for the dancer to leap into the whirling circle, and Rick allowed his gaze to wander over the throng of faces turned toward him from every side. The scene spread out dazzlingly from the raised platform.

All at once Rick's head became rigid and his eyes fixed themselves in an unbelieving stare. This lasted for half a moment; then suddenly he started and jumped forward and shouted at the top of his voice: "*Damn!*"

Miss Carson stopped short with amazement in the middle of her dance. The orchestra wavered and was silent. The clinking of knives and forks and the hum of conversation was suddenly hushed all over the room. Rick stood at the front edge of the platform, still staring at something with a wildly inquiring eye, his arm still moving mechanically around his head as the noose whirled in a great circle.

And then those who followed the direction of Rick's gaze saw a man—a stout,

red-faced, middleaged man—suddenly rise to his feet from a table near the center of the room, cast one quick, startled glance at the cowboy on the platform and dart madly down the aisle toward the door.

The rest happened so quickly that no eye was swift enough to follow it. There was a lightning gleam from Rick's eye, a powerful, rapid movement of his arm, and the whirling circle of rope shot out and whizzed through the air over the heads of the amazed throng. leaving behind it, like the tail of a comet, the line whose other end was firmly grasped in Rick's hand.

It was a perfect throw, worthy of the champion of Eastern Arizona. Straight as an arrow the noose went to its mark, dropping with precision over the head of the red-faced man, far across the room. Rick lunged backward, jerking in his arm, and the noose tightened about the man's body, below his breast.

Rick leaped from the platform and dashed down the aisle, pulling in the rope as he ran to keep it taut. In a second he had reached the side of his captive, thrown him to the floor and sat on him.

"Hello, Henderson," said Etick calmly to the prostrate form under him. "I want eight hundred dollars and a ticket to Honeville, Arizona, and I want it quick."

Henderson, panting with exertion, glared and was silent. Not so the other diners. Women were screaming, and two or three of them were trying to faint. Men were calling out, "Get the police!" at the same time crowding down the aisles to be in at the death. Waiters were running distractedly in every direction; their chief pushed his way through, calling meantime to his lieutenants to get the police.

"You'd better act quick, Henderson," said Rick, shaking the head waiter off. "Somebody's gone to get a policeman. I don't like 'em any better than you do, and they'll have to catch you if they want you. Better come across."

"D'ye mean that?" gasped Henderson.

"I sure do."

There was some more quick action then. Rick arose and pulled the noose off. Henderson scrambled to his feet, thrust his hand in his pocket and handed his captor a roll of bills. Rick skinned back the edges, nodded and released his hold. And then you should have seen Mr. Henderson of Kansas get out of that

restaurant. He overturned three or four tables and knocked down a dozen men and half as many women, but he certainly got out.

“Much obliged!” Rick yelled after him as he disappeared through the door.

Of course Rick lost his job. Worse, Lonny Dickson had him arrested for disturbing the peace, and he was taken to the night court. But the magistrate released him, after a reprimand for not having turned Henderson over to the law.

And what did he care for his job with nine hundred and thirty dollars in his pocket? That is an actual fact; instead of diminishing, the roll had grown. Perhaps Mr. Henderson had made another haul. And the railroad ticket was there too. Rick pocketed the hundred and thirty dollars profit without a word; you who understand ethics, which I don’t, may argue about it if you want to.

Another thing. One o’clock the following afternoon found Rick Duggett eating luncheon—yes, luncheon—with a young lady named Carson. I wouldn’t be surprised if it ended by his marrying the girl and taking her back to Arizona with him. He never did anything by halves.

(_All-Story Weekly_, June 24, 1916)

Warner & Wife

Lori Warner, after a leisurely inspection of herself in the pier mirror next the window, buttoned her well-fitting blue jacket closely about her, put on her hat, and caught up a bulging portfolio of brown leather that was lying on the dressing table. Then she turned to call to her husband in the adjoining room:

“Timmie!”

When she had waited at least half a second she called again, this time with a shade of impatience in her voice: “*Timmie!*”

The door opened and a man appeared on the threshold. Picture him a scant three inches over five feet in height, weighing perhaps a hundred and fifteen or twenty pounds; in short, a midget. A thin forelock of reddish hair straggled over his left eyebrow; his mustache, also thin and red, pointed straight down in a valiant but abortive attempt to reach his full lips; his ears, of generous size, had an odd appearance of being cocked like those of an expectant horse.

The small and deep-set eyes, filled as they were with timidity and self-deprecation amounting almost to docility, seemed nevertheless to possess a twinkle of intelligence. This was Timothy D. Warner.

“Good morning, my dear!” said he, stopping three paces from the threshold like a well-trained servant.

“Where were you at breakfast?” returned his wife, scorning the convention of salutation.

Mr. Warner blinked once, then said pleasantly:

“I haven’t been.”

“Indeed! I supposed as much, or I would have seen you. I told you last night I wanted to talk over this Hamlin & Hamlin matter at the breakfast table.”

“I know. I’m sorry. But you see”—Mr. Warner appeared to hesitate—“I—the fact is, the beastly alarm clock failed to go off.”

“Did you wind it?”

“No.” This manfully.

Lora Warner sighed. “Timmie, you are unthinkable! What about Hamlin & Hamlin? Did you look it over?”

This simple question seemed to upset Mr. Warner completely. He grew red, hesitated, and finally stammered:

“No—that is—I read something—”

“Do you mean you didn’t?”

He nodded reluctantly.

“Then what were you doing? There was a light in your room when I went to bed.”

Mr. Warner gazed on the floor, and was silent.

“What were you doing?”

Still silence.

“I have asked you twice, Timmie, what you were doing.” The tone was merciless.

Mr. Warner, seeing there was no help for it, raised his eyes and met her gaze. “I was playing solitaire,” he announced bravely.

Then, before the storm had time to break, he continued apologetically:

“I didn’t know there was any hurry about it, my dear, or I would have looked it over at once. The case doesn’t come up till the twenty-fifth. Besides, you said you had it all worked up, and merely wanted my opinion on one or two minor points. If I had known you really needed—” He stopped suddenly.

“Well? If you had known I really needed—”

“Nothing,” said Mr. Warner lamely.

“What were you going to say?”

“Why—advice—if you needed my advice—”

“Your advice! Do you think by any chance I *need* your advice?”

“My dear, goodness no!” exclaimed Mr. Warner, as though the idea were preposterous.

“I should hope not,” his wife agreed. “I am quite able to manage my business without you, Timmie. Only, as you do nothing but sit around and read, I thought you might have happened on something that would throw light on the question of annulled liens, which is intricately involved and has an important bearing on this case. But I believe I have it very well in hand.”

“There is plenty of time till the twenty-fifth,” Mr. Warner observed diffidently.

“There is,” assented his wife. “But that has nothing to do with this. The case has been put forward. It is calendared for today.”

“Today! But what—then perhaps—I can look it over this morning and see you at lunch—at recess—”

“My dear Timmie,” smiled Mrs. Warner, “you appear to think I do need your advice. Don’t trouble yourself. I have it well in hand. Play solitaire by all means.” She moved toward the door.

“At ten dollars a point,” announced Mr. Warner to her back, “I am sixty-two thousand dollars ahead of the game.”

“Fine!” She sent a derisive smile over her shoulder. “By-by, Timmie!”

Mr. Warner gazed at the closed door for a full thirty seconds, then turned and went to his own room to complete his interrupted toilet. That done, he went downstairs to the dining room.

Sadie, the cook, appeared in the doorway.

“Good morning!” she observed unamiably.

“I see I am late,” returned Mr. Warner with a weak attempt at cheerfulness. “Do you suppose I could have a couple of eggs, Sadie?”

“Fried or boiled?”

“Well—shirred.”

Mr. Warner never ate his eggs any other way than shirred, and as Sadie never failed to ask him, “Fried or boiled?” he was forced to begin each day with the feeling that he was being somehow put in the wrong. A most uncomfortable feeling, but one to which he was so well accustomed that he shook it off almost immediately and fell to thinking of other things.

First of the case of Hamlin & Hamlin vs. the Central Sash and Door Company, which was to come up that day in court. No use to worry about it, he decided; no doubt his wife, as she had said, had it well in hand. His wife usually had things well in hand. No less could be expected of her, being, as she was, the ablest lawyer in the city of Granton, excepting neither man nor woman.

Everybody said so, including Mr. Warner; indeed, he had said it before any one

else. He had expected it of her from the first; and during all the fifteen years of their married life she had been mounting steadily, with never a faltering step, to the height of his expectation and her own ambition.

Mr. Warner often pictured her to himself as he appeared on that day when he had first seen her in the law school in New York. His attention, which had just begun to be solidly fixed on torts and evidence, had suddenly wavered, fluttered through the air, and settled inextricably in the fluffy brown mass of her glorious hair.

It had taken him just three seconds to discover that her face was as fresh and beautiful as any phrase in Blackstone—in fact, a little more so—which was quite a discovery for a man of the temperament and inclinations of Timothy D. Warner.

The puzzle of his life was, why had she married him? When, some years after the event, in a moment of astounding intrepidity, he had asked her this question directly, she had replied with cynical humor that every ship needs an anchor for safety. Mr. Warner understood quite well what she meant, but he was inclined to doubt.

He had at one time distinctly heard her pronounce the words, “I love you,” and, since there had been nobody else in the room but himself, he felt justified in believing that they were addressed to him. For six months after the wedding she had openly fed this belief; since then her time had been completely occupied with her own career.

They had been married within a week after the end of their three years in law school, and had gone immediately to Granton, a town of sixty thousand in the Middle West—Lora having declared there was no time to waste on a honeymoon.

Luckily, Mr. Warner had inherited an income of some three thousand dollars a year from his father, so they were not forced to dig for bread.

He had supposed, not unreasonably, that they would open an office together, for Lora had stipulated that her marriage should not interfere with her ambition. But she vetoed this idea without ceremony. No partnership for her. She would carve out her own future, unhampered and alone. So he rented an office for her in the finest building on Main Street, and another for himself two blocks farther down.

From the first she had been successful. The New Woman had just become fashionable in Granton, and the city received its first female lawyer with open arms.

Her first two or three cases, unimportant of course, she won easily. Then called in consultation as an experiment by the corporation which owned the largest factory in the city, she had saved them a considerable amount of worry and a large sum of money by showing wherein a certain annoying statute could be proved unconstitutional.

She and Mr. Warner had sat up every night for a week, studying this problem. It was, of course, by the merest luck that Mr. Warner happened to be the one who discovered the solution. So said Mr. Warner, and his wife politely agreed with him.

Nor could she see any necessity for mentioning her husband's name when she carried the solution to the board of directors in her own pretty head.

At any rate, it earned for her a share of the corporation's law business, and in addition the amazed respect of the solid business men of the city. They began to take her seriously. At the end of a year one of these men actually placed an important case entirely in her hands. She was half afraid to take it, and told her husband so.

"My dear," said Mr. Warner, "you are far too modest. You'll win it, sure as shucks." And he had straightway sat down and attacked the case on both flanks and in the center, with the result that in less than a fortnight he had it bound, gagged, and delivered into her hands.

Mrs. Warner acknowledged the obligation in private with a kiss—the first he had received in four months. That was his reward. Hers consisted of a fee in four figures, an immense gain in prestige, and the clamorous enlogry of the men higher up.

From that day forth her office was filled with clients and her portfolio with briefs.

As for Mr. Warner's office, it was never filled with anything but tobacco smoke, for Mr. Warner himself occupied a very small portion of space, and no one else ever set foot in it.

Nevertheless, for fifteen years he continued his habit of visiting it for an hour every day, usually about two o'clock in the afternoon. He would lean back in the swivel chair, cock his feet on the edge of the desk, and light his pipe. Thus he would remain, looking meditatively out on Main Street for the space of three pipefuls; the time varied from forty-five minutes to an hour and a quarter, according to the kind of pipe he happened to be smoking.

Then he would return home and bury himself in the library with the documents relative to some one of his wife's important cases which she had recommended to his study.

For it must be understood that Mr. Warner did all his wife's "preliminary work." That was what she called it—not inaccurately, for what he exactly did was to work up her cases for trial. That is, the difficult and doubtful ones.

"But," you will exclaim if you happen to be a lawyer, "that is all there is to the case. The preparation is the difficulty. Any one with a little wit and common sense can do the court work."

That may be true. I am not a lawyer, and am not qualified to judge. You may take the facts as I give them for what they are worth.

To resume. Mr. Warner's time was so taken up with his wife's preliminary work that he had none left to search for clients on his own account. Besides, was he not the happy possessor of an exciting avocation? Any man who has won sixty-two thousand dollars from himself at solitaire, even at ten dollars a point, has had his hands pretty full.

Mr. Warner had been driven to solitaire by loneliness. The loneliness was a natural growth. His brilliant and beautiful wife, drawn more and more as her popularity increased into the whirl of Granton society, had at first attempted to take her husband along, and he had not been averse. But he soon had enough of it.

Two teas and one dinner were sufficient to make it plain to him that his position was perfectly analogous to that of the husband of a prima donna. His wife was courted, sought after, flattered, fawned upon, flirted with. She was beautiful, witty, graceful, and four inches taller than her husband. He was—well, he was Timmie.

So he went home and played solitaire.

He played for hours, days, weeks, months—whenever he could find a respite from the preliminary work. He played all the kinds he had ever heard of, and when they became tiresome, invented new ones.

Then, one day he had an idea. He had had it before, but never had it struck him so forcibly. All day it remained in the front of his brain, and that night after dinner he spoke to his wife about it. It was an embarrassing idea, and he grew red and stammered for a full ten minutes before Mrs. Warner grasped the meaning of his disconnected and halting sentences. When she did understand, she stopped him with an exclamation.

“My dear Timmie! You know very well it’s impossible. I regret it as much as you do. I—I would like to have—to be a mother, too. But right in the middle of my career—it takes time, you know—and there is the danger—really, it’s impossible. It’s too bad, Timmie; but one can’t have everything. Here are those Tilbury supply contracts; look them over, will you? They must be absolutely tight.”

Mr. Warner took the contracts and went to his room. That night was the most uncomfortable one he had ever known. He had seen a glorious vision of a little Timmie sitting on his knee, and to have it so rudely snatched away was sadly bewildering. It was this experience that planted within him the germ of dissatisfaction with life which was destined to prove his salvation.

By this morning on which we have seen Mr. Warner descend to his breakfast this germ had grown and begotten a family. It stirred around within him as he consumed his shirred eggs, and made him gloomy. Even the remembrance of his brilliant victory at solitaire the night before could not bring ease to his mind.

“Something’s wrong with me,” he muttered to himself as he wandered into the library. “Something inside, I mean.” He kicked viciously at a chair that had thoughtlessly gotten in his path. “Can’t be stomach—breakfast tasted good. I guess I need some air.”

He went out for a walk. Down the broad residence-street, lined with great trees and extensive lawns, he strolled aimlessly; but as soon as the fresh morning air got well into his lungs he quickened his pace, and soon found himself on the outer edge of the city.

After another half-hour of brisk walking he was surrounded by woods and fields and green meadows; and, turning down a narrow, winding lane, entered a shady wilderness. Somewhere quite near he could hear a brook. He found it, and flopped down on the bank.

For two hours he lay there, dozing.

Three o'clock found him at home again, feeling a little guilty that he had not been there to lunch with his wife. He always liked to hear her talk of the proceedings at court on days when she attended, not to mention the fact that she liked him to listen. Besides, was there not something in particular he wanted to ask about?

Something—to be sure. The Hamlin & Hamlin case, of course. No doubt it would be all right, but he really should not have neglected it, and she should have told him sooner that it had been put forward. A glance at the clock showed him that it was past four; too late now, anyway. He wandered aimlessly around the house for a while; then took a book from the library and went up to his room to read.

An hour later he heard the hall door leading into the adjoining room open and close, followed by the patter of quick footsteps to and fro, barely audible through the thick wall. Mr. Warner laid down his book and leaned forward attentively, trying to discover the temperature of the room beyond the wall by whatever sounds might reach his ear.

Suddenly his wife's voice came:

“Timmie!”

He jumped hastily to his feet, crossed to the mirror and arranged his tie, cleared his throat twice and walked reluctantly, by a circuitous route, to the door. There he stood.

“Timmie!”

He opened the door and went in.

“Good evening, my dear,” said he, stopping three paces from the threshold.

Mrs. Warner was seated at the dressing table arranging her hair. Her lovely face, wearing an unwonted flush, looked across at her husband from the mirror. There was also an unusual redness about her eyes, which he noted and wondered at.

“I didn’t see you at lunch,” she began abruptly.

Mr. Warner blinked. “No,” he said, and stopped.

“Where were you?”

“Why—I—the fact is, I went for a walk.”

Mrs. Warner turned around to look at him.

“A walk?”

“Yes, in the country. The jolliest woods out on the Wakarusa Road. Perfectly full of trees.”

“That is a habit of woods, isn’t it?” suggested Mrs. Warner sarcastically. Then she had the grace to laugh at herself; but Mr. Warner thought she was laughing at him and became uncomfortable.

“I was sorry to miss lunch,” said he, to change the subject. “I wanted to ask about Hamlin & Hamlin. I suppose it came out all right. “

“Well, you suppose wrong. It didn’t.”

“What!” Mr. Warner took a step forward. “You don’t mean—”

“Yes. We lost.”

“But that’s impossible!” cried the little man, aghast.

“No. It’s true. Good heavens, Timmie, do you think I can always win?”

He answered simply:

“Yes.”

At that tribute she turned again to look at him, and her eyes softened. “I believe

you really do think so,” she said. “You’re a dear, Timmie.” Then she exploded with sudden violence: “I just wish old Hamlin had heard you say that!”

Her husband blinked at her, utterly bewildered.

“What?” he stammered.

“What you just said.” She turned about to face him. “Timmie, do you think I am a woman naturally inclined to give way to tears?”

“My dear goodness, no!” Mr. Warner actually smiled, the idea was so very amusing.

“Well, I did this afternoon. It was old Hamlin’s fault. I hate him! Do you know what he said? He said that you win my cases for me. At least he intimated it. ‘My dear Mrs. Warner, it is quite evident that we have not had the benefit of your husband’s advice in this case. I shall pay your fee with reluctance.’ That was the way he put it. Just because he was angry at losing! I won’t take a cent!”

“But why on earth should he say such a thing?” demanded Mr. Warner.

“I don’t know. Of course, it’s absurd. But he’ll shout it all o\ver town, and I have enough enemies to make it embarrassing.”

“No one will believe it.”

“Oh, yes they will. The envious are easily persuaded. But not for long. I’ll show them.” Mrs. Warner’s pretty lips narrowed to a thin line. “As far as old Hamlin is concerned,” she continued, “it is easy enough to understand him. He hasn’t forgotten ten years ago, when he had the impudence to try to make love to me. I told you about it at the time.”

“I know,” said the little man, looking away. He was thinking that old Hamlin was not the only one, and telling himself that this was a good opportunity to say something that had been on his mind for months, if he could only find the courage. He ended by blurting out:

“There is young Nelson, too.”

Mrs. Warner looked up, frowning. “What do you mean by that?”

“Why—you know—he is—that is, you see him—”

“Don’t be a goose, Timmie.” The pretty lips parted in a smile, possibly at the idea of her husband being jealous. “Of course I see him. I can’t very well snub the son of the man who owns the Granton Electric Railway Company—they are my best clients. But don’t get any silly notions in your head. You know very well I haven’t time to allow myself to be in love with Jack Nelson or any one else. Not even you, Timmie, dear. Now off with you; I must get ready for dinner. It’s nearly time.”

“But people are bound to talk—”

“Timmie!”

Mr. Warner went. The germ of dissatisfaction was stirring within him, and he wore a gloomy countenance as he took off his brown tweed suit and got into a dinner jacket. He wondered why it should render him utterly speechless to hear his wife say “Timmi !” like that.

Then the dinner bell sounded, and he gave it up with a sigh.

II

During the month that followed, Mrs. Warner found abundant justification for her prophecy that old Mr. Hamlin would “shout it all over town.” More accurately, he whispered it, which in such cases is far more effective.

The first rumor of his pernicious utterances came to her ears from the lips of her friend Mrs. Lodge, at a dinner party at the

latter’s home. It appeared that Mr. Hamlin had assured Mr. Lodge—strictly *sub rosa*, of course—that the brilliant and eminent Mrs. Warner was really nothing more than a pretty dummy whose strings were worked by the subtle brain of her insignificant-looking husband.

“Of course,” said Mrs. Lodge in conclusion, “it’s all the veriest bosh. Haven’t we all heard you make the most wonderful speeches? Thomas Hamlin is an old crank. But it is really too bad, because some people are going to believe it.”

And a week later, at a meeting of the city bar association, of which she was vice-president, Mrs. Warner overheard several unpleasant witticisms that were quite evidently intended for her ears. They were actuated, she told herself, by the contemptible envy of disgruntled lawyers who hated her for her preeminent success. Nevertheless, they left their mark.

She began to fear for her prestige.

Fed for ten years on a rich diet of eulogy and adulation, the horrible thought entered her mind that she might end by finding a seat at the table of ridicule. As for a shrinkage in fees, she did not care about that, having made herself independently rich.

But the fees, instead of shrinking, were augmented, and new clients came while old ones stayed. She naturally considered this a good sign and her fear dwindled. And when President Nelson, of the Granton Electric Railway Company, informed her that the defense of the famous Holdup Suit, as the conservative press had nicknamed it, was to be left entirely in her hands, she felt herself able to laugh at her enemies and detractors.

The Holdup Suit, brought by the City of Granton against the Granton Electric Railway Company, to collect thirty thousand dollars in profits in accordance with a clause of the franchise, was a political move on the part of the new liberal city administration.

Every one knew that the city could not possibly win. Every lawyer in Granton had declared both in public and private that the case had not a leg to stand on. But the administration was making an immense hit with the people by bringing it, and it was being gloriously front-paged by the press.

No wonder Mrs. Warner felt proud that she had been selected to defend it, though she was naturally a little vexed that it should be so universally known that her task was absurdly simple. As she overheard one lawyer say, "Nelson won't even have to defend the action. As soon as the city presents its case the judge will throw it out of court."

It was in connection with the Holdup Suit that Mrs. Warner conceived her great idea.

One sunny afternoon in August as she was being carried swiftly down Main Street in her motorcar on her way to the offices of the railway company, her face suddenly took on an expression of deep thought, then lighted up with a victorious smile.

"I'll do it!" she said to herself with prompt decision. "It's just the thing! Nobody could talk after that."

She spent two hours with President Nelson in his private office, examining innumerable documents and pamphlets. When they had finished, and Mr. Nelson had expressed his admiration of her sagacity and penetration, she informed him that she had a question to ask.

"Fire away," said the great man genially.

"I want to know," returned Mrs. Warner, rising and putting on her gloves to indicate that the point was really unimportant, "if it would make any difference to you if Mr. Warner—my husband—should be chosen to represent the city in this case?"

Mr. Nelson stared for a moment, then permitted himself a smile of surprise. "Of

course not," he ended by declaring. "But why—I didn't know—"

"It isn't decided yet," Mrs. Warner explained. "But I have reason to believe he is going to be retained. Of course, this is in the strictest confidence."

Mr. Nelson, still smiling, assured her that he would keep the secret. "I don't care if they retain Satan himself," he declared. "We can't lose." Then he added hastily, "with you."

Mrs. Warner thanked him for the expression of confidence and departed. At the door of the outer office she found herself suddenly confronted by a tall young man, hat in hand, bowing and smiling.

"Mrs. Warner, I've been waiting here two endless hours for a word with you. I had begun to fear Father was going to keep you locked in there forever. Won't you let me drive you home? My car is outside." This all came out in a breath.

"My car, too, is outside," smiled Mrs. Warner.

"Please," said the young man persuasively.

She ended by accepting. No sooner had they seated themselves on the soft leather cushions than the young man pulled out his watch and proffered a second request.

"Couldn't we drive round awhile?" he pleaded. "It's only four o'clock, and such a jolly day."

But this met with a firm refusal. "I am not good-for-nothing like you, Jack. I have work to do. Straight home!"

"Please?"

It was difficult to resist the pleading brown eyes, for he was a good-looking and pleasant youth, besides being the son of Henry Blood Nelson. But Lora Warner was not the woman to make even so slight a mistake as this would have been. She repeated, "Straight home!" in a firmer tone than before, and shook a menacing finger at him. The car shot off down Main Street.

Twenty minutes later, as she stood on the steps of her home shaking hands with

her escort, she looked up to see a familiar figure turn in from the street and come up the walk. Nelson, noting her raised eyes, turned and caught sight of the newcomer.

“Good evening, Mr. Warner,” he said pleasantly.

“Good evening,” replied the husband, coming up to them. The men shook hands. “Home so early, my dear?” he continued, turning to his wife. Then, without waiting for an answer, he went into the house.

“Thank you for bringing me home,” said Lora; and the young man lifted his hat and departed.

At the dinner table that evening Mr. Warner wore the appearance of one who has communed with himself in sorrow. His constitutional cheerfulness had been slipping away from him for some time now, thanks to the ravages of the germ of dissatisfaction; but on this occasion he was absolutely dumpish. Lora noticed it with surprise and a little discomfort.

“Is there something wrong, Timmie?” she demanded.

“Everything,” he replied rashly, without thinking; and then, aghast at his own nihilism, he stammered something about not feeling well.

“I’m sorry,” said his wife, not without feeling. “Is there anything I can do?”

He replied with a simple “No,” and attacked the roast.

After dinner Mrs. Warner led the way to the library, saying she had an important matter in mind which it would be necessary to discuss at length. In dreary silence Mr. Warner followed her to a divan between the windows and seated himself on the arm of a chair.

This in itself was a revolution. Only a free and bold man, a man of initiative, deposits himself on the arm of a chair. Mr. Warner had never done it before save in the privacy of his own room, having, like all others who are timid, weak, or downtrodden, invariably chosen the seat.

He went still further. Before his wife had time to introduce her important matter he opened his mouth and said distinctly:

“I saw old Mr. Hamlin today.”

Lora, feeling the electricity in his tone, looked up quickly.

“Well? Is there anything so very strange about that?”

“He came to see me at the office.”

“At the office?”

“At my office.”

“Oh, he did! What about?”

“About his case against the Central Sash and Door Company. You know, he appealed.”

“But why should he go to see you?”

Mr. Warner appeared to hesitate. The fact was, he hadn't intended to mention this affair at all. What was it that forced the words to his lips? Perhaps the memory of seeing his wife standing on the steps with her hand in that of young Nelson; perhaps merely—and this is a better guess—the germ of dissatisfaction within him. He continued:

“He wanted me to take the case. In spite of the fee he seemed to think it wasn't necessary—that is, to think about you.”

“Did you take it?”

“Of course not. No. Hadn't he insulted you? I told him so. I told him some other things, too. He's a very energetic man.”

“Energetic?”

“Yes. He actually tried to throw me out of the office. Must be fifty years old if he's a day. But then I'm not so very big, and he thought he could do it. I pushed him out and locked the door.”

Mrs. Warner smiled. “It must have been a very exciting encounter.”

“It was. Quite hot for a minute. I thought you might want to know about it.”

“Of course. I’m glad you told me. I didn’t know you were a fighter, Timmie.”

“Well”—the little man was evidently trying not to look pleased with himself —“to tell the truth, I didn’t, either. But I couldn’t stand still and let him put me out of my own office.”

“I’m glad to know it,” continued Mrs. Warner. “That you’re a fighter, I mean. Because it will make it all the more interesting. You have to fight me now.”

Mr. Warner blinked three times before he could find his tongue.

“Fight you!” he exclaimed finally, quite as though he had been informed that he was about to charge on the German army.

“Yes. That is what I wanted to talk to you about. My dear Timmie, you are to represent the city in the Holdup Suit.”

“The city! Me! What—why—” He was staggered out of coherence.

“Exactly. The city and you. You are to handle the case for the City of Granton.”

Mr. Warner was blinking at the rate of fifty times a second.

“My dear Lora,” said he—and you may believe he was strongly agitated when he called his wife his dear Lora—“my dear Lora, I haven’t the slightest idea what you are talking about.”

Mrs. Warner began her explanation. “It’s very simple,” she declared. “In fact, there’s nothing more to say. As you know, I am retained for the railway company. You will represent the city. We will be opponents. It is my own idea.”

“But why?” He was still bewildered.

“Silly! Don’t you see it will put an end to all these absurd rumors about my being—what old Hamlin says?”

“Oh!” said Mr. Warner, suddenly comprehending.

“They can’t very well say we are in partnership when we are opposed to each

other,” continued his wife. “It will work out beautifully. The only difficulty is to get the brief for you. But you ought to be able to manage it. Mayor Slosson is still a good friend of yours, isn’t he?”

Mr. Warner nodded.

“Then it shouldn’t be so difficult. Besides, they know very well there isn’t a chance in the world of winning, so they won’t care who handles the case. If necessary, you could offer your services without fee. You had better see the mayor in the morning.”

“But—”

“Well?”

“Would it be professionally correct?”

“Correct? How?”

“For us to take retainers in opposition.”

“Good Heavens! Why not?”

“I don’t know. I thought perhaps—I suppose it would be all right.” He hesitated for a minute, then added diffidently, “Naturally, you know, I don’t like to take a hopeless case.”

“I know. I thought of that. But nobody expects you to win. Every one knows you can’t win.”

“True.” The little man walked across to a window and stood looking out on the night. This for perhaps ten seconds; then he returned to the chair and sat down, not on the arm, but in the seat. He looked up at his wife and found her regarding him expectantly; he kept his eyes steadfast, noting her fresh velvety skin, her pretty parted lips, her mass of glorious brown hair. Then he looked away, blinked and sighed.

“I’ll see Mayor Slosson in the morning,” he said.

Lora sprang up from the divan, ran to his chair and threw her arms about his

neck. “You’re a dear, Timmie!” she cried.

When he got to his room ten minutes later his face was still flushed with the remembrance of her kiss.

III

At ten o'clock the following morning Timothy D. Warner called on Mayor Slosson at the city hall, and was shown at once into the private office.

Mayor Slosson, a square-jawed, athletic-looking man of thirty-two or -three, had been carried into office by a wave of liberal sentiment that had swept the city at the last election.

He had been a factory hand, had risen to the position of superintendent, and some five years before had started a factory of his own with capital borrowed from one Timothy D. Warner. He had paid back the money, but it will be seen that he considered himself still in debt.

"Pretty busy?" inquired Mr. Warner, dropping into a chair. "There's a crowd outside. I supposed I'd have to wait."

"Beggars, most of 'em," commented the mayor. "I'm never too busy to see you, Mr. Warner. Thank God, I haven't reached the point yet where I forget my friends. I've discovered that most people have. How's everything?"

Mr. Warner replied in a somewhat doubtful tone that everything was all right. Then, because what he had to say tasted badly in his mouth, he got it out at once, without preamble.

"Jim, I want to represent the city in the Holdup Suit."

The mayor whistled in mild surprise; but before he had time to put it into words his visitor continued:

"I know it's a great deal to ask, and I'd rather bite my tongue off. But—that is—I have a personal reason. I ask it as a favor. It isn't as though you were endangering your case, because every one says you haven't any."

Some inward thought had brought a grin to the mayor's face.

"Isn't Mrs. Warner representing Nelson?" he asked curiously.

The other replied simply: "Yes."

“Then—would it be professional?”

“I think so. We are not partners, you know.”

There was a pause, while the mayor gazed thoughtfully at a paperweight on his desk.

“I don’t see why you shouldn’t have it,” he said finally. “Gray, the city attorney, could appoint you as temporary assistant and give you the assignment. He’d be glad of the chance, for I’m afraid they’re right when they say we haven’t a case. It’s a pity, too. The people are entitled to that money and they ought to have it. I know they say we are trying to make political capital, and maybe we are, but it’s a just claim for all that.”

“Then do you think—shall I see Gray?”

“Yes. Wait a minute.” The mayor looked at his watch. “He ought to be in now. Come on—we’ll go round there together.”

Thus it happened that at two o’clock that afternoon Mr. Warner entered his office on Main Street with a huge bundle of papers under his arm and a worried frown on his brow. The papers he had got from City Attorney Gray, who had evidently been glad to get rid of them; the frown came from a certain newfound perplexity that was destined to give him many uncomfortable hours in the immediate future.

Mr. Warner’s trained legal mind had shown him at a glance that Mayor Slosson was indisputably correct in his contention that the city’s case was a just one. Also, that it was as hopeless as it was just. But the curious thing was that, finding himself thus accidentally the leader of a lost cause, he felt suddenly freed from his immemorial timidity and diffidence. Instead, he felt a new instinct stirring within him—a glorious, breathtaking instinct—the instinct to fight.

He sat down at his desk, untied the bundle of papers, and read over the clause in the franchise that was the center of dispute.

ARTICLE 14—It is further agreed that whenever the net profits of the party of the first part for any fiscal year, beginning on the first day of July and ending on the thirtieth day of June following, shall be shown to be in excess of eight per centum of the amount of capital stock as stated in the papers of incorporation,

the party of the second part shall receive an amount not less than fifty per centum of such excess, to be paid within sixty days from the expiration of the fiscal year in which such excess was realized. (Net profits defined below.) Furthermore, that the party of the second part, through its representatives, shall at all times have access to the books, papers and accounts of the party of the first part, in order to determine such excess,

“Not a chance,” Mr. Warner muttered to himself. “We can’t win. It’s as simple as A B C. That part of the railway which runs to Vinewood Park, being without the city limits, is not covered by the franchise, and the city can’t collect a cent on its profits. And yet it’s the city people that use it and they’re certainly entitled to their share. The man that signed this franchise for the city was either a crook or a brainless fool!”

He read on through the articles to the end, including the stipulation for fines for violation of franchise and the conditions of revocation. Then he returned to Article 14 and read it over several times, shaking his head dismally. Then—suddenly he stopped short, uttered a sharp exclamation, and glanced up at a calendar on the wall.

“August thirtieth,” he observed, while his eyes shone with excitement. “I wonder—but they wouldn’t be such fools. They’re too sharp for that. Anyway—”

He turned to the telephone. A short wait—then:

“Hello! Mayor Slosson? This is Mr. Warner. Warner. I want to see you for a minute. Will you be in? I’ll run right over. Yes. Something important.”

These were the sentences—short, snappy—of a man of ability and decision in action. Mr. Warner had not talked like that for fifteen years. Some such thought crossed his mind as he ran out to hail a Main Street car. He felt dazed and intoxicated, but thoroughly alive.

His interview with Mayor Slosson was a short one. As soon as they were alone in the private office he fired a question:

“Jim, has the Granton Electric Railway Company sent the city a check for its share of the excess profits last year?”

The mayor looked surprised. “Why no, of course not,” he replied. “That’s what

they won't do. We claimed thirty thousand"—the mayor looked at a paper on his desk— "\$31,254.65 for our share, including the profits on the Vinewood Park line, and they refused to pay it."

"I know," said Mr. Warner impatiently, "but have they paid the ten thousand they admit they owe?"

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"Have they offered it?"

The mayor thought a moment. "I don't know," he said finally. "I think not. Metcalf, at the city treasurer's office, could tell you. Why? Is it important?"

"Rather," said the lawyer dryly.

"Well, here's the telephone."

But Mr. Warner was already halfway to the door. "No telephone for this," he declared. "It has too many leaks. I'll go and see Metcalf. And listen, Jim, don't breathe a word of what I've asked you. Not a word to anybody."

And he was gone before the astonished mayor could frame a reply.

Metcalf, at the city treasurer's office, proved to be a thin, sorrowful-looking young man with an immense white brow and a mass of coal-black hair. When Mr. Warner had explained his errand, after swearing the young man to the strictest secrecy, he turned to a large book and examined its pages attentively, after which he turned over one by one the contents of a bulging letter file. Then he turned to the lawyer:

"They have never sent a check, Mr. Warner. I was sure of it, anyway, but I thought I'd better look it up. On July twentieth we wrote demanding the payment of \$31,254.65. They returned a refusal and a denial of the obligation on July twenty-third. On the twenty-fourth we replied that if the amount were not paid by the end of the month we would bring suit. On the twenty-fifth they told us to

go ahead. The correspondence, with our copies, can be placed at your disposal at any time. “

“Who signed the letters?” Mr. Warner’s eyes positively glittered.

“John Henry Nelson, the secretary of the company—old man Nelson’s son,” replied the young man.

Mr. Warner returned to his office. His eyes shone more than ever, but the frown had deepened. His perplexity was great and intolerably painful, and it entirely overshadowed his elation.

He knew one thing for certain—he could not face his wife with defiance in his heart and get away with it. At least, not at home. The fighting instinct had done valiant work within him in the past hour, but he had not reached so sublime a height as that.

So, lacking the firmness of moderation, he adopted the only course left to a desperate man. He burned his bridges. In other words, he went to a Main Street restaurant and ate two mutton chops and some fried potatoes; and on his way back to the office he stopped at a furniture store and made certain purchases, stipulating that they be delivered within the hour.

Ten minutes later he stood before his desk regarding the telephone that stood upon it with an expression of fearsome dread. He was saying to himself, “I am about to perform the bravest act of my life—that is, I hope I am.”

He coughed twice for courage, whistled aloud, pressed his lips firmly together and stretched out a trembling hand toward the receiver. As he did so the bell rang violently. He jumped backward halfway across the office, knocking over a chair and bumping his head on the chandelier.

But it was only Mayor Slosson calling up to ask if he had seen Metcalf. Mr. Warner replied that he had.

“What did he have to say? Had they sent the check? What’s the game, Mr. Warner?”

“I can’t tell you over the telephone,” replied the lawyer; and hung up with a bang.

After a wait of a few seconds he took the receiver down again and gave the operator the number of his own home.

“Hello!”

Mr. Warner recognized the voice of Higgins, the maid. He requested in a firm tone that Mrs. Warner be called to the phone.

“Who is it wants to speak to her?” came the voice of Higgins.

“Mr. Warner.”

“Who?”

“Mr. Warner!”

“I can’t hear you.”

“Her husband—Timmie!” shouted the unhappy man.

“Oh—wait a minute!”

And then, in much less than a minute, came a well-known voice, clear and pleasant:

“Hello! Timmie?”

“Good evening, my dear,” said Mr. Warner.

“It would be a better one if you would come home to dinner.” There was a smile in the voice. “Where on earth are you? It’s nearly seven o’clock.”

Mr. Warner took his courage between his teeth. “I’m at the office. I’m going to sleep here. I’m having a cot sent in. I want to know if you could send Higgins or somebody over with my bag—a comb and brush—my things, you know—”

“My dear Timmie!” Mr. Warner could feel her astonishment and incredulity oozing through the wire. “Are you crazy? Come home at once.”

“No. I’m going to sleep here.”

“In the name of goodness, why?”

“Because I don’t think it would be exactly right for us to—that is, live together—while we—while this case—the Holdup Suit, you know. I’m retained for the city. I saw the mayor this morning. I’m going to stay here till the case is decided.”

“My dear Timmie”—his wife’s voice was becoming deliberate—“of all the silly notions you’ve ever had, this is certainly the silliest! What possible difference does *that* make?”

“It makes lots of difference. Will you send the bag?”

“No, I won’t! Come home!”

“Will you send it?”

“No!”

“Then Ill do without it,” declared Mr. Warner with strange calmness; and again he hung up with a bang. Never in all his life, before that day, had he hung up with a bang even once.

He dropped into a chair, mopping his brow with a handkerchief. The deed was done. Strange, bizarre emotions were leaping wildly about in his breast. He felt capable of anything. Suddenly he looked up quickly, while an expression of apprehension shot into his eyes. Suppose she did! It would be just like her. He walked to the door and locked it and put the key in his pocket.

As he sat down again the telephone bell rang. He turned around and eyed it malevolently. It rang again—a long insistent jingle. He reached out, took the receiver from the hook and set it on the table. Then, grinning, he took out his pipe, filled and lighted it, and cocked his feet upon the desk.

He had been in this position, puffing jerkily, for half an hour, when a knock sounded on the door. He jumped up, startled; then, remembering his purchase at the furniture store, crossed leisurely, taking the key from his pocket. But before he inserted it in the lock he called out:

“Who is it?”

Silence; then another knock.

“Who is it?” he repeated.

A well-known voice came:

“It’s I—Lora. Let me in!”

Mr. Warner felt his knees come together. He had not really expected this. He hoped the door was good and thick. Clutching the key firmly in his hand as though it were a weapon of defense, he called huskily:

“I won’t!”

“Timmie, open the door!”

“I tell you I won’t,” repeated Mr. Warner. Some of the huskiness left his voice. “I can’t, Lora. The mayor wouldn’t want me to. It wouldn’t be right. Did you bring the bag?”

“Yes. I want to give it to you.” The voice sharpened a little. “Don’t be an ass, Timmie! Open the door!”

But the brilliant Lora had made a mistake. At her confession that she had brought the bag Mr. Warner felt his heart leap with an intoxicating thrill. She had admitted to herself the possibility of defeat, then. He pressed his lips tightly together.

“If you’ve got the bag,” he said finally, between his teeth, “leave it in the hall and I’ll get it when you’re gone. I can’t let you in. I’m—I haven’t any clothes on.” This was a lie, but the poor man needed it. “Anyway,” he continued, “why should you want to come in? What do you want?”

“I want you to come home, of course.” The tone could not be called one of appeal, but neither was it that of command. “I honestly believe you need some one to look after you, Timmie. You’ve been acting queerly for weeks. Please open the door!”

“No!”

“Please!”

It was awfully hard; he could not remember that she had ever said please to him before. He gritted his teeth. “Go away!” he shouted savagely.

Silence followed for perhaps ten seconds; on the part of Mr. Warner, a breathless silence. Then came a sound as of something heavy dropped on the floor outside, and retreating footsteps. He ran to the window and looked out, and saw his wife cross the sidewalk and enter her car at the curb. The car started forward with a jerk and disappeared down Main Street. Mr. Warner dropped into a chair as one exhausted.

A little later he went into the hall and got the bag, which he found outside the door. Soon after that the cot came, and he put it up in a corner and went to bed, to dream strange dreams.

IV

The following morning Mr. Warner received a call from Mayor Slosson, who appeared to be slightly irritated at the discourtesy he had been subjected to the evening before. But he accepted the lawyer's apology without reservation, and proceeded at once to inquire into the reason for the mysterious questions concerning the check the railway company hadn't sent.

"There's no reason why I shouldn't tell you," replied Mr. Warner, glancing up at the calendar. "It's August thirty-first, and it doesn't matter now if the whole town knows it. Only we might as well keep the secret till we get in our work."

"What is it?" inquired the mayor. "A puzzle?"

"Why, yes. It's a puzzle to me, and a joke, too. But it won't be a joke to Mr. Henry Blood Nelson. Listen."

And Mr. Warner leaned forward and began to whisper. He whispered steadily for five minutes, save when he was interrupted by an exclamation of astonishment and delight from the mayor, which was often. When he had finished the mayor's face was a study in exultation, glee, and triumph.

"By God, we've got 'em!" he cried; and he was not naturally a profane man.

"I think so," agreed the lawyer.

"It's certain. Certain! Ill leave all details to you, Mr. Warner. But make the appointment for tomorrow if you can, and call me up as soon as you know. Of course, I won't say a word to any one."

The mayor stayed half an hour longer, discussing the case from every possible angle. When he had gone Mr. Warner drew forth a sheet of paper from a drawer of his desk, took up a pen and wrote as follows:

MRS. LORA WARNER, 621 Main Street, City.

DEAR MADAM:

I am writing to ask if it would be convenient for yourself and a representative of

the Granton Electric Railway Company to receive a call from the undersigned in your office some time tomorrow (Friday, September 1). Mayor James L. Slosson will probably be with me. We wish to confer concerning the suit brought by the City of Granton against the Granton Electric Railway Company.

Yours very truly,

TIMOTHY D. WARNER.

A grim smile hovered about Mr. Warner's lips as he signed this letter, sealed, and stamped it. Then he put on his hat and went out to the mailbox on the corner.

The following morning brought a reply, typewritten:

MR. TIMOTHY D. WARNER, 417 Main Street, Granton.

DEAR SIR:

Replying to your favor of August 31, I wish to say that Mr. John Henry Nelson, secretary of the Granton Electric Railway Company, and myself will expect you and the mayor at my office at 11 A.M. tomorrow (Friday). But I also wish to say that if it is your intention to offer any compromise in this matter the conference will be fruitless. My client has too high a confidence in the justice of his case to submit to any compromise whatever short of an unconditional withdrawal of the suit.

Yours truly,

LORA WARNER.

Up to the receipt of this letter Mr. Warner had been conscious of a stubborn disinclination to do what he felt to be his duty both to the city and to himself. But the mention of young Nelson's name drove away the last vestige of a qualm. Indeed, when he called up Mayor Slosson to tell him the hour of appointment there was a note of vindictiveness in his tone that caused the mayor to grin to himself. He thought he knew the reason for it, and perhaps he was not so far wrong at that.

At exactly one minute to eleven Mr. Warner and Mayor Slosson turned in at the entrance of 621 Main Street and mounted a flight of stairs to the most luxurious

suite of law offices in Granton. The door at the end of the hall bore the inscription in gold letters:

LORA WARNER

Attorney at Law

“This way, gentlemen,” said a neatly dressed female clerk; and they were ushered through a door on the right into a large, sunny room facing on Main Street. At one end of a shining mahogany table sat Mrs. Lora Warner; behind her chair stood John Henry Nelson.

Every one said good morning at once, and young Nelson placed chairs for the newcomers. None of the four appeared to be exactly at his ease; constraint was in the air. Mrs. Warner, who had remained seated at the end of the table, motioned young Nelson to a chair at her right; her husband, seated at the other end, was busily fumbling among some papers in a portfolio. His face was flushed.

“We await your pleasure, gentlemen,” said Mrs. Warner in a most professional tone.

The mayor glanced at Mr. Warner, who cleared his throat and looked around the table with steady eyes.

“In the first place,” he began, “we wish to announce our intention of withdrawing our suit against the Granton Electric Railway Company for excess profits. I speak for the City of Granton”—he looked at the mayor; the mayor nodded—“and we admit that under the terms of the present franchise our claim cannot be justified at law.”

An involuntary exclamation of surprise came from the lips of young Nelson; but Mrs. Warner maintained her professional gravity.

“Will you give us a notice of this withdrawal in writing?” she inquired coolly.

“Certainly. I have it here.” Mr. Warner tapped his portfolio. “But I wish first to speak of another matter.” He opened the portfolio and took from it a sheet of paper, which he unfolded. “This is a copy of the franchise under which the Granton Electric Railway operates. No doubt you are familiar with it, but I shall take the liberty of reading a portion of Article Fourteen.

It is further agreed that whenever the net profits of the party of the first part for any fiscal year, beginning on the first day of July and ending on the thirtieth day of June following, shall be shown to be in excess of eight per centum of the amount of capital stock as stated in the papers of incorporation, the party of the second part shall receive an amount not less than fifty per centum of such excess, to be paid within sixty days from the expiration of the fiscal year in which such excess was realized.

“You will notice it is provided and agreed that the excess of profit shall be paid within sixty days after the end of the fiscal year. Obviously, an infraction of this rule would constitute a violation of franchise. Such violation has been consummated. The Granton Electric Railway has admitted in writing an excess of profits amounting”—Mr. Warner consulted a slip of paper— “to \$10,604.20, and no payment, or offer of payment has been made. This is the first day of September. The sixty days have terminated.”

“Of course not!” cried young Nelson, springing to his feet.

“Of course we haven’t paid! You know very well we have merely been waiting till the dispute was settled. We’ve been willing to pay the ten thousand at any time. The sixty-day clause has nothing to do with it. As a matter of fact, only last year we didn’t send the city a check till well in October. I signed it myself.”

“Pardon me, Mr. Nelson,” put in Mrs. Warner, whose face had suddenly gone white. She turned to her husband and stretched out a hand that trembled. “Will you please let me see that franchise?” she asked, with an evident effort at control.

“With pleasure,” replied the lawyer. “But just a moment, please.” He turned to young Nelson. “The fact that your check last year was not sent till October proves merely that the preceding city administration were better friends of yours than they were of the city’s.” Then again to his wife, holding up the franchise:

“You will notice, here at the bottom, it is provided that any violation of franchise shall be deemed sufficient cause for revocation. We wish to announce our intention to take full advantage of this technical violation. Here are our terms:

“The Granton Electric Railway Company is to pay the city \$31,254.65, the full amount of its claim for excess profits. It is to submit to the revocation of the present franchise and accept a new one which shall include the Vinewood Park

line in the computation of future profits. The alternative is that we will revoke the present franchise by law and refuse to grant a new one.”

“It’s blackmail!” cried young Nelson, again starting to his feet; but at a glance from Mrs. Warner he sat down again.

“Will you please let me see that franchise?” she repeated, and this time her voice plainly trembled.

Mr. Warner handed the paper across the table.

“You may keep it,” he said politely. “It’s only a copy.”

Then he gathered the rest of the papers into the portfolio and rose to his feet. The mayor also rose.

“We will wait till noon tomorrow for your decision,” said Mr. Warner. “Unless our demands are met by that time, we shall at once enter an action to annul your franchise.” And he turned to go.

Mrs. Warner looked up from the paper; the print was dancing before her eyes.

“But—wait!” she cried. “Timmie!” She stopped short, while her face reddened to the tips of her ears. Then her head went up proudly. “I mean Mr. Warner,” she amended. “Will you give me time to get in communication with Mr. Nelson?”

Mr. Warner turned at the door. “Mr. Nelson is here,” he said, dryly.

Again his wife’s face grew red. “I mean Mr. Henry Blood Nelson,” she explained. “The president of the company.”

“He can communicate with me at my office at any time,” replied the lawyer.

“But our terms, as I have given them, are final.” With that he departed, followed by the mayor.

“The blackmailers!” cried young Nelson at the closed door.

“Mr. Nelson,” came Mrs. Warner’s voice, curiously steady, “you are talking of my husband.”

The young man turned, flushing. “I’m sorry, I—really, I forgot.”

“Very well. I understand. Now go—your car is outside, isn’t it?—go to your father’s office and tell him I shall be there in half an hour. Don’t say anything about what has happened. Ill tell him myself. I deserve it.”

She sent him away, in spite of his remonstrances. When she found herself alone she sat down with the franchise before her on the table and began to read Article Fourteen.

V

That night Mayor Slosson and Mr. Warner sat up till eleven in vain expectation of a word from the hostile camp. Then, considering it useless to wait longer, the mayor arose to go.

“We’ll hear in the morning,” he observed hopefully. “You don’t think it possible they’ve found a loophole?”

“Not a chance,” declared the lawyer confidently.

As soon as his visitor had departed he undressed and lay down on the cot. He felt that he had done a good day’s work, both for himself and for others. But somehow this feeling brought no comfort. His wife’s face, white with consternation and dismay, would not leave his vision. He wondered if she had gone to bed, and if so, whether she slept.

For an hour he lay thus, uneasy, in torment. Suddenly he sprang up from the cot, turned on the light, took a pack of cards from a drawer of the desk and sat down. He began to lay them out for his favorite game of Canfield: One up, six down, one up, five down, one up, four down, one up, three down. He had nearly completed the pleasant task when his face suddenly filled with an expression of disgust.

“Silly fool!” he muttered aloud, brushing the cards onto the floor and rising to his feet.

Again he sought the cot and lay there, with eyes alternately open and closed, till morning. Then he arose, dressed and went out to a restaurant for breakfast.

The first word from the enemy came a little before nine o’clock in the form of a telephone message from Mr. Henry Blood Nelson. He wished to know if he could call on Mr. Warner at his office at a quarter past nine.

“We’ve got ‘em,” said Mr. Warner, hanging up the receiver and turning to Mayor Slosson, who had just come in.

“We have,” agreed the mayor. “Shall I leave?”

“No. I may want you.”

The mayor sat down and lit a cigar.

The little office at 417 Main Street saw more bustle and excitement in the next three hours than it had witnessed in all the fifteen years of its uneventful career.

First came Mr. Henry Blood Nelson, to depart sputtering with wrath. Then his son, John Henry Nelson, who departed likewise. Then different officers of the Granton Electric Railway Company, singly and in bodies, armed with books, arguments, and protestations. Then Mr. Arthur Hampton, of the firm of Hampton and Osgood, who had been the G. E. R. lawyers before the advent of Mrs. Warner.

And, finally, came again Mr. Henry Blood Nelson, with hatred in his heart and a check for \$31,254.65 in his hand. It was surrender.

“Mr. Warner,” said the mayor, when he found himself again alone with the lawyer, “I want to congratulate and thank you on behalf of the people of Granton. You used sharp weapons against the enemy, but it is the only kind that will pierce their dirty, thick skin. And I thought I was doing you a favor when I gave you the case!”

Late that evening Mr. Warner, after dining at the Main Street restaurant, walked wearily up the two flights of stairs that led to his office. In his hand were two evening newspapers, and on the front page of each was a three-column picture of Mr. Warner himself. He had not read the accompanying articles, but their tenor may easily be guessed.

As he ate his dinner he had marveled somewhat at the pictures. To his certain knowledge there was not a photograph of himself anywhere in the world except the one he had given to his wife some fifteen years before, and he had supposed it had long since been destroyed. Yet here it was, staring him out of countenance from the columns of a newspaper!

He wondered vaguely how they had managed to get hold of it. He remembered now that when he returned from a long walk late that afternoon the man in the office next door had told him that some reporters had been hanging around since one o'clock.

He sat down at his desk, turned on the light—it was nearly eight o'clock—and opened one of the papers. So that was how he had looked fifteen years ago! Not so bad—really, not so bad. Silly mustache, though—kind of funny-looking. Had time improved it any? He got up and looked in the mirror over the mantel. As he turned again to the desk he was startled by hearing the telephone bell.

He took up the receiver.

“Hello.”

“Hello. Is this Mr. Warner?”

He recognized the voice at once. “Yes. What is it, Higgins?”

A pause followed, during which a mumbling of voices came over the wire. Then Higgins:

“Mrs. Warner wants to know if you’re coming home to dinner.”

“I’m not coming—” began Mr. Warner impulsively, then he stopped short. He reflected that such a message should not be given to a servant. But why not? The whole town would be talking of it in a day or two. He turned to the transmitter and spoke distinctly:

“Tell Mrs. Warner I’m not coming home at all.”

Then he hung up.

He opened a paper, sat down and tried to read. But the print was a vacant blur to his eyes, though he tried hard for five minutes.

“What the devil!” he muttered angrily, aloud, “am I losing my eyesight? Am I a baby?”

He threw the paper on the floor and picked up a law book, but with no better success. Somehow the page bore a distinct resemblance to a tangled mass of brown hair.

“If I’m going to do this I may as well do it like a man,” he growled; and to show that he meant what he said he got up and began to pace up and down the room.

This for half an hour; then he crossed to the window and stood looking out on dimly lighted Main Street, two stories below.

In the show windows of the Thayer Dry Goods Company, directly opposite, wax dummies stood simpering at the passersby. Half a block down were the red and blue lights of Rowley's drug store; a block in the other direction was the arc over the entrance of the restaurant of which he had become a patron two days before. The street itself was nearly deserted; perhaps a dozen pedestrians were in sight, and now and then a carriage or buggy came along.

The whirr of an automobile sounded from the north, and soon the car itself appeared around the corner of Washington Avenue. It crossed, and came up the west side of Main Street; slowed down, and stopped in front of 417, directly beneath the window.

Mr. Warner felt something catch in his throat. "It can't be," he muttered. But he knew it was, and hence felt no additional surprise when he saw a familiar figure leap from the tonneau and start for the entrance. But he felt something else. What was it? What was the matter with him? He only knew that he seemed suddenly to have been paralyzed, that he could not move a muscle to save his life. He remained staring stupidly out of the window, feeling as though he were about to be shot in the back.

A moment passed that seemed an hour, and then he heard the door open and close and a voice sounded behind him:

"Timmie."

He turned slowly, as on a pivot. Lora, with flushed face and strange eyes, stood with her back to the closed door.

"Good evening, my dear," said Mr. Warner. Then he wanted to bite his tongue off. Next he tried, "Won't you be seated?" and felt more foolish than before. So he kept still.

"I've come," said Lora, advancing a step, "to take you home."

The lawyer found control of his tongue. "I'm not going home," he declared calmly.

“Yes, you are. You have to.”

“Why?”

“Because I want you.”

“Is my own inclination to be disregarded?”

“Oh!” She caught her breath. “Is that it? Don’t you want to live with me anymore?”

“Yes, that’s it. That is—See here, Lora. Sit down. Let’s talk it over.”

She crossed to the chair he placed for her with a curious hesitancy in her step he had never seen before, and waited for him to speak.

“You say you want me,” he began abruptly. “You don’t mean that. You mean you are used to me—miss me, like you would Higgins. Just now you asked me if I didn’t want to live with you. That’s just it. I’ve been living with you for fifteen years. If I were to say what I wanted, I’d say that I want you to live with me for a while.”

“It’s the same thing—” began Lora, but he interrupted her:

“Pardon me.” He caught her eye and held it. “Do you know what I meant?”

Her gaze fell. “Yes,” she admitted.

“Then don’t pretend. You see, the trouble is you shouldn’t ever have married me. Perhaps you shouldn’t have married any one. But don’t think I’m saying you’re a great lawyer. I used to think that, but I don’t any more. Any smart lawyer, even, would have seen that sixty-day clause in that franchise the first time he danced at it. And you didn’t see it at all.”

He stopped; his wife raised a flushed face.

“You are pretty hard on me, Timmie.”

At that, moved by a swift, uncontrollable impulse, he sprang to his feet and shouted:

“Don’t call me Timmie!”

Lora looked amazed. “Why not?”

“Because it’s a fool name. “*Timmie!*” No woman could think anything of a man with a name like that. That’s why I don’t blame you. It’s the most idiotic name I ever heard.”

“It’s your name. That’s why I like it.”

“And that’s why I hate it.” Mr. Warner actually glared. “I should never have let you call me Timmie. I shouldn’t have let you do lots of things—at the beginning, I mean—but I was so crazy about you I couldn’t help it. I thought—”

She interrupted him:

“You were crazy about me?”

“Of course.”

“Do you mean you were in love with me?”

“I do.”

“It’s funny you never said anything about it.”

“Good Heavens!” Again the little man glared. “It was you who wouldn’t let me say anything! Simple enough, since you weren’t in love with me.”

“That isn’t true.”

“It is.”

“I say it isn’t.”

Mr. Warner advanced a step. “What do you mean by that?” he demanded. “Were you in love with me?”

Silence. He advanced another step, and repeated his question. “*Were* you in love with me?”

Lora nodded her head slowly up and down, and there came to Mr. Warner's ears a barely audible: "Yes."

That, entirely unexpected, brought him to a halt. He didn't know what to say, and ended by dropping back into his chair and muttering "Too bad it ended so soon."

Five seconds passed in silence, then Lora suddenly fired a question.

"Timmie, why do you think I came here for you tonight?"

"Because you missed me," he replied moodily.

"Worse than that. Because I couldn't live without you. I know now, because I've tried it."

She rose from her chair, crossed to his side and laid a hand on his arm. "Listen, dear." He stirred uneasily. "No, don't move. I'm not going to make love to you, and I don't want to argue. I just want to ask you once more to come home with me, and tell you why.

"Last night I nearly cried my eyes out. I was miserable and unhappy and I couldn't go to sleep. I tried for hours, and then I got up and went to your room and cried all over your pillow. I don't know whether I love you or not, but I do know that unless you come home with me I don't want to live. You said something just now—I know I'm not a lawyer; that is, your kind of a lawyer. I found it out last night. I'll admit I'd hate to give up my office, because there are parts of the work I love. But— couldn't we make it Warner & Warner? Of course, the first Warner would be you. Or even"—she smiled—"Warner & Wife."

It would seem that so extended and gracious a speech as that would deserve a careful and thoughtful answer. But Mr. Warner appeared to think otherwise. All he said was:

"Why did you cry last night?"

"Because I wanted you. I wanted you worse than I've ever wanted anything in my life."

“And you—cried on my pillow?”

“Yes.”

“Which one? The one on the outside?”

“Yes. It seemed to bring me nearer to you. I kissed it, too. I—I wished it was you, Timmie. Wasn’t I silly?”

“No.” Something seemed to be wrong with Mr. Warner’s voice. “No, I don’t think you were silly.”

“But I was. You see, I realized what I had been missing for so many years, and I was crying for that, too. I had just found out that I was married to a very wonderful man and didn’t have sense enough to know it. And the hardest part was to know that I had thrown your love away.”

“You couldn’t know that—”

“Ah, but I did!”

“—because it isn’t true.”

“Yes, it is. Don’t forget what you said just now.” She took away her hand that had been resting on his arm. “I know I sha’n’t forget it. I promised not to make love to you. But couldn’t you come home with me and just—well, be friends? I want you so!”

And at that the defense broke down. No wonder, for it had been a terrible assault. Mr. Warner sprang to his feet, and he seemed somehow fully as tall as his wife. And she was sure he was much stronger, when she felt his arms tight around her, pressing her closer. She raised her face, and their lips met.

“There’s one thing,” said Mr. Warner two hours later as he sat in a chair in the library at home. He couldn’t have used the arm on this occasion—at least, the one on the left—because it was occupied by someone else. “And that is, about the name. At the office, I mean. You mentioned Warner & Warner and Warner & Wife, but I know one I like even better.”

“I know, too.” The second best lawyer in Granton blushed prettily. “But there’s

one trouble, Timmie. They're not always sons, you know."

(All-Story Cavalier Weekly, February 27, 1915)

Jonathan Stannard's Secret Vice

When Mrs. Stannard saw her husband with a woman in a yellow hat one night at Courin's Restaurant, she thought she had solved the mystery which was making her life miserable. Then, watching from her secluded corner, she had seen a tall, middleaged man with a brown mustache walk over to their table and join them.

Him she recognized. So her husband had not lied to her, after all, when he had said that he was going to dine that evening with John Dupont, of the Academy.

And she was further assured when he observed casually, in their own home three hours later:

"By the way, Dupont brought his wife along. Did you ever see her?"

"No," replied Mrs. Stannard.

"Nice-looking woman, but a bit flashy. Had on a lot of yellow stuff. Dupont's getting to be tiresome. I wished myself at home with you. What did you do with yourself all evening?"

She murmured something about reading, thereby achieving her second falsehood within sixty seconds.

But though her husband thus stood acquitted of this particular malfeasance, the mystery remained. It was not of long standing. She had married Jonathan Stannard twelve years before, when he was still an underprofessor at the university.

Three years later he had become suddenly famous by his lengthy essay, "The New Homer." Others had followed; his reputation grew and solidified; and since he was financially independent he had been able to give up his professorship and devote himself entirely to writing.

He was a conservative.

Classicism was his sacred word. His books and lectures were divided into two equal parts: appreciations of the classic and attacks on the modern; the latter were the most interesting, for he was a hard hitter.

He could belabor the Futurists or Motion Pictures or Eugene Brieux for three hundred pages, with what effect! Assuredly not in vain, for he was taken seriously.

As a husband he was as near perfection as any reasonable woman could expect. He had never neglected his wife; for over eleven years he had even appeared to continue to love her, which is admittedly something unusual in the case of a literary man who hangs around the house all the time. Indeed, for any positive act of his to the contrary, she had every reason to believe that he loved her still.

But there was the mystery.

Though she had previously noticed a rather unusual amount of absence on his part, it had really begun one January evening some six months before. After dinner he had appeared restless, a rare thing with him; and finally, after an hour of books picked up and thrown down again, he had announced abruptly that he had an appointment at the Century Club.

A hasty kiss and he was gone.

Two hours later, about eleven in the evening, an important message had come for him and she had telephoned the club, only to be told that he had not been there. That was all very well; men do change their minds. But when he returned shortly before midnight he replied to her question:

“Why, I’ve been at the club. I said I was going there, didn’t I?”

“That’s odd,” said Mrs. Stannard. “I called up to give you Selwyn’s message and they said you hadn’t been there all evening.”

“Absurd!” he exclaimed. “Of course I was there! Why, of course I was there! If they had only searched properly—”

But his wife, noting his ill-concealed embarrassment, felt the shadow of doubt enter her mind. She entertained it most unwillingly, for she was not of a suspicious nature, and there had been eleven years of mutual trust to justify her

confidence in him; so she had almost succeeded in obliterating the incident from her mind when, a week later, something happened to remind her of it.

He had taken tickets for them for a Hofmann recital, and at the last moment a headache had put her on her back, so he had gone off alone. The next morning she had asked him:

“And how was the new Debussy tone poem?”

“Awful,” he replied emphatically, after a second’s hesitation. “The man has no ears or he couldn’t write such stuff.”

And ten minutes later, going through the morning paper, her eye had fallen on the following paragraph:

...Salammbô, the new tone poem by Debussy, which was to have been rendered for the first time in America, was dropped from the program on account of the late arrival of the manuscript, leaving Mr. Hofmann insufficient time to study the composition. A group of Chopin was substituted...

Obviously, her husband had not attended the recital at all! Mrs. Stannard drew her lips together and hid her face behind the paper to think unseen. Should she confront him with the evidence of his falsehood and demand an explanation? Yes. No. If he had lied once he would lie again. Useless. Better to hide her knowledge of his guilt. But she found it extremely difficult to hold her tongue, and it was with a sigh of relief that she saw the door close behind him as he went out for his morning stroll.

Her feeling was chiefly one of discomfort, for she could not as yet bring herself to believe that her husband, Jonathan Stannard, the man who above all others stood for rectitude in morals as well as in art, could be guilty of any misdeed.

But he had lied—she pronounced the word aloud in order to get a better hold on it—he had lied to her twice within the week. And now that she thought of it, he had been absent from the house considerably more than usual for the past month or so.

Tuesday afternoon he had gone out at two o’clock and stayed till dinnertime without saying a word of where he had been. Wednesday evening he had gone out for a walk after dinner and returned at a quarter to eleven.

Clearly, he was up to something.

That was her first conclusion. After an hour's reflection she reached her second, and her eyes flashed as she said it aloud:

"There's a woman in it somewhere."

Thenceforth she took good care not to ask where he was going or where he had been. And he, abandoning a habit closely followed for more than eleven years, did not take the trouble to tell her. His absences grew more frequent.

Two or three afternoons and as many evenings each week he would go out and remain several hours without a word to her. She suffered considerably, but she told herself that the only possible course was to sit and wait in dignified sorrow for whatever might come.

Then, on a sudden impulse, she had gone alone to Courin's Restaurant one night when he had told her he was to dine there with John Dupont, the painter; and she thought she had discovered her enemy in the woman with the yellow hat, only to find later that she was Dupont's wife.

But she resolved to sit and wait no longer.

Dignity or no dignity, she would find out who or what it was that was taking her husband away from her. She had lost six pounds in a month, and her eyes were acquiring a permanent and unattractive redness from frequent tears.

When her husband left the house at eight o'clock the next evening she followed him. But not very far. At the corner of Broadway and Eighty-seventh Street he boarded a downtown car, and she stood helplessly in the middle of the pavement watching the thing whiz out of sight.

The next time, two days later, she had a taxi ready.

She saw him, a block ahead, as he darted into the subway station; but by the time she had reached the spot and leaped out and paid the chauffeur and rushed breathlessly down the steps, a train had gone through and the platform was empty.

Then she awoke to the absurdity of her course. If she did keep close enough to

follow him, he would certainly see and recognize her, even through her heavy veil.

By now she was too enraged to cry. She went home, consulted the Red Book, and in a firm and resolute voice asked central for a certain number found therein.

Within thirty minutes her maid ushered in a short, fat man in a brown suit and straw hat, with enormous hands and feet and twinkling eyes. Mrs. Stannard received him in the library.

“You are—” she began in a timid voice, as the man stood in the doorway with the straw hat in his hand.

“Mr. Pearson, of Doane, Doane & Doane,” he replied amiably. “You telephoned for a man, I believe. This is Mrs. Stannard?”

“Yes. You are”—her voice faltered—“you are a detective?”

“I am.”

Mrs. Stannard looked at him much as she might have looked at a strange and ferocious animal from the zoo. Then, partially recovering herself, she asked him to be seated. He did so, jerking up his trousers and balancing the straw hat on his knee.

“You follow people?” she declared abruptly.

Mr. Pearson smiled.

“I sure do,” he admitted proudly.

“Well”—she hesitated—“of course, I know that there’s nothing really wrong, but I am a little worried about it, and I thought if you could—”

“Pardon me,” the detective interrupted, “but are you speaking of your husband?”

“Certainly!” said Mrs. Stannard indignantly.

“Just so. You want to know where he goes. Natural curiosity. Day or night?”

“Why—both.”

“Ah!” Mr. Pearson elevated his brows. “That’s bad. Now, if you will permit me to ask a few questions. What is his full name?”

“Jonathan Stannard.”

Mr. Pearson wrote it down in a little leatherbound book.

“Business?”

“Why—the writer.”

“Writer?”

“Yes. He writes.”

“U-m. Does he drink?”

“No.”

“Gamble?”

“No!”

“Er—fond of—er—women?”

“Well! Well—”

But seeing the foolishness of it, she swallowed her indignation and replied calmly:

“No.”

“I see.” Mr. Pearson was frowning as he wrote. “Evidently he’s a bad un. Always been a good husband?”

“Yes.”

“U-m. The worst kind. Like Wooley. I handled that case. I suppose now you’ve got some particular woman in mind?”

“I have told you my husband does not run after women,” said Mrs. Stannard

with dignity.

“No?” Mr. Pearson winked at a chair. “Now, madam, please give me the particulars of his absence.”

She did so; the hours, the dates, the duration. He filled two pages of the book with them.

“You say he’s a writer. Stories?”

“No. Mr. Stannard writes essays and criticisms. He is a man of high morals and serious purpose. I can’t imagine why he is deceiving me—”

“No doubt. You aren’t expected to. We find out and let you know. We always find out. I’d like to go through his desk.”

She demurred, but he insisted. She sat trembling, with an eye on the hall door, while Mr. Pearson opened drawer after drawer of her husband’s desk and examined the contents. But he found nothing but typewritten sheets with headings like, “Chiaroscuro; the Lost Art,” or “The Deleterious Effect of the Motion Picture on the Literary Sense.”

“I take it,” said Mr. Pearson, closing the bottom drawer and standing up—“I take it that Mr. Stannard is one of them serious guys. Moody and a kicker. I see here where he says he has about as much respect for the modern school of illustrators as he has for a paper hanger. Also, he seems to have a grudge against the movies.”

“He stands for the noble in art,” said Mrs. Stannard. “He has conducted a campaign against the cinema because it appeals only to the lowest function of our mentality.”

“Just so,” Mr. Pearson agreed. “I remember him now. I’ve heard my daughter speak of him. He hates things that other people like. Take this, for instance.”

He picked up a sheet from the desk and read:

The real danger of the poison—for the motion picture is a poison— lies in the ease and frequency with which it is administered. One dose would be harmless, but repeated day after day it is slowly corroding the intellect of the nation. “We

hear much criticism nowadays of the modern craze for wealth, of materialism in art, of the undermining of Christianity by science; but more pernicious than any of these, or of all of them put together, is the subtle and insidious virus of the cinema.

“I see,” muttered Mr. Pearson, replacing the paper on the desk. “Probably a shifty customer. Secret vice. Will you please sign this order, madam, for our protection. On the bottom line.”

Mrs. Stannard did so.

“I take it,” said the detective, pocketing the slip, “that you want a complete report of your husband’s movements outside this house. Including everything?”

“Including everything,” she agreed, her lips tight.

“All right.” He picked up the straw hat. “You may depend on us, madam. You will hear developments. Good day.”

A bow from the door and he was gone.

Mrs. Stannard lived a year in the week that followed.

For the first day or two she reproached herself bitterly for what she had done. To have one’s husband followed by a detective! So vulgar! So mean, somehow! However he was wronging her, was it not better to remain in ignorance than to stoop to the role of spy, even by proxy?

If it transpired that some creature had ensnared him with unlawful charms—and she no longer had doubt of this—what could she do, anyhow? And if it were something else?

What, then? She remembered the detective’s words, “secret vice.” There was something sinister, something horrible about them. Yes, there were worse things even than a woman.

Each day she gazed at her husband’s back with alarm and dread as he left the house. To what dreadful place was he going? What revolting deed was he about to commit?

“Secret vice!” Yes, it would be something truly, grandly horrible. There was nothing petty about Jonathan Stannard. Even in his vices he would not be as other men.

On the third morning after the detective’s visit, seized with insatiable curiosity, she telephoned the office of Doane, Doane & Doane. No, they had nothing to communicate as yet.

Mr. Pearson, one of their best men, was working on the case day and night. They would probably not report before the end of the week, when all possible evidence would have been gathered.

Really, Mrs. Stannard must have a little patience.

So she waited, brooding, scarcely sleeping at all, tormented by her fears. When her husband told her at the breakfast table that she was not looking well, and advised a trip to the mountains or seashore, she could hardly refrain from replying: “Yes, you want me out of the way.” She was, in fact, working herself into a pretty state.

Her husband was absent nearly every afternoon and evening, and she would sit in her room, at the window, gazing dully into the street for hours. Several times she saw a man start from somewhere in the block to follow her husband as he descended the stoop. It was Mr. Pearson.

And then at five o’clock, Friday afternoon, the detective called to make his report.

She received him, as before, in the library. He wore the same brown suit and straw hat—the former, indeed, looked as if he had never taken it off—and he wiped his brow with his handkerchief as he took a seat at her invitation.

She saw something ominous in the deliberate manner with which he turned to face her, drawing the leatherbound book from his pocket with one hand and placing his hat on the floor with the other.

She trembled.

“You—you—”

She could not go on.

“Madam,” said Mr. Pearson impressively, “I am able to give you a full and complete account of your husband’s actions. I may say the thing has been done thoroughly. I did it myself. Are you prepared to listen?”

She nodded, unable to speak.

“In my judgment,” continued the detective, opening the leatherbound book, “your husband is the finest example of a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde I have met in my professional career. Also, he is a clever man. I would have lost him the first day but for my ability to hang onto the tail of a subway express. Evidently he has gone in fear of being followed. But he could not elude me.”

“Tell me! Tell me!” Mrs. Stannard implored.

“Certainly. I am coming to it. I take it, madam, that you do not care to hear the details of the chase. What you want to know is what your husband has done and where he has gone. I have here a list of the dates and places, if you will be so good as to give me your attention.”

He pulled out his handkerchief to mop his brow, cleared his throat, and read as follows in a loud, rhetorical voice:

REPORT ON JONATHAN STANNARD,

WRITER, 318 RIVERSIDE DRIVE

Friday, July 9, 2.24 P.M., entered Empire Moving Picture Theater, Third Avenue and Thirty-ninth Street. Remained three hours and eleven minutes.

Friday, July 9, 8.15 P.M., entered Royal Moving Picture Theater, Third Avenue and Grand Street. Remained two hours and thirty-four minutes.

Saturday, July 10, only appearance in company with client, Mrs. Stannard.

Sunday, July 11, A.M., attended church with client.

Sunday, July 11, 7.09 P.M., entered Circle Moving Picture Theater, Ninth Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street. Remained three hours and fifteen minutes.

Monday, July 12, 3.03 P.M., entered Louvre Moving Picture Theater, Third Avenue and 14th Street. Remained two hours and one minute.

Tuesday, July 13, only appearance in company with client.

Wednesday, July 14, 1.48 P.M., entered Columbia Moving Picture Theater, Eighth Avenue and 117th Street. Remained four hours and twenty-one minutes.

Thursday, July 15, 9.10 A.M., went to Long Beach with client.

Friday, July 16, 1.55 P.M., entered Mecca Moving Picture Theater, Broadway and Ninety-eighth Street. (Evidently getting bolder.)

Left him there to report to client.

Mr. Pearson closed the book and looked at his client with an air of triumph.

She sat motionless, gazing at him stupidly as though she had not comprehended. Then suddenly she was aware of a shadow on the threshold, and she looked up to see her husband standing in the doorway, a puzzled expression on his grave, handsome face at the sight of his wife seated talking to a man he had never seen.

He came toward them and saw the look on his wife's face.

"What's the matter?" he demanded.

She struggled for a moment to find her voice, and finally succeeded.

"Jonathan," she said, "I know all. This is Mr. Pearson, a detective. He will tell you—"

Stannard's face paled a little as he looked from one to the other.

"A detective!" he repeated. "What for? What is it?"

Then Mr. Pearson spoke.

"Mr. Stannard," he announced, rising to his feet, "I have just informed your wife that during the past seven days you have spent twenty hours and two minutes in moving picture theaters, with the dates and places."

There was a silence. Stannard's face grew white as chalk, and it could be seen that he trembled from head to foot.

The detective gazed at him sternly. His wife had cast her eyes on the floor, as though she could not bear to look at him in that moment.

"I am ruined!" groaned the stricken man, sinking into a chair.

"And I thought it was some kind of a woman," whispered his wife. Profound regret was in her voice.

The detective stooped to pick up his hat.

"Well," he said as he started for the door, "I guess you're through with me."

Mrs. Stannard nodded her head in silence, then said suddenly:

"But I must pay you; how much is it?"

"That's all right," replied the other genially from the threshold; "we'll mail our bill and you can send a check. I trust the job has been satisfactory?"

Again Mrs. Stannard nodded. "Quite satisfactory."

"Good. Good day, madam." He started to go, then turned again to add, "You'll have to excuse me for hurrying off like this, but I got a date to go to the movies."

Alone with her husband, Mrs. Stannard turned to look at him with an expression of mingled incredulity and sorrow. The unhappy man sat with his face buried in his hands, moaning piteously; great beads of perspiration stood out on his brow. Thus do strong men, overtaken by their sins, bend under the awful burden of remorse.

Suddenly he looked up and showed her his haggard countenance.

"It is the end," he whispered miserably. "The end of everything—I cannot—it is too much to expect—Vera, tell me—tell me—can you ever forgive me?"

And then it was that Vera Stannard shone forth in all the glory of her womanliness. She gazed at her husband and saw the dumb pleading of his eyes

fastened on her; she heard the agonized despair in his voice, and she felt something come up in her throat, while the hot tears came to her eyes. It is ever woman's part to forgive. She smiled at him.

"We are one, Jonathan," she said in a sweet voice that trembled. "Who am I to judge you. I will even"—she hesitated and faltered, then went bravely on—"I will even share your sin. Yes, I will share it and glory in it."

She stepped forward and laid a hand on his arm.

"Come, dear; let us dress for dinner. Afterward we shall attend the cinema—together."

(*All-Story Weekly*, September 11, 1915)

A Tyrant Abdicates

The fact that Mrs. Coit kept her rooms full could be accounted for only by the Law of Chance. As a matter of free choice, no rational human being would ever have submitted to her sour tutelage. But situated as it was, on East Thirty-seventh Street, her house had inevitably attracted a certain portion of those poor unfortunates who find in that locality everything of home that New York can mean to them; and what Mrs. Coit got she usually kept. Her manner was so very forbidding that it seemed even to forbid their escape.

Perhaps the most unpopular of Mrs. Coit's activities was the strict supervision of the movements of her men roomers. It came to be generally understood that coming in at eleven o'clock was barely safe, midnight required a thorough explanation, and one o'clock was unpardonable. From this you may judge of the rest.

The two who suffered most from this stern maternalism were the Boy and the Girl. It is unnecessary to give their names, since, being in love, they were undistinguishable from several million other boys and girls that the world has seen or read about. To confirm their title as members of this club, their course of true love did not run smooth. No doubt it is trying enough to be bothered by a particular mother, a strict father, or an inquisitive aunt; but all of these are as nothing to a prying landlady.

Mrs. Coit was fat, forty, and unfair. No one knew the nature of her widowhood,

whether simple or complex, voluntary or forced, but all were agreed that Mr. Coit was lucky to escape, through whatever medium. The Bookkeeper had once declared positively that Mrs. Coit was a *grass* widow, but, being pressed for an explanation, admitted that he had grounded his belief on no better foundation than the too evident presence of dry hay in the mattresses.

The roomers—that is, the seasoned ones—were little disturbed by her. Most of them had come to accept life as a dull and colorless routine, to which the impression of anything unusual came as a relief, and Mrs. Coit served as matter for continual amusement. They laughed at her and submitted to her minute censorship without complaint.

But in each of these dulled and sluggish hearts old Romance crouched, ever watchful for an opportunity to make its presence known. That opportunity arrived on the day that the Boy first met the Girl.

Within a week every roomer in the house was enlisted on the side of Cupid. It is true that Cupid needed no assistance, especially from these dried-up mortals whom he had long ago abandoned; but they *thought* they helped, and Cupid always was an ungrateful little wretch. The Boy was fair, the Girl was sweet, and it truly seemed that it would take much more than the grim visage of Mrs. Coit to frighten away that ever-welcome though sometimes painful visitor.

Mrs. Coit, however, was doing her best. After ten years of unchallenged tyranny, her subjects openly rebelled and resented her malicious activity. As I have said, for themselves they did not care—what mattered a little extra discomfort in lives long since devoted to the Prosaic? But when it came to the Boy and the Girl, an interference with the divine right of rings, they rallied round the flag and struck hard for the colors of Love.

As time passed and the general interest in the affair deepened, Mrs. Coit redoubled her vigilance and asperity. Her remarks to the Boy on the foolishness of marrying at his age and on his salary were repeated with emphasis, and to the Girl she talked so severely about the selfishness of hampering the Boy's career that she left her in tears. This was unwise; it merely served as an excuse to the Boy for so many more kisses.

Many were the objections entered by Mrs. Coit, many were the petty trials and inconveniences she managed to inflict on the lovers; all, of course, in vain. The

women declared that she was jealous of the Boy, which was manifestly absurd; the men, that she was naturally mean, which was somewhat ungallant. Anyway, they might have spared their abuses, since the Boy and the Girl had finally been steered through the shoals of criticism and the rocks of opposition to the sheltered harbor of a Definite Engagement. Mrs. Coit had settled down to a dull resentment; the roomers, to a calm and pleasurable expectation.

Mrs. Coit, on her daily round of dusting, was commenting to herself somewhat bitterly on the folly of youth and the general levity of mankind. In the Bookkeeper's room she grew particularly resentful, since he had only the day before advised her to mind her own business, and, jabbing the duster savagely at a corner of the mantel, she knocked to the floor a little plaster bust of Milton, which broke into a dozen pieces. Sobered by this unhousewifely incident, she proceeded to the Boy's room, next door.

She entered without knocking, and to her surprise found the Boy sitting on the edge of the bed with his face buried in his hands. Mrs. Coit regarded him silently, with increasing wrath. The Boy, not hearing her enter, remained motionless.

"Well!" said Mrs. Coit finally, "Ain't you goin' to work?"

The Boy looked up. "No."

His eyes were swollen with sleeplessness and his face was pale, his hair uncombed, his whole figure dejected and forlorn.

Mrs. Coit noted each of these symptoms separately and carefully.

"Lose your job?" she asked, almost hopefully.

The Boy shook his head, and buried it again in his hands. Mrs Coit, trying to maintain her attitude of severe disapproval; began to dust the Morris-chair. Then, after discovering that she had gone over the same arm four times, she turned to the Boy again,

"Sick?" she demanded.

"No," said the Boy, without moving. Evidently he was not looking for sympathy.

Mrs. Coit regarded him critically. No, he certainly wasn't drunk. Not him. Then, glancing over the bed, her eye fell on a photograph in a little gilt frame. It showed the face of the Boy, smiling, happy.

Mrs. Coit understood at once. For five long months this same photograph had been staring at her from the dressing table in the Girl's room, on the floor below. To confirm her suspicion, she looked at the mantel, where a picture of the Girl had occupied the place of honor. It was not there.

Mrs. Coit gazed at the picture for a full minute, then without a word completed her dusting and prepared to leave the room. The Boy remained silent. Mrs. Coit, her hand on the doorknob, turned and looked at him hesitatingly. Then,

"Have you had a fight with *her*?" she demanded.

The Boy looked up at her despairingly. "What do you care?" he cried. His voice was harsh and shrill with pain.

Mrs. Coit started to answer, then, thinking better of it, turned and fled down the hall, banging the door after her. The Boy snatched up the picture, pulled off its frame, tore it in a dozen pieces, and threw them on the floor.

Fifteen minutes later Mrs. Coit, passing through the lower hall, heard the outer door open, and, looking down the stairway, saw the Boy go out and close the door after him. Then, muttering to herself something about "idiot," and holding the duster firmly before her after the manner of a fixed bayonet, she proceeded to the Girl's room and entered with an air of determination.

Here the havoc was even greater. The Girl, reclining limply and disconsolately in an easy chair, eyes inflamed, cheeks marked with tear-tracks and splotches of red, turned and looked at the intruder indifferently.

"I knew it," said Mrs. Coit, in a tone of deep satisfaction. "Why ain't you at work?"

The Girl tried to smile. "I have a headache," she said.

Mrs. Coit snorted contemptuously. "Oh, I know all about it," she declared. "He just told me. I knew it'd be like this."

The Girl covered her face with her hands and turned away.

“I knew it’d be like this,” repeated Mrs. Coit.

The Girl made no sign.

“What’d you want to fight about a little thing like that for?” Mrs. Coit asked cunningly.

“It didn’t seem little then,” said the Girl wearily.

Mrs. Coit pressed her advantage, but to no purpose. The Girl refused to give any information; she even refused to become angry. Finally, at the insistence of Mrs. Coit, she dressed herself and prepared to go to the office.

“You’d better walk around a while before you go in,” said Mrs. Coit. “Your face looks like a boiled cucumber.”

After she had gone Mrs. Coit sat in the chair she had left, gazing thoughtfully at some little bits of paper scattered on the floor. What she was thinking, no one could possibly have told. Her face expressed nothing but grimness, her attitude satisfaction; and as she stooped over to gather up the bits of paper her lips settled into what might have been a line of triumphant resolve.

That evening, for the first time in many months, the Boy returned from the office alone. He and the Girl had walked together always—but that was over. However much he loved her, he still felt that she had said to him that which could never be forgiven, especially since it was undeserved. Of course, if she came to him and *asked* forgiveness—he caught his breath at the thought—but that, he was sure, she would never do.

His day at the office had been miserable, and the future, he reflected, held nothing for him but a dreary succession of similar ones. He had decided to leave Mrs. Coit’s that very evening, since everything there would be full of bittersweet memories of the one happy period of his life. One has great capacity for grief, as for joy, at twenty-one.

As he was turning the key in the lock of the outer door, a figure came up the steps. It was the Girl.

Without speaking, the Boy opened the door and stood aside politely to allow her to pass. She bowed her head in thanks, and silently began to ascend the stairs to her room.

The Boy's voice came after her, calling her name. She turned and looked down at him. He was standing by the mail rack, holding a large envelope in his hand.

"Is it for me?" asked the Girl doubtfully.

"No," said the Boy. "It's for—us."

Her face flushed at the familiar pronoun.

The Boy ascended the stairs to where she stood.

"I suppose we must open it together," he continued coldly. "It's addressed to both of us."

The Girl looked on silently while he tore open the envelope. His elbow brushed her arm, and they both started nervously.

Then, as they gazed together at the card the envelope had contained, they blushed almost painfully. The Boy felt his heart mount to his throat; the Girl put up her hand to brush away the mist that suddenly formed before her eyes. Pasted side by side on the card were the two photographs they had that morning torn up and thrown away, and written below in a shaky, curious hand was the inscription:

To two young fools from an old fool.

And tied to the card with a piece of faded blue ribbon was an old, well-worn wedding ring!

Fifteen minutes later the Boy and the Girl came down, hand in hand, to the sitting room where Mrs. Coit sat poring over her account books. She rose at their approach.

"Well?" she demanded aggressively.

The Boy, nothing daunted, advanced boldly, holding one hand toward her.

“Here is your ring, Mrs. Coit,” he said, the old happy smile in his eyes. “I thought you might want it back again.”

Mrs. Coit hesitated, and for the first time in the knowledge of Thirty-seventh Street seemed embarrassed.

“That ain’t my ring,” said she finally.

Then occurred the outrage. Perhaps she wouldn’t have minded so much, but just at that moment the Bookkeeper passed through the hall, and, glancing in at the door, saw everything. The Boy threw his arms around Mrs. Coit’s neck, gave her a resounding kiss on either cheek, and, leaving the ring lying on the desk, fled toward the stairs, the Girl following.

Mrs. Coit recovered in time to pursue them to the foot of the stairs.

“Hey, there!” she called, a curious break in the voice she tried to make stern. “Hey, there! You left your room in a pretty fix this morning, you did! Once more like that, and out you go!”

From the floor above came the sound of happy, mocking laughter. Mrs. Coit’s reign had ended.

(Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine, January 1914)

Rose Orchid

Accepting as postulates the assertions that human beings are pegs, and that LieutenantCommander Brinsley Reed, U. S. N. was a human being, it follows with certainty that he was beautifully fitted for his particular hole.

He was third in his class out of Annapolis. By the time he attained his two full stripes he had successfully dominated three junior messes and been the subject of unusual commendation in two wardrooms; and before he had advanced halfway up the list he was known as the best deck officer in the North Atlantic.

Four different captains applied for his services as executive when he passed into the next rank. But LieutenantCommander Reed, who had ideas of his own concerning the proper discipline of a ship, and who was lucky enough to possess a key to a certain door in the Bureau at Washington, disappointed them all by

obtaining for himself the command of the gunboat *Helena*.

For the two years that followed, every man who had the good fortune to be transferred from the *Helena* to another ship swore at every chance, with violent and profane asseveration, that the *Helena* was a “madhouse.”

“The old man’s a holy terror,” they would say. “Bag and hammock inspection and fire drill twice a week. Abandon ship three times a month; and when he can’t think of nothing else it’s general quarters. For a seagoin’ hat it’s ten days in the brig. And brasswork? Say! Why, this is a home!”

All of which meant to indicate that LieutenantCommander Reed was one of those persons who illustrate and justify the rather curious order of the words in the phrase: an officer and a gentleman.

He had at one time believed in the Bible; but it had long ago been discarded for the Blue Book, which is officially known as “Navy Regulations, 1914.”

In the third winter under his command, at the conclusion of the annual target practice and maneuvers at Guantanamo, the *Helena* was ordered to San Juan to relieve the *Chester*, which was returning to go into dry dock at New York.

LieutenantCommander Reed was much pleased at this, for two reasons: first, it would remove him from continual subordination to a flag officer; and second, he would have an opportunity to visit a boyhood friend whom he had not seen for many years, and who was now the owner of a tobacco plantation in Puerto Rico. The *Helena* had lain at San Juan for a month the previous spring; but the lieutenantcommander had not then known that his friend was on the island.

After all, the visit proved to be disappointing. I will not go so far as to say that LieutenantCommander Reed had lost all social instinct, but the fact is that in his endeavor to perfect himself as a military machine he had forgotten how to be a man. He found his friend dull, and his friend found him insufferable.

For two days they made a pretense of amusing each other. On the third morning the lieutenantcommander begged his friend to take no notice of his presence, but to follow his own inclinations; the guest would amuse himself.

“Very well,” the other agreed, “then I shall ride over to the north enclosure; the carts should arrive today. You won’t join me?”

The lieutenantcommander refused, and spent a miserable day lounging in a hammock between two giant cedars, drinking crushed pineapple and reading some ancient copies of popular magazines. That evening he announced his intention of returning to the *Helena* at San Juan on the following morning.

“But you were to stay a week,” his host protested rather feebly. “And a rest will do you good. It’s not very amusing out here, but I’d be glad to have you. What’s the hurry?”

“Confound your politeness,” said the lieutenantcommander, who regarded bluntness as an untainted virtue. “It’s no good, Dick; we don’t cut in. We’re only in each other’s way—and I want to get back to the ship.”

Accordingly, at four o’clock in the following afternoon (the start having been postponed some hours on account of the midday heat), the lieutenantcommander mounted his little native pony that had carried him from San Juan to Cerro Gordo in six hours, waved a last farewell to his host, and departed on his journey of forty miles across the mountains, through the foothills and down the long plain to the sea.

As he turned into the white wagon road that leads through San Lorenzo, the lieutenantcommander felt a pleasant sense of relief.

He understood himself perfectly. Stern, passionately fond of authority, conscious of but one code of morals and of conduct, and supremely happy in his power and ability to enforce it, he was utterly unable to breathe in any other atmosphere than that of his cabin. As his pony carried him forward, past the wonderful blue limestone cliffs and innumerable rushing streams of the southern slope of the Sierra de Luquillo, his mind was thirty miles away, on the decks of the *Helena*.

It dwelt on a score of petty details: the independence of Ensign Brownell, the return of Quartermaster Moran, the disgraceful condition of the pay storeroom at the last Sunday inspection. He considered these matters at some length; he liked their flavor; and he earnestly desired to deal out justice—according to the code.

At Caguas, where he stopped for a cooling drink and a few minutes’ rest, he was advised to postpone the continuance of his journey.

“It is dangerous, seor,” said the proprietor of the little shop. “See!”

He pointed to the northeast, where, above the top of the dim, blue range, a black cloud was proceeding slowly westward, like a giant treading ponderously from peak to peak.

“Well, what of it?”

“It means a storm, seor; you will be drenched. And the trail over the mountains—at night—”

But the lieutenantcommander stopped him with a gesture, mounted his pony, and departed.

He was very nearly in the center of the range, within two miles of the village of Rio, when the storm finally broke. It began with a mild drizzle; and the lieutenantcommander dismounted long enough to unstrap the rubber poncho from his saddle and put it on.

He had not proceeded a hundred yards farther when the rain began to descend in torrents. At the same moment the fastapproaching darkness came like a blanket over the narrow trail; and the traveler found himself fighting blindly against whirling sheets of water and the impenetrable blackness of a tropical night.

He soon gave up the attempt to guide his pony; it required all his strength, bending over close against the animal’s neck, to maintain his seat. The roar of the wind and the descendin’ torrents seemed terrific; he was incapable of thought or movement.

Something brushed violently against his body, and he felt the pony sway and stumble; then a jar, a feeling as though he was being hurled violently through space....

The lieutenantcommander sat up, glanced round, and cursec long and variously. He wanted to know where in the name of th’ Seven Seas—Then he remembered.

He started to rise to his feet, and suddenly became conscious of a sharp, stinging pain in his left arm; and, trying to raise it, found that it hung helpless at his side. With another oath he stood up and stamped vigorously to assure himself of the seaworthiness of his legs, and gave an involuntarily grunt of pain as the shock communicated itself to the broken arm.

The storm was past.

Overhead the stars gleamed with the soft brilliance of the South. About and above him the thick foliage waved its broad fingers mysteriously in the gentle breeze, and through a rift to the left could be seen the uncertain white outline of a limestone cliff. Toward this the lieutenantcommander made his way, thinking to find the trail. The pony was not to be seen.

For perhaps half an hour he searched for the trail, stumbling over roots and fallen branches, occasionally brought to an abrupt stop by a growth of shrubbery and vines too dense to penetrate.

At every step a shiver of pain ran through his body from the injured arm, and his head felt faint and dizzy.

Suddenly he found himself in an open clearing, at the farther end of which he saw a light shining from the window of a cottage. He staggered to it painfully and hammered on the door

The door opened; the floor seemed to rise to meet him; and once more all was darkness.

When he awoke it was to a feeling of the most delicious warmth and weariness. For some minutes after he became conscious he kept his eyes closed, merely through the lack of desire to open them. Suddenly he heard a voice at his elbow. The words were Spanish.

“No, beloved, he is still asleep.”

Another voice, a man’s, came from across the room

“But are you sure?”

“But yes Really there is no cause for worry. Except for the arm, there is no injury.”

“All right. Come here, Rita.”

The lieutenantcommander opened his eyes. It was broad daylight; evidently he had remained unconscious, or had slept, for many hours. He noted a small

bamboo table placed close by the couch on which he lay, an American wicker rocking chair, a homemade palm screen; then his gaze wandered across the room, where stood the owners of the voices.

The girl was directly in front of the man, disclosing to view only the outlines of his figure. Suddenly she moved to one side; and the lieutenantcommander gave a start of surprise and closed his eyes involuntarily.

Then he opened them again, slowly and cautiously. The man's face stood out clearly in the light from the open window; and there could be no mistake.

"Decidedly," thought the lieutenantcommander, "I'm in a devil of a hole. The wonder is I'm still alive."

Then he lay silent, feigning sleep, and overheard the following dialogue:

"Well, I must go," accompanied by a masculine sigh.

"But, Tota! I've been waiting for you to say that; I've seen it in your eyes. This is our holiday; you promised it."

"Now, little one, don't be unreasonable. How could I foretell the storm? And those *hombres*; you know what they're like. If it were not for the little trees—"

"Very well; then do you go. I shall not miss you; I shall amuse the stranger. I shall sing to him, and prepare for him the little yellow *bisca*, and perhaps—"

The voice ended with an indescribable tone of teasing suggestion.

"Rita! What do you mean?"

There came the sound of feet scurrying across the floor, sigh, a little breathless laugh, then:

"Oh, Tota, my beloved! Well then, kiss me, kiss me! Ah!"

There was a pause, then the man's voice: "And now—"

"Now you may go. But I shall go with you to the spring. And I want—but come, I'll tell you on the way."

The lieutenantcommander heard them go out, leaving the door open behind them; and he opened his eyes and thought swiftly.

He understood at once that he had not been recognized; which was easily accounted for by the facts that he was in “civilians,” and that in the past six months he had grown a beard. But there still remained some danger; and this position of insecurity and helplessness was extremely unpleasant. Decidedly, he must get away at the very first opportunity. The first thing to do was to find out about his pony. He would ask the girl when she returned.

Then, suddenly, the lieutenantcommander became aware of the fact that he felt exceedingly comfortable. Only his poncho, coat, and boots had been removed, he was covered only by a coarse cotton cloth, and there was a dull, aching pain in the injured arm from wrist to shoulder; still he felt unaccountably easy and contented.

The room, which he now noticed for the first time, though uncarpeted and with bare walls, had an indefinable air of coziness, even of refinement. The light entered with a soft glow at the window opposite, which he surmised to be toward the west; over the other window a green shade was drawn, to exclude the tropical sun.

Two or three wicker chairs, an American sewing machine, and a table or two were all the room contained; yet such was its effect that the lieutenantcommander, who had never noticed a mere room before in all his life, found himself studying it with interest and appreciation.

He was roused by the sound of approaching footsteps, and looked up to see the girl coming up the path toward the open door. In her arms was a huge bunch of rose orchids.

She entered the room silently and placing the flowers on a table, tiptoed to the side of the couch. Then seeing that the lieutenantcommander’s eyes were wide open, she smiled brightly.

“Ah! The seor is awake.”

“Yes.” In spite of himself, he smiled back at her

“Well! But you have slept a very long time. And the arm— does it pain you

greatly?”

She carefully drew back the coverlet, and the lieutenantcommander perceived for the first time that the sleeve of his shirt had been slit to the shoulder and his arm encased in rude splints and bandages.

“Why—I didn’t know—” he said, “thanks to you, it is really comfortable.”

“That is well. We did the best we could. Oh, but I was so frightened when the seor tumbled in at the door! I thought you were dead. And Tota—Mr. Hurley—that is, my husband—he thought you would never—but oh!” She stopped short, and a look of real horror appeared on her face.

“What is it?” the lieutenantcommander asked in alarm.

“Why, the seor must be starved!” she cried. “And here I stand and talk like an old woman.”

She turned without another word and fled into the kitchen.

From thence, for the following fifteen minutes, there issued a series of most tantalizing sounds and smells. The lieutenantcommander had not realized it before, but he was hungry— incredibly so.

“Will the seor use the goat’s milk?” Rita called from the kitchen.

“No; make it black, please,” he replied.

He was served on the bamboo table, drawn up close to the couch. Rita, saying that she had work in the next room, instructed him to call if he needed anything. Then, struck by a sudden thought, she bent over the table and cut his meat into little squares, broke the hard bread into small pieces, and separated the sections of grapefruit, saying:

‘Y forgot about the seor’s arm. Of course, you are helpless—like a baby.’

Despite the difficulty of eating with one hand, he found the meal incredibly good. There were alligator pears, broiled ham, a spiced omelet, black steaming coffee, and several kinds of fruit.

When he had finished Rita appeared and, after asking if he smoked, cut off the end of a cigar and lighted it for him! He lay back on the couch and puffed away in glorious content, thinking of nothing.

The morning passed. Rita tripped in and out, lightly, her little sandaled feet gliding noiselessly over the bare floor, stopping now and then to inquire if the seor was comfortable.

She arranged the rose orchids in a red jar and placed them near him, on the bamboo table. Once she appeared in the doorway to say that her husband had found the seor's pony, unharmed, in the grove of tillandsias over near the trail. She had forgotten to tell the seor before.

"Ah!" said the lieutenantcommander. He ought to have been pleased by this information, and perhaps he was. But he made no comment.

Early in the afternoon Rita, having completed her household tasks, sat down in the wicker rocking chair and began to talk. She had brought in a pitcher of pineapple juice and offered a glass of it to the seor, who leaned back against a heap of cushions and sipped luxuriously.

"The seor was going to San Juan?" said Rita abruptly

The lieutenantcommander nodded.

"Ah! It is a wonderful city—San Juan. I used to live there." She sighed, and clasped her hands back of her head. Her form, small and wonderfully graceful, was outlined against the back of the chair like the "Sibyl" of Velasquez.

"It was very gay. The music at night, and the promenade, and the little chairs that used to fall under the weight of the big Americans. And how we would scowl when we were forced to stand while they played the—what you call it?—the 'Star Spangle Banner'!"

The lieutenantcommander sipped away in silence, watching her.

Rita sighed again.

"Oh, it all seems so very long ago! And yet it is only a few months. And perhaps, some day I shall see it again."

“Are you lonely—out here?”

The lieutenantcommander realized with surprise that he was really interested to know her answer.

He read it in her eyes. They grew large, and glowed with eloquent negation.

“No, no! How could I be, with Tota?” Involuntarily, as she pronounced the name, her voice softened with tenderness “That is my husband,” she continued proudly.

“You have not seen him. He is an American, too. And one thing is hard—it is that I never can talk about him. Even my mother—she was angry when Tota took me away. I suppose that is why,” she threw at the seor a glance at once ingenuous and reserved, “I want to talk to you.”

The lieutenantcommander felt uncomfortable.

“So you are married,” he observed foolishly.

Rita frowned. Then the frown gave way to a little, amused, happy laugh.

“Why, what does the seor think? But then, you Americans are all alike. That is, all except Tota! He will be here soon; he wants to see you. He is a very wonderful man, and so good, seor.”

“I have no doubt of it,” the lieutenantcommander said dryly.

“Yes. We came here but nine, ten months ago, and already we have many acres of coffee trees. There were some—that was in May—already in bloom. Have you ever seen them, seor? The little white blossoms that look like tiny stars, they are so very white? Tota says he prefers them brown, like my face,” and she laughed delightedly at her Tota’s stupid joke.

Of this chatter the lieutenantcommander was hearing very little; but he was looking at Rita—her soft brown, slender arms, her lithe form, full of nervous grace, her dark, glowing, ever-changing eyes. I have not attempted to describe her, and I shall not; you must use your imagination. You may judge a little of her charm by the fact that, as he sat and looked at her and listened to her voice, LieutenantCommander Reed, for the first time in his life, had emotions.

For an hour she rattled on, mostly of Tota, and the seor sat and sipped pineapple, now and then interposing a nod or a word. He became utterly unconscious of everything in the world but her presence and his delight in it, and he felt a distinct and disagreeable shock when the door was suddenly opened and a man appeared in the room.

It was Hurley.

Rita sprang from her chair and ran to him.

“Tota!” she cried.

Hurley folded her in his arms and kissed her.

“Well, little one, I kept my promise.” Then he turned to th’ seor, “You must excuse us,” he smiled, utterly unabashed.

Rita had an arm about his neck and was clinging to the lapel of his jacket with the other hand.

The lieutenantcommander was experiencing a curious and hitherto undreamed-of sensation. A lump in his throat was choking him, and he felt a tight gripping in his chest. But his mind was working rapidly; and he made his decision almost without hesitation.

“I’ve been waiting for you,” he said to Hurley. “I understand you found my pony. Bring him up.”

At the tone of command the man started and glanced keenly at the lieutenantcommander, who remembered too late that he should have attempted to disguise his voice. He thought of his broken arm, and braced himself for whatever might come.

Hurley walked over to the couch and stood looking down at him in silence. The expression in his eyes was distinctly unpleasant; but the lieutenantcommander perceived that it was alloyed with doubt.

“Have I ever seen you before?” Hurley said finally

The lieutenantcommander achieved a smile of surprise.

“What makes you think so?” he asked.

“Why did you speak to me—like that?”

The lieutenantcommander, being rather clever, did not make the mistake of apologizing. Instead, his tone was one of irritation as he said: “How do I know? Do you expect a man with a broken arm to get up and bow?”

For another minute Hurley stood above him, eyeing him keenly. Then he turned.

“I don’t know,” he muttered. “I’ll bring up your pony. Come Rita; you come with me.”

They returned shortly with the pony, saddled and bridled. Hurley, sending Rita to another room, helped the lieutenantcommander put on his coat and boots, placed the injured arm in a sling, and strapped his poncho back of the saddle. Then he steadied him with both hands, carefully, while he mounted.

“You ought to be in San Juan by seven,” said Hurley, standing in the doorway. “That’s a good hour and a half before dark. The trail runs over there,” pointing to the west, “by that first blue cliff. You can’t miss it. And I guess I made a mistake in there,” he continued, a little awkwardly. “I meant no offense, sir.”

For more reasons than one the lieutenantcommander made no reply. He started the pony as gently as possible out of respect for the broken arm, and nodded a farewell. As he met the trail under the cliff, he turned and looked back. Hurley and Rita were standing together in the doorway.

LieutenantCommander Reed was a man of decision. Whenever he met a problem he liked to face it squarely, analyze it thoroughly, and decide it quickly. This he had always done.

But the problem which was now before him defied analysis. It seemed somehow intangible, fleeting, ungraspable. He tried one after another of his cherished rules, and found that none of them fitted.

For the first three hours of the last stage of his journey to San Juan his mind was in an uncomfortable and entirely unique condition of flexibility. As might have been expected, the weight of habit preponderated and he decided in favor of duty.

Owing to the broken arm, the four hours' ride was slow and painful, but he suffered no further mishap. As Hurley had predicted, exactly at seven o'clock he climbed from the Naval Station wharf at San Juan into the Commandant's gig.

On board the *Helena* all was confusion and despair. They had not expected their Commanding Officer for another four days, and they were having the time of their lives.

The first luff, who was an easygoing, good-natured fellow, who possessed a hearty dislike for his skipper, had taken advantage of his absence.

There had been no inspections or drills of any kind, the brasswork had not been touched, the decks had received merely a gentle flushing with the hose, and every classed man on the ship had been granted shore liberty.

You may imagine the effect of this state of affairs on Lieutenant Commander Reed. Within two hours after his arrival every man and officer on board was ready for insubordination or mutiny, or worse, and the first luff heard his skipper's voice in his dreams.

At eleven o'clock the following morning Lieutenant Commander Reed sat in his cabin, holding a pen in his hand and gazing thoughtfully at a pad of official memorandum paper on the desk before him.

He had got his disordered ship and crew in something like a presentable and tractable condition, and was preparing to put into effect his decision of the afternoon before.

He frowned and sighed at intervals, and finally rose, walked over to a porthole and stood for some time gazing out on El Morro and the rocky coast.

Finally, with a gesture of decision, he returned to the desk, arranged the pad of paper, and wrote as follows:

Ensign G. J. Rowley, U. S. N.,

U. S. S. Helena.

Sir:

You will take four men and proceed at once to the village of Rio, twenty miles from San Juan on the Caguas road. Two miles beyond Rio, in a cottage three hundred yards to the left of the trail, you will find James Moser, Chief Yeoman, a deserter from the U. S. S. *Helena*.

He has assumed the name of Hurley. You will arrest him and deliver him on shipboard. You are advised to proceed with caution.

Respectfully,

Brinsley Reed,

Lt.-Comd'r., U. S. N., Commanding.

He read the order through slowly, and pushed a button on the desk for his orderly. Then removing the order from the pad, he reread it more slowly still, while a deep frown gathered on his forehead.

The decision had been made.

Suddenly he opened a drawer at the side of his desk and took from it—a rose orchid!

I have no idea where he got it; possibly he had taken advantage of Rita's absence while she had gone with Tota to fetch the pony.

But then that is scarcely possible, since the lieutenantcommander was the last man in the world to be swayed by any weak sentiment.

“Did you ring, sir?”

The orderly's voice sounded from the doorway, and his commanding officer actually blushed as he hastily slipped the orchid back into the drawer.

Then he turned to the orderly:

“Learn to stand at attention till you're spoken to!” he roared. “No, I didn't ring! Get out of here!”

It is little wonder that Ensign Rowley failed to carry out the order, since it was

no part of his duty to go searching about in his skipper's waste basket for torn bits of paper.

(*_All-Story Weekly_*, March 28, 1914)

The Pay Yeoman

Paymaster Garway Ross, attached to and serving on board the United States steamship *Helena*, possessed in an eminent degree all of the qualifications mentioned as appertaining to his position.

He also possessed one or two of the flexible virtues and a bitter knowledge of the sourness of the fruit of life. This last it was that drove him to seek the salty masculinity of the wardroom.

On a certain day of the year Paymaster Garway Ross, moved by the inherent laziness of man and a careless irresponsibility peculiar to himself, did a very foolish thing. He gave the combination of the office safe to his yeoman.

The pay-yeoman, generally speaking, is the man who does the work of the paymaster. Particularly was this true in the case of Yeoman James Martin and Paymaster Garway Ross.

To the latter a monthly statement was a fearsome labyrinth and a quarterly return a snare of the devil. Also, he hated to count money, always having had so much of his own that he had never been under the necessity of counting it.

Finally, after a year of growing confidence in his yeoman, he entrusted him with the daily balance of the cash and sighed with immense relief.

For two years all was harmony. Paymaster Garway Ross read novels, wore out the lounge in the wardroom, invented mysterious and tantalizing cocktails, while Yeoman Martin wrote and ruled in the pay-office two decks below.

Then, on a day in August (the *Helena* was at dry dock in New York), Martin announced his intention of applying for a furlough. The paymaster heartily approved, though he realized it meant a temporary burden on his own shoulders.

By a tactful word to the captain he got Martin's week of liberty extended to two; and in his effort to show his appreciation of his yeoman's services, even went so

far as to present him with a treasury note of poetic denomination.

This gift, however, Martin steadfastly refused, seemingly on the grounds of personal dignity. The paymaster pocketed the note with great reluctance and waved a cheerful *au revoir* as Martin went down the gangway.

About three o'clock on the following afternoon the paymaster, by a tremendous effort of the will, lifted himself from the wardroom lounge, proceeding to the pay office, made an entry in the provision return, opened the safe, and balanced the cash.

That is, he tried to balance it. It was eight thousand dollars short.

For the remainder of that day, and the whole of the next, Paymaster Garway Ross was thoroughly stunned.

He was conscious of an immense incredulity. This was not based on any real knowledge of Martin's character or belief in his honesty, but originated in and proceeded from the paymaster himself. His mind, limited by its own habits, was incapable of registering so sudden and complete a reversal of conception.

In short, the thing was incredible.

But when, on the morning of the third day and for the fortieth time, he checked up the contents of the safe and found the shortage actually existent he forced himself to recognize the truth and prepare for action.

Owing to certain of the naval regulations, his dilemma was a curious one, for had it become known that he had entrusted the combination of the safe to his yeoman the paymaster would have been court-martialed and probably dismissed from the service; so runs the rule. Obviously, therefore, he could not expose Martin's guilt without at the same time admitting his own.

But the paymaster's sympathies had been smothered by an overwhelming fact—he disliked, as he expressed it to himself, being made the goat for any one. For a long hour he sat perched on the edge of the office stool, smoking a huge black cigar, revolving schemes innumerable and rejecting each in its turn.

Exactly in proportion as his helplessness became apparent his anger increased, and the cold anger of a brain slow to conceive and strong to retain is to be

feared.

It was well for Jimmie Martin that he was many miles away from the berth-deck of the *Helena* when Paymaster Ross emerged from the pay office and mounted the officers' ladder to his own room.

The following morning he visited his bankers in Cedar Street, and in exchange for a personal check received eight hundred ten-dollar bills. These he took to the ship and placed in the safe, after which he balanced the cash. He then drew forth a private account-book and turned to a clean page, which he headed, "James Martin."

Beneath this he wrote: "To experience supplied—\$8000."

He knew nothing of bookkeeping, however, and the sense of the entry appeared to be somewhat obscure. Accordingly, after a minute of thought, he wrote in the middle of the page in pencil the words: "Account not closed."

One hot June morning the United States steamship *Helena*, with her shining decks and her rakish stack, boomed forth a salute to the commandant and weighed anchor in the harbor of San Juan.

Within half an hour her boats were lowered and her starboard gangway made fast, and a few minutes later the steam launch glided away, headed for the naval station wharf.

The passengers were the captain, paying a call to the commandant; the surgeon, whose errand was personal; and Paymaster Garway Ross, in search of fresh meat. The commissary was paying for a little indiscretion by reposing in solitary grandeur in the brig.

For two years and six months, since the disappearance of Jimmie Martin, the *Helena* had roamed the seas and paraded the coast. She had escorted a floating dry dock from Cherbourg to Norfolk, honored a New Orleans Mardi Gras with her presence, twice attended the annual maneuvers at Guantanamo, and made herself generally handy and useful. She was at San Juan in obedience to an order to relieve the *Chester*.

More than two years ago it was that the new pay-yeoman had placed a big red "D" opposite Jimmie Martin's name on the crew payroll, for Martin's furlough,

already extended by himself from two weeks to thirty months, seemed likely to become permanent.

Perhaps some day some country deputy would appear at Norfolk or Brooklyn with Martin in one hand and an expense list in the other, and, pocketing the reward for apprehension of a deserter, leave Martin to be sentenced for three dreary years to the prison ship at Portsmouth; but he remained as yet on the list of the wanted. His billet had been filled, his bag and hammock sold at auction, and he had become but a vague and unrecognized number to the roll and the crew of the United States steamship *Helena*.

With one exception.

Paymaster Garway Ross did neither forget nor forgive. Perhaps it would be not exactly just to call him vindictive; yet he desired revenge. Almost unconsciously he nursed his anger and the wish for vengeance.

It had never taken the form of active investigation or pursuit. But it was there, smoldering, waiting; just as, according to the scientists, we each harbor within us the sleeping germ of insanity, ready to be raised at any moment to dreadful activity by something that is not within us.

In his search for fresh meat the paymaster followed his nose in and out of three smaller shops before he found the way to the large establishment of Hernandez y Hermanos. Here he found what he wanted.

The elder Hernandez, smiling, courteous, recorded his order for ten hindquarters and the same number of fores, promising immediate delivery and the freshest beeves. Then he turned to a clerk and beckoned sharply.

“No! Mendez! Drive to the storage and bring this,” he said, handing the clerk a duplicate of the paymaster’s order. “And, going, you may take the scales to the hotel.”

“But there are the jars of Seor Martin—”

“Go, fool!” the excitable Hernandez shouted. “Bah! Seor Martin can wait.”

An electric thrill, indefinable, illusive, passed through the brain of the paymaster. He decided to disregard it, but it was insistent. He turned to Hernandez.

“Seor Martin?” he said half indifferently. “Who is this Martin?”

Hernandez was glad to oblige the paymaster.

“*Amencano*,” he replied. “Coffee planter this side—a little—of Caguas. A very good man, I believe, but small. He pays very well.”

‘Y think I know him,” said the paymaster. “What is he like?” He understood that the “small” applied to the fortune, not to the person.

‘Y have never seen him, seor,” was the reply. “Never does he come to San Juan. He sends money by the carrier and a writing. Every month—sometimes two.”

“Do you keep the orders? Could I see them?”

“Certainly, seor.”

Hernandez trotted to the office at the rear, and after some minutes reappeared with an old letter file. From this he took some papers which he handed to the paymaster.

The paymaster was curiously excited. Whether it was the spoken name of Martin or an awakened recollection of something he had once said about Porto Rico, or merely the effect of intuition, may not be known; but he was actually quivering with eagerness—the eagerness of bruin roused by the odor of the hidden sweet.

The first paper showed him his mistake. It was an order for three chairs and some glass jars and was signed “S. Martin.” He gazed at it blankly.

“Pardon, seor,” said the courteous Hernandez, “but that was written by the seora. For many months she has written. But there are some—”

He rummaged in the pile of papers, drew one forth, and handed it to the paymaster.

And then the face of Garway Ross turned pale and his eyes closed to a narrow slit. Perhaps, after all, he was vindictive. As for the paper—that handwriting! The books of the pay office of the *Helena* were full of it.

The next morning but one found the paymaster, mounted on a short-haired native

pony, proceeding leisurely along the white, level road that leads from San Juan to the foothills of the Sierra de Luquillo. Feeling sure of his quarry, he had taken his time. He had not questioned the carrier for fear of a possible communication and warning to Seor Martin; but the courteous Hernandez had furnished information of the exact whereabouts of Martin's plantation.

The paymaster's intentions were extremely hazy. Strapped about his waist under his coat were two ugly Navy revolvers; yet he was no Corsican. He told himself that they were meant purely as a defense; he certainly did not premeditate murder. In the meantime there they were.

He did not intend to expose Martin or arrest him; that would have been to expose and betray himself. Nor had he an idea of forcing a material restitution. The loss of the money had been but a slight and temporary annoyance; furthermore, it was to be doubted if Martin had it in his power to repay even a small part of it. Apparently, then, his journey was purposeless.

But still his heart was hot with anger; indefinable, and therefore reasonless. He was not a lover of justice, an avenger of the law, a crusader for the right. He was simply a man with a grudge.

The pony, unlike its rider, was little inconvenienced by the glare of the road and the heat of the tropical sun. For four long hours he trotted on unwearyingly, stopping now and then to rest in the shade of a grove of palms, or to drink from one of the bubbling streams dashing toward the foothills below.

At eleven o'clock he turned from the road into a path at the foot of a ridge of limestone cliffs, and three hundred yards farther on came within sight of a low rambling house set at the edge of a small clearing.

This was the home of Seor Martin.

Paymaster Garway Ross stopped his pony and for some minutes sat gazing at the house in silence. Afterward when the scene rose in his memory, he wondered at the rare loveliness of the setting—the charm, even, of the house itself.

In the immediate background was a grove of tillandsia, fragrant and cool. On either side appeared long rows of coffee trees, brilliantly white with their innumerable blossoms; and beyond, at the foot of a sloping valley, could be seen a somber purple patch, relieved here and there by a gorgeous scarlet of nature's

most beautiful parasite.

Over all was the heavy fragrance, the droopy languor, of the land of the lotus.

But for the present the paymaster was conscious only of his immediate emotions. For the first time he realized that the enterprise contained an element of real danger.

Martin might even now be observing him from one of those shaded windows; possibly have recognized him. Thinking thus, the paymaster wheeled his pony about and retreated out of sight round a bend in the path.

Here he removed one of the revolvers from the hidden belt and placed it in his side coat pocket; after which precaution he returned to the clearing and rode boldly up to the door of the house.

He had scarcely halted his pony when the door opened and a woman appeared on the threshold. The paymaster dismounted, lifted his hat, and bowed.

“I want to see James Martin,” he said.

The woman looked up quickly and for a moment was silent.

Then she spoke in a low, rather harsh voice:

“What about?”

The paymaster bowed again.

“I had rather tell that to Mr. Martin himself,” he said. “Is he here?”

“No.” A faint gleam of interest flickered across the woman’s face as she added, “Were you a friend of his?”

“Yes,” said the paymaster inwardly thanking her for the tense, while he wondered at it. “When will he be at home?”

The woman did not answer. Instead after a moment of silence, she turned and called sharply, “Miguel!”

Another moment, and a slouching blinking *hombre* appeared in the doorway.

“Take the pony,” the woman said shortly.

Then, motioning to the paymaster to follow, she started round the path encircling the house toward the grove of tillandsias in the rear.

The paymaster guessed intuitively what they were to find.

It was in the air, in the woman’s tone, in her very silence; and he as silently followed her through the shady grove across a quivering log-bridge, and into a second grove more deeply shaded than the first. She halted abruptly by a giant tillandsia, and the paymaster approached and stood at her side.

He had guessed correctly. At their feet was a slender mound of earth covered with coarse grass; and at its farther end was a rude block of limestone bearing this inscription:

JAMES MARTIN

_Died December 22, 1907

Age 24_

The woman sat on the trunk of a fallen tree and gazed at the stone impassively, in silence. Finally the paymaster turned to her.

“So,” he said, “six months ago.”

The woman nodded.

“I am Paymaster Ross, of the navy,” he continued presently “Perhaps you have heard him speak of me. I knew your— him—”

“My son,” said the woman dully.

At this the paymaster felt a slight surprise; somehow he had never thought of Martin as having a mother. He knew that he ought to speak, to say something; but he felt that there was nothing he could possibly say, nothing worth saying.

Finally, “He was a good boy,” he observed awkwardly.

Again the woman nodded.

“I suppose he was. He spoke a lot about you. He always said you was kind to him. I suppose I ought to thank you.”

“Won’t you tell me more about it?” said the paymaster. “I mean about him, and how he came down here, and how he—about the end.”

Then he seated himself beside her and waited.

She began with a grim smile.

“There was a time then I could have talked all about it,” she observed.
“Somehow I don’t feel like it any more. And it’s all Jimmie’s fault. Maybe you’re right. Maybe he was a good boy and all that; but somehow he never

seemed to get anywhere.”

She paused and sighed heavily, and the paymaster rose to his feet and stood looking down at the grave.

“He was just like his father.”

As the woman continued, her voice held a new note of bitterness, and the paymaster shuddered.

“He died when Jimmie was twelve years old and the others was babies. He always was a fool, and Jimmie was just like him. Then, after I’d starved and slaved to death nearly, Jimmie got that money from the navy.

“He called it a bonus. I never understood about it. I never wanted him to go in the navy anyway; but then that was all right. And then, when he got all that money, he made us all come down here, where it’s only fit for niggers.

“And Annie and Tom are always sick, too. I used to wonder about it and I wouldn’t be surprised if he stole it. Annie and Tom are the others. You didn’t see ‘em as you came in from the road?”

With an effort the paymaster turned to face her and shook his head.

“No. But he—he was a good worker.”

His own words sounded in his ear hollow, inane. Here all was dust and ashes. Words were useless.

“Perhaps,” the woman continued. “But when a woman like me has had her whole life spoiled by a man and his son, she can’t think very well of either of ‘em. He should have given me that money; I’d earned it. But he talked about Annie and Tom, and what he’d do for ‘em, and brought us all off down here where it’s only fit for niggers.

“And now he’s gone and I can’t get anybody to stay here, and the niggers won’t work, and we’re worse off than ever. He ought to stayed in the navy. At least, we got forty dollars a month from him then.”

The paymaster forced himself to speak.

“But the place seems to be in good condition. Couldn’t you sell it?”

The woman laughed—a harsh crackling laugh that gave the paymaster an involuntary shiver of disgust. Then she waved a hand toward the long stretch of white blossoms on either side of the house.

“They look pretty, don’t they?” she said with infinite sarcasm. “Yes, they look pretty all right. But they’re all eat up with worms. There’s something wrong with ‘em inside. Of course, I tried to sell out as soon as he was gone. He might have done it himself.”

Again the paymaster made a weak attempt to probe beneath the crust.

“But he was a good boy, Mrs. Martin,” he said. “And from what you say, I judge that he gave you all he had. He did everything he could. And now—now that he is gone—”

For a moment the woman stared at him almost wonderingly. Then she gave a short laugh.

“That’s a fool notion,” she said. “I guess I know what you mean. It sounds just like him. What’s the difference if he’s dead?”

He’s better off than I am. But then, of course, you was his friend.”

She stopped abruptly and sat gazing at the paymaster in a sort of stupid antagonism.

But the paymaster was silenced. The fruit of life! And he—not knowing—for what had he come? His eyes, as he turned them for the last time on the grave of Jimmie Martin, were eloquent and—if that may be—tender.

But the dust of the grave has no ears—perhaps! He wondered and turned to go.

The woman made no motion to follow or to speak. Was she somehow aware that her harsh and gloomy note had been used by the poet to complete the rhythm of a scheme awful and beautiful? Had she played her part knowing and yet helpless?

She barely glanced up as the paymaster passed her. He moved swiftly. At the

log-bridge he turned and looked back. She was sitting as he had left her, her head bowed forward, and he shuddered as he conceived her likeness to the hovering form of the bird of death.

It was a week or so later that the pay-yeoman of the *Helena* was seated at his desk, striving valiantly to bring order out of chaos. He was trying to strike a balance from the vague and cryptic entries of a private account-book which the paymaster had asked him to check up.

The paymaster was seated on the edge of the desk, smoking a huge black cigar.

“I don’t know,” said the pay-yeoman, scratching his head in perplexity. “Which are receipts and which expenditures?”

“Why, they’re in a sort of chronological order,” said the paymaster vaguely. “But it must be mostly expenditures.”

The yeoman sighed hopelessly and turned over some halfdozen pages. Then he gazed at the book reflectively, tapping his teeth with the end of a penholder.

“Now, here, for instance,” he said. “Here’s an entry: ‘James Martin. To experience supplied—\$8000.’ Does that mean you gave him eight thousand, or did he give it to you?”

The paymaster did not reply. Instead, he leaned over the yeoman’s shoulder and gazed at the page for a full minute in silence.

Then he took the book from the yeoman, erased something written on the page in pencil, and taking a pen from the desk, printed across it in big black letters the word “Paid.”

Then he returned the book to the yeoman.

“But was it a receipt or an expenditure?” persisted the other. “That doesn’t mean anything.”

“It means a good deal to me,” said the paymaster.

“And,” he added to himself as he turned to leave the office, “to Jimmie.”

(All-Story Magazine, January 1914)

An Agacella Or

George Stafford had been—believe him—from his infancy a most unique and interesting personality. But if you will believe me instead, he had been nothing of the sort.

I know very well the conclusion at which you will immediately arrive when I say that George Stafford was phlegmatic. But you will be wrong. In these days of extreme specialization, even our adjectives are not free; it has come to the place where nothing can properly be called occult except a science, nothing can be high—in the figurative sense— except ideals, and no one can be phlegmatic except a Dutchman. Nevertheless, in spite of the facts that he was born in Plainfield, New Jersey, that he spoke nothing but United States (being as ignorant of English as he was of Sanskrit), and that his father had made some half a million dollars solely through the benevolent protection of the New York Custom House, George Stafford was phlegmatic. More than that, he was unimaginative, he considered billiards a rather violent form of exercise, and, if the truth be told, he was even a trifle stupid.

To let you at once into the secrets of George's mind and character, it is only necessary to say that he was spending his vacation at the Hotel Thiersberry, in the Berkshires. With the single exception of an orchestra chair in a New York theater, the Hotel Thiersberry is admitted to be the very dullest spot in all America. It is eminently proper, fearfully expensive, and in the last degree exclusive. "Exclusive" is a terrible word, and the Hotel Thiersberry is a terrible place. And it was here that George Stafford was spending his vacation.

I use the term "vacation" merely for the sake of politeness. For, consulting my dictionary, I find that a vacation is an intermission of stated employment, and it would be absurd to imagine George as consorting with anything so vulgar as stated employment. Not that he was spiritualistic or esthetic or artistic; work—or anything else—could never have disturbed George's soul; but it would most certainly have disturbed his body. And yet he had an excuse—such as it was—for his use of the word "vacation." For, having existed through thirty years in a state of habitual and supreme idleness, George had been persuaded by a friend to put on at least the semblance of endeavor, and had submitted to the painting of a sign, "Rainier & Stafford, Architects," on the door of a modest suite on the fifty-

eighth floor of a downtown skyscraper. The check which the elder Stafford drew each month to help pay George's share of the office expenses was surprisingly small, everything considered.

It was through the influence of Rainier, his partner, that George had been permitted to enter the jealous portals of the Hotel Thiersberry; for the House of Stafford, though favorably known on Mercer Street, was beyond the pale socially. It had not yet arrived. George, though idle, had never been fashionably idle; indeed, that is an art that is seldom acquired as early as the second generation. Thus it was that upon registering at the Hotel Thiersberry George had found himself entering on an entirely new phase of existence.

It was not at all the same as an ordinary hotel. To mention only one peculiarity, George found soon after his arrival, on going into the library to write a letter to his partner, that there was no letter paper. On investigation, he learned that at the Hotel Thiersberry one was supposed to be desirous of using one's own letter paper. George had none, and he distinctly desired to write a letter; in fact, now that he came to think of it, several of them.

The third morning of his vacation found George in the library, writing letters. He had bought the paper the day before, in a shop in the village, five miles away. He was half ashamed to use it, and it was indeed very unusual paper; but the shop had contained nothing else that was even possible. This that he had finally chosen was tinted a magnificent purple, and there was embossed in flaming gold at the top of each sheet the figure of an animal that greatly resembled a cow, holding in its hoofs what appeared to be a bundle of kindling wood. It was one of those atrocities which you may see in any stationery shop window; and even George, deficient in taste as he was, had been almost tempted to buy a linen tablet instead.

George was writing on the large mahogany table in the center of the library. Seated opposite him was the lank and angular Mrs. Gerard-Lee, copying a list of synonyms from Graves; for Mrs. Gerard-Lee was an authority. Over by a window were young Mr. Ambleswaite and Miss Lorry Carson, engaged in a hot dispute concerning the proper shape of legs, it being understood that the legs were supposed to be attached to a Pelton saddler; while in front of the door leading to the veranda were gathered a halfdozen old females representing at least twelve hundred pounds avoirdupois and about twelve millio~ sterling. "How Mother would enjoy this!" thought George. And he wrote:

I just overheard Mrs. Scott-Wickersham say that she returned to Amenia a month later than usual in order to attend the Duchess of Wimbledon's masque ball. And yet she doesn't seem—

At this moment George became aware of the fact that some one was standing at his right elbow. Turning, he beheld a middleaged lady of impressive build and a somewhat florid countenance peering through a lorgnette at the sheets of letter paper lying before him. At his movement, her gaze slowly traveled from the paper to his upturned face.

"Sir," she said, "what is your name?"

"What?" said George, taken aback. "My—oh, yes, my name—of course, certainly, my name." Then, somewhat recovering himself, "Stafford is my name," he said with dignity.

His questioner regarded him with a look of triumph. "It is he," she said to herself, aloud. "I am sure of it, since he can't remember his name." Whereupon she winked at George distinctly, even painfully.

Now, George had learned in the last three days that one must be willing to undergo a certain amount of humiliation when one is breaking into the Hotel Thiersberry. But to have a strange lady stand before you and make remarks about you to your face and wink at you was too much. He opened his mouth to protest, but before he could speak, the lady continued. "Mr. Stafford," she said, "I am Mrs. Gordon Wheeler, of Lenox; and this is my daughter.... Cecily, Mr. Stafford."

Whatever protest George had decided to utter was drowned in amazement as Mrs. Gordon Wheeler stepped aside to make way for her daughter. For the first time in quite ten years he became conscious of the blood in his veins. While he stood half dazed by the vision of loveliness disclosed by Mrs. Wheeler's timely eclipse, Cecily, her cheeks a delightful rosy pink, stepped up to him with outstretched hands.

"Mr. Stafford," she said in a low, sweet voice. And then she stopped, as if finding it impossible to express her feelings in words.

"My dear girl," said George, taking the hands and holding on to them, "if you will sit in this chair for a few minutes, till I finish my letter, I shall be ready to

talk to you. I trust your mother sleeps in the afternoon?”

“Good heavens!” said Mrs. Wheeler. “Here I am with an unmarried daughter, and the man accuses me of sleeping! My dear sir, it is impossible. In these days of the vulgar competition of the *nouveau riche*, one must be constantly on one’s guard. However, I often close my eyes.”

“I am sure you do,” said George approvingly; and then, under his breath, “Goodness knows they need it!”

“You will eat at our table?” asked Mrs. Wheeler.

“Certainly,” said George, “and thank you.”

After Mrs. Wheeler had gone, it took George a full hour to finish the letter to his mother. Within two minutes, Cecily, seated beside him, became impatient and began lassoing the toe of her slipper with the cord of her handbag; and George, wanting an excuse to gaze at the slipper, which was worth it, offered a wager that she couldn’t do it once in ten.

“That is very silly,” said Cecily, “as I have been walking and am covered with dust.”

“My dear girl—” began George, embarrassed.

“You called me that before,” Cecily interrupted, “and I don’t like it. And now, if you don’t mind, I shall read while you finish your letter.” But she raised her eyes every few seconds to see if George was through writing, which accounts for the fact that he spoiled four sheets of the wonderfully embossed paper with blots, and found himself writing upside down on the fifth.

The early afternoon found George and Cecily together in a canoe on the lake in front of the hotel. The water was still and crystal clear, save where here and there a leaping trout or bass disturbed its surface. Above their heads the overhanging boughs swayed gently back and forth with the sinuous grace of an Indian punkah; and the water trickled from the up-sprung leaves with a soothing, continuous music. George, leaning back contentedly, lit a cigarette—his fifth in half an hour—and blew caressing rings around the neck of a greedy swan.

“Aren’t you afraid you’ll get overheated?” said Cecily sarcastically.

“No,” said George, in innocent surprise. “It’s perfectly safe here in the shade. Really, I’m quite cool.”

Cecily sat up straight and regarded him with speechless indignation. “Do you think,” she finally demanded, “that I came out in this boat to sit and watch you smoke? Look at that!”—pointing across the lake, where another canoe could be seen shooting along the farther shore. “They started after we did. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Take me back to the hotel.”

At this command George sat up and regarded his companion with surprise. “What the dickens have I done?” he demanded “What’s the trouble?”

“The trouble is,” said Cecily severely, “that this is a canoe and not a houseboat. It’s supposed to move. This swayin’ motion which I experience whenever you shift to a more comfortable position is no doubt very delightful, but I can get the same effect in a rocking chair, where there is no danger of being spilled into the water at every—”

“Do you mean,” George interrupted, “that you want to cross the lake?”

“I do,” said Cecily decidedly.

The young man sat up again, this time quite erect, and surveyed his companion with unfeigned astonishment. “Good heavens!” he said. “What for? Look at that!”—pointing to the float at the bottom of the steps leading to the hotel. It was quite two hundred feet away. “Haven’t we come all the way from there to here? I know we drifted, but we came, didn’t we? Anyway, why should we want to get anywhere? I don’t see why you want to go so fast.”

Cecily regarded him with unmixed contempt. “Very well,” she said finally. “If you will hand me that paddle, I shall return to the hotel. I suppose I must take you too, since you’re too heavy to throw overboard. Give me the paddle, please.”

At last George was aroused. Now, there was not less than two hundred pounds of George; and a mass of two hundred pounds, when once aroused, can do almost anything with a canoe. Within ten seconds of the commencement of the young man’s unwonted and sudden activity, the canoe was resting on the surface of the lake bottom upwards, with Cecily clinging desperately on one end, and George on the other.

“I *asked* you to hand me the paddle,” said Cecily in chilling tones.

George glared at her across the shiny bottom. “Here it is,” said he grimly, reaching for it as it floated by some two feet away.

“Be careful!” screamed Cecily; whereupon George, losing his hold on the canoe, floundered frantically about like a young whale, causing Cecily’s end, with Cecily attached, to sink some four or five feet into the lake. When she emerged, dripping with water and pink with rage, George had again caught hold of the canoe, and was trying to hold on to the paddle and wipe the water from his eyes with one hand.

“I suppose,” said Cecily, with withering contempt, “that you can swim?”

“I can,” said George, “but I hate to.”

“I honestly believe that, if I could, you would let me tow you ashore.”

“No-o”—doubtfully. “But if you could go to the hotel and get someone to fetch a boat—”

Cecily was speechless. Without another word, she gave the canoe a push against George’s breast, and started swimming toward the float with one hand, guiding her cargo with the other. George floated calmly on his back, eying the performance with admiring approval. By virtue of his position, he arrived at the float first; and, clambering upon it, he pulled first Cecily, and then the canoe, out after him.

“That was a jolly ducking, wasn’t it?” he said pleasantly.

During the week that followed, George Stafford was subjected, for the first time in his life, to discipline. Far from being offended at his willingness to be towed ashore, Cecily seemed to take an even deeper interest in him, and lost no time in undertaking his reformation. After many attempts, she found his wits incapable of exercise; but she had less difficulty with his arms and legs. By the end of the week he presented almost an athletic appearance, though it is true that he was eternally out of breath.

Behold him, then, on a Friday afternoon, dressed in flannels and baffing wildly at a tennis ball which Cecily always managed to send just beyond his reach.

George's flannels were not immaculate—he tumbled too often in his vain lunges after the ball—his face was dripping with perspiration, and his collar had somewhat the appearance of a lettuce salad. Cecily stopped suddenly with her racket uplifted ready to serve, and began to laugh.

“What's the matter?” her opponent demanded.

“Nothing,” said Cecily, “only ” and then she laughed again.

“Look a' here,” said George hotly, “if you think—”

“But I don't. I can't. Are you tired?”

“No!”—indignantly.

“Well, I am. Besides, I want to talk. I've just thought of something I want to tell you.”

“What is it?” asked George, after they had walked over to a tree and seated themselves in the shade. He was lying flat on his back, with a cigarette between his lips, blinking stupidly at a fleecy, puffed-up cloud that showed through a rift in the leaves. Cecily, seated beside him, was idly stuffing the pocket of his shirt with grass. When she spoke it was in a slow, impressive tone.

“Mamma suspects,” said she.

George turned and looked at her uneasily. “Suspects what?”

“Why,” said Cecily, embarrassed, “don't you know? Our— my—us.”

“Oh!” said George, in a tone of relief. Then, raising himself to his elbow in irritation, “I don't like people who suspect,” he declared. “It's uncomfortable, and it's dangerous, and it's bad form. Now, I never suspect any one. Why should she?”

“Perhaps she saw us.”

“When?”

“Last night. You remember you kissed me good-night on the veranda, and then

followed me up to the hall and—”

“All right,” said George; “that settles it. I’m through. If every time you turn around—”

“Don’t be silly,” Cecily interrupted impatiently. “You know we’ve got to tell her.”

“My dear girl,” said George, “we have nothing to do with it. It’s *you*. You pulled me ashore. You made me play tennis. You called me George. And now—it’s up to you.”

“But I’ve tried, and I can’t. I really can’t.”

“Very well,” said George. “Then, we’ll have to call it off. Rather than face that—your mother, Ill go away from here and never see you again. You’re killing me, anyway. Look at that sun! I’ve been out in it for three hours, when I should have been asleep. I’ve done nothing but work ever since I met you. I wake up in the morning all ready for a good rest, and here you are at the door loaded down with paddles and rods and lines. You can’t even let the fish alone. And if you think for a minute that I—”

“All right,” said Cecily. “I’ll tell her. But you’ll have to be with me.”

Accordingly, nine o’clock of that evening found a young man and a girl walking hand in hand down the corridor in the Hotel Thiersberry which led to the apartments of Mrs. Gordon Wheeler. They walked slowly, even timidly. As they passed an elevator shaft, the young man might have been observed glancing at it longingly; whereupon the girl tightened her grasp on his hand and hurried her step.

The loud bang of a door stopped them halfway down the hall. Then came heavy footsteps; and they stood still, hesitating, while the ponderous form of Mrs. Gordon Wheeler bore down upon them from the direction of her rooms.

“There you are!” exclaimed Mrs. Wheeler, in the tone of one who has made an important, if not wholly pleasing, discovery.

“We are, indeed,” agreed George, with admirable presence of mind.

Mrs. Wheeler paused, regarding the pair sternly with set lips, then pointed silently to the door of her rooms.

“We can’t talk here,” she said.

“Now,” she continued, after they were seated inside the apartment, “what have you to say for yourself?”

“Mrs. Wheeler,” said George, “in view of the eloquence of your eyes, I am silent. I am sure there is something you wish to say to me.”

“Young man, are you entirely without morals?”

“I hope so. They are inconvenient. Have I ever given you reason to doubt it?” demanded George.

“Don’t be funny,” Mrs. Wheeler said sternly. “This is no laughing matter. Don’t try to be witty, sir.”

“He won’t, Mamma,” put in Cecily. “I can promise you that.”

“Be silent, child! You don’t know what you’ve escaped,” said her mother. “As for you”—turning to George—“what do you think of this?”

George took the slip—a newspaper clipping—and read it through. “Well, what of it?” he demanded.

“Of course you don’t understand it,” said Mrs. Wheeler sarcastically. “I am surprised—I am really surprised—at your shamelessness. Listen.” She read aloud from the newspaper clipping:

The Earl of Woodstock, who has been staying since early July at the Severance villa in Newport, is reported to have retreated to a hotel in the Berkshires for a month’s rest. He is preserving a strict incognito, having been advised by his physicians to obtain absolute quiet, if possible.

“Well,” said George, “it’s a good thing for the earl that Cecily didn’t get hold of him.”

Mrs. Wheeler, ignoring him, walked to her writing desk and took from the top

thereof a large book bound in red leather.

“That,” she said, pointing to the clipping she had just read, “was in the *Herald* two weeks ago. It naturally led me to investigate, since Cecily and I also had arranged to come to the Berkshires, and among other information I found the following”—reading aloud from the book:

Woodstock, Earl of, and Baron Dynely of Aldingbourne, county Oxford, in England; an agacella or, pied sable, armed, unguled, and bearing rods. *Virtus dedit, cura servabit.*

“Now,” said Mrs. Wheeler, closing the book and dropping it on the table with a bang that caused Cecily to jump clear out of her chair, “what do you think of that?”

“Fine,” said George approvingly. “Quite interesting. What does it mean?”

“It means that you’re an impostor,” said Mrs. Wheeler, glaring at him. “But, thank God, I’ve found you out in time! One week after that notice appeared in the *Herald* I walked into the library of this hotel. What did I see? I saw a fat, overfed, and foolish-looking young man writing letters. Looking closer, I saw that the paper he was using bore a crest consisting of an agacella or, armed, and bearing rods.”

“It was nothing of the sort,” said George hotly. “It was a cow getting ready to light a fire.”

“Don’t interrupt,” said Mrs. Wheeler. “Don’t you think I know an agacella when I see one? I asked the young man his name. It took him quite two minutes to think of it. On questioning him further, I discovered that he was completely an ass. The conclusion was inevitable: it was the Earl of Woodstock!”

“It was nothing of the sort!” said George again, indignantly. “It was me!”

“Of course,” Mrs. Wheeler went on, again ignoring him, “I immediately introduced him to my daughter. Cecily—dear child—did her part nobly. She became your constant companion. You became inseparable. And just as I was preparing to send to London to find out what repairs were needed at your town house, I look over my evening’s mail, and I find—this!” She snatched up a newspaper from a heap on the desk and read aloud from its columns:

The Earl of Woodstock, who has been taking a much-needed rest at the Hope cottage in the Berkshires, has returned to the Severance villa at Newport.

“Now,” said Mrs. Wheeler, pointing an accusing finger at George, “who are you?”

“That was the first question you asked me,” said George. “Are you going to begin all over again? Because if you are ” He rose and picked up his hat.

“No, you don’t,” said Mrs. Wheeler grimly, getting between him and the door. “You wait till I’m through with you.”

“George!” cried Cecily. “Are you going to leave me?”

George, incapable of the exertion required to stand and talk at the same time, reseated himself.

“Cecily,” said he, “you ask too much of me. I could forgive you anything but your choice of a mother. That was your great mistake. As it is, we must part. I shall never see you again. The fact that we are married makes no difference.”

“Married!” shrieked Mrs. Wheeler, dropping upon a divan and clutching wildly at the air.

“Yes, married,” said George calmly. “Married by a fool of a parson in the village yonder. Cecily has won me. She had rather a hard time of it, and so did I. I’m completely tired out. The truth is, I was in a state of utter exhaustion, and didn’t realize what I was doing. I was in no condition to resist.”

Mrs. Wheeler arose, trembling, resting her hand on her bosom tragically. “Mr. Stafford,” she said, “this is incredible. I can scarcely believe my ears. As for you, Cecily, you shall hear from me; but not now—not tonight. I am inexpressibly shocked. My nerves are completely upset. Tomorrow we shall talk the matter over and do the best we can with this awful mess. Good-night.” She walked falteringly to the door of her bedroom and disappeared within.

“George,” said Cecily, walking over to him and taking his hands in her own, “do you love me?”

“Of course I do,” said George. “Haven’t I proved it?”

Cecily stooped and kissed his cheek. "I don't mind it a bit because you're not an earl, dear," she said tenderly. "You're stupid enough to be one."

(*Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, April 1914)

The Mother of Invention

William Frederick Marston blew a cone of cigarette smoke thoughtfully into the air, sighed despairingly, and read the cablegram for the third time:

WALK HOME TIRED OF YOUR FOOLISHNESS NOT A CENT.

Jonathan Marston.

"I suppose," said William Frederick aloud, "he thinks he's funny. And the first two words, which are entirely useless and perfectly offensive, cost him an extra halfdollar. The governor is getting extravagant."

He tossed his cigarette into a porcelain urn on the table, lit another, and crossing the room, seated himself in a chair by the window and gazed thoughtfully out at the throng in the street below.

The hour was halfpast three in the afternoon; the street, the Rue Royale, Paris. Trim speedy taxicabs, with their air of fussy importance, glided along the farther curb; here and there an oldfashioned cabriolet or hansom dodged helplessly about in the rush of the modern traffic. The pedestrians sauntered, strolled, trotted, paraded—did everything, in short, except walk. The chauffeurs and cab drivers courteously exchanged scurrilous epithets, the *sergent de ville* at the corner blew his whistle furiously, waving his arms wildly in all directions, and barefooted gamins darted through the crowd, crying late evening editions of the newspapers. Over all was the soft radiance of the September sun.

But the humor and color of this animated scene was entirely lost upon William Frederick Marston. Perched high in the air on the horns of a dire dilemma, he was madly struggling in a desperate effort to regain a footing on solid earth.

For perhaps half an hour he remained sitting by the window, smoking many cigarettes and trying to think. But his situation was so fantastically horrible, so utterly unprecedented, that he found it impossible to shape his thoughts. There was no ground on which to build. The hypothesis being absurd, how could he be

expected to arrive at a logical conclusion?

Suddenly he rose to his feet, thrust his hand into his vest pocket and drew forth three francpieces and one or two sous. For a moment he gazed at them mournfully, then returned them to his pocket, crossed to a wardrobe, took from it his hat and gloves, and left the room.

In fifteen minutes he resumed, looking, if possible, more dejected than before. He entered the room with a slow, irresolute step, closing the door behind him with exaggerated care. Depositing his hat and gloves on the table, he crossed the room and stood by the window. Again he thrust his hand into his vest pocket, and drew it forth. It contained three sous. Opening the window, he tossed them into the street below and smiled with tragic amusement as he saw three or four gamins dart toward them. Then, with a deep sounding sigh, he sank back in a chair by the window, muttering, "I—Billy Marston—to lose *three francs* at roulette! It is horrible."

It was, indeed; too, it was incredible. But alas! It was true.

And now the three francs were gone, and William Frederick Marston began to think in earnest.

How it had come about he could scarcely have told. His recollection of the events of the three months previous was somewhat dimmed by their whirlwind rapidity and unusual and varied character. He had a faint memory of an affair of the heart *a la* Byron at Milan, a disgraceful though amusing experience among the beachcombers at Marseilles, and a disastrous hour of recklessness at Monte Carlo. He had mentioned none of these incidents in his letters to his father, Jonathan Marston, of New York, who had seen fit to send his son, William Frederick, on an educational tour of the Mediterranean during the summer vacation preceding his senior year at Harvard.

The tour of the Mediterranean had been abruptly halted by the misfortune at Monte Carlo. William Frederick had cabled to New York for additional funds and on receiving them he had departed for Paris. Struck by the beauty of that city, he had immediately decided to buy it, and discovered too late that he had squandered his last sou on a worthless option. The fall term at Harvard was to begin in two weeks. He cabled his father:

LEAVE FOR NEW YORK TOMORROW WIRE FUNDS.

William.

That cablegram promptly brought the following answer:

FIVE HUNDRED MORE YOU NEED A GUARDIAN.

Father.

But by that time the lure of the City by the Seine had William Frederick in its deadly grasp. Three days later he sent another cablegram:

FUNDS DISAPPEARED WIRE QUICK SAIL TOMORROW.

William.

In a few hours came the following answer:

PASSAGE ON *Alvonia* SAILING CHERBOURG TENTH PAID HERE AM
SENDING TWENTY DOLLARS FOR FARE TO CHERBOURG.

Father.

William Frederick, commenting indignantly on the folly and immorality of suspicious parents, obtained the twenty dollars and purchased a ticket for Cherbourg, whither he decided to betake himself the following morning. The ticket, however, was but thirty francs. That evening he entered a certain gay and noisy apartment in the Montparnasse Quarter with fifty francs in his pocket, and came out with two thousand. On the following day, at the hour the *Alvonia* sailed from Cherbourg, he was walking in the Champs Elysees, ogling aristocratic carriages and trying to decide whether to spend the evening on the Mountain or at the Folies Bergere.

Three days later he sent the following cablegram, collect:

MISSED STEAMER WIRE FUNDS OR ARRANGE TRANSPORTATION.

William.

And it was in answer to this that he had received the unfeeling and sarcastic advice from his father to walk home. And William Frederick, being a wise son

and therefore knowing his own father, was very well aware of the fact that what Jonathan Marston said, he meant.

He was, in fact, tired of Paris. He wanted to go home. The governor must know that. And the fall term at the university would commence in three days. He felt a sudden fierce yearning for knowledge. Was his father so unfeeling as to deny him the advantages of a decent education? Did he not realize the imperative necessity for one's attendance at one's preliminary lectures and recitations? Surely he must. Another cablegram would persuade him.

But no. Pride had something to say about that. Since his father had seen fit to refuse his reasonable request for money to come home, he would make no further appeal to him. Such an appeal, he told himself bitterly, would be useless anyway. Some other expedient must be found.

He had friends, of course—dozens of them. There were one or two whom he could trust utterly—Sackville Du Mont, for instance, or Tom Driscoll, of Philadelphia. But they, poor devils, could be of no use in a financial difficulty. And the others would talk. That would serve his father right—to have it known all over New York that the son of Jonathan Marston had been forced to depend on the assistance of friends to get home when an unforeseen shortage of funds had overtaken him during his travels in Europe. If his father showed no concern for the dignity of the Marston name, why should *he*?

But here, again, entered pride. And the pride of youth, when properly nourished and aroused is capable of magnificent sacrifices and supreme idiocies. It caused William Frederick to reject with scorn the idea of an appeal for money to his acquaintances; it caused him to regard the conduct of his father with increasing indignation and resentment; it caused him, finally, to resolve grandly that he would make his way home unaided and alone. Sublime resolution!

He proceeded immediately to the consideration of ways and means. The obvious and ordinary method he dismissed with contempt. It was all very well for common persons to peel potatoes or feed cattle for a passage across the Atlantic—indeed, Tom Driscoll had done it, and he thought none the less of him for it—but such a degradation could not even be thought of in the case of William Frederick Marston. It was a sheer impossibility. In fact, he regarded as absolutely necessary the luxuries and privileges of the first cabin. This greatly increased the difficulty of an otherwise simple task. He must use his wits.

He used them. A thousand schemes offered themselves to his mind, each to be rejected in its turn. As for earning the money for a passage, that was impossible. He had no ability that was marketable, even in that greatest and most varied of all markets—Paris. He realized it with a sense of amazement.

But there must be a way. He enlarged his scope of speculation. Stowaway? Bah! Take passage on a liner, pretend to have lost his ticket, and trust to Fortune and the name of Marston? But that would mean an appeal to his father, perhaps even a demand on him by the steamship company. Besides, there was the fare to Cherbourg, and incidentals. Appeal to Ambassador Halleck? But that, again, would mean an appeal to his father, though indirectly.

If he only possessed Tom Driscoli's experience and daring! Tom could do anything—and would. And was not he the equal of Tom Driscoll? Ha! His pride rose higher and higher, carrying William Frederick with it in everwidening circles, until finally he arrived in the realm of pure artistic creation. Here the question of morality ceases to exist. The intellect, freed from the troublesome problems of ethics and legality, conceives, with a sole and single aim, the satisfaction of its own desires.

And then, suddenly, the face of the young man was illumined with a great light. This gave place to a deep, painful frown; and the frown, in its turn, to a sublime and portentous grin. He crossed to the table for a cigarette and finding the box empty, fished one of his discarded stubs from the porcelain urn and lit it with the detached air of a genius at his easel.

“After all,” he muttered, “I shall have to ask Tom to help, but not with money. The question is, will he do it? Well—he must. I'll make it as strong as I can. And—let's see—there's the William Penn Tablet, and the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, and the Statue of Franklin, and the Old Tower—”

William Frederick Marston had achieved an immortal conception.

At this point this tale assumes the dignity and importance of history, and we shall let the chroniclers speak for themselves. From the *Philadelphia Clarion*, September 21:

LIBERTY BELL DEFACED

Name of French Palmist Appears in Red Paint on its Surface

Police are at a Loss to Discover Perpetrator of Deed of Vandalism and are in Communication with the State Department at Washington.

Late last evening, or early this morning, some person or persons entered Independence Hall by a window; at the rear and defaced the Liberty Bell by painting on it, in large red letters, the following:

Jules Mercade

Chiromancien

37 Rue de Rennes

Paris

The outrage was first discovered by H. P. Sawyer, who entered the room at eight o'clock this morning to assume his duties as guardian of the bell. He first noticed that the window leading from the room to the park at the rear was open. Startled, he hurried to the Bell to assure himself of its safety and soundness, and found it disfigured in the manner described above.

The guard whose duty it was to close up the building last night declares that the window was locked by him at nine o'clock; but that question is really of no importance, since the fastening was old and rusty, and could have been easily forced even without the aid of a tool. No one can be found who saw any person either in the park at the rear or near the window. The vandal evidently chose an hour when he was certain to be unobserved. The police have been unable to discover any clue whatever to his whereabouts or identity.

The authorities are at a loss to account for any possible motive. There was no attempt, apparently, at permanent mutilation. The paint used was ordinary house paint, easily removable by the application of turpentine. If it is really, as it seems to be, an advertisement of a French palmist who expects to escape punishment for the outrage he has instigated because of his distant residence from the scene

of its commission, Monsieur Mercade will quickly discover his mistake. The State Department has already communicated with the proper authorities at Paris, asking them to apprehend Mercade, and a reply is expected not later than this afternoon.

This deplorable affair has revealed the lamentable lack of proper care by the authorities of our public museums and historical relics. It may be asserted without fear of successful contradiction...

September 22nd:

It will be a matter of pleasure and gratification to every patriotic citizen to learn that Jules Mercade, whose name was found painted on the Liberty Bell yesterday morning, was arrested at his rooms at 37 Rue de Rennes, Paris, early yesterday afternoon.

According to Paris dispatches, Mercade exhibited no surprise at his arrest, since which time he has preserved a profound silence. He has even refused to admit his identity, and the police have been unable to establish it, since he appears to have occupied the rooms at 37 Rue de Rennes for few days only before his arrest. The prisoner seems, indeed, to be much amused at the position in which he finds himself, and it is the opinion of the French authorities that he expects to escape punishment for his act on account of lack of evidence, and then reap the advantage of the publicity his name has received.

Mercade has agreed to dispense with the formality of extradition on condition that he receive first-class steamship accommodations and that there be no outward sign of his status as a prisoner; and to this peculiar bargain the French authorities have agreed at the request of Ambassador Halleck, in order to avoid delay.

He will sail tomorrow from Cherbourg, on the *Daconia*, accompanied by a member of the Paris police.

September 29th:

If there be such a person as "Jules Mercade," and if he be responsible for the defacement of the Liberty Bell on September 21, it seems likely that, owing to the bungling of the Paris police, he will go unpunished.

The “Jules Mercade” who a police officer brought over on the *Daconia*, which arrived at New York yesterday, proved to be no less a personage than William Frederick Marston, son of Jonathan Marston, the New York financier.

Young Marston seems to regard his experience as an amusing escapade, and though he is unable, or unwilling, to explain how he came to be taken for “Jules Mercade,” and indeed refuses to discuss the affair in any way whatever, it is evident that he has enjoyed himself immensely at the expense of the much vaunted Paris police. He was, of course, immediately released.

But Mr. Marston, however much he has enjoyed himself, has aided in the defeat of the ends of justice—though without such intention—by failing to assert and prove his identity at the time of his arrest. No doubt, he has gotten a great deal of fun out of it. But the defacement of the Liberty Bell was an offense against national sentiment and dignity, and all good citizens will agree that...

At about eight o'clock in the evening of the day on which the *Daconia* arrived in New York, two men were seated, smoking at the dinner table in the Marston home on Fifth Avenue. The ladies had departed about fifteen minutes previously. The elder man was puffing thoughtfully on a large black Cazadores; the younger had consumed two cigarettes and was starting on a third.

“That bridge over the Tiber at Athens is wonderful,” said the younger man suddenly, breaking the oppressive silence with an effort. “I don’t wonder you insisted I shouldn’t miss it.” He chattered on for a minute, stammered, and stopped.

“William,” said the elder man in a voice deep, well modulated, and musical, “You’re a perfect ass. Don’t try to play the innocent baby with me. I know you too well. At the same time, I have made a discovery. There is one man in this world who is even a bigger idiot than you are.”

Judging by the calm tranquillity with which the younger man received these rather forceful phrases, it is to be supposed that he had heard them before. He poured himself a pony of cognac and passed it to and fro under his nose.

“Of course,” he said, sniffing with appreciation, you arouse my curiosity. Who may this inconceivable idiot be?”

The elder man drew in a mouthful of smoke and expelled it with the proper care

and deliberation before he answered. “The man,” he said, “who, at your request, painted a monstrous, red, hideous sign on the Liberty Bell of our great country.” Jonathan Marston, the terrible, smiled reminiscently—a smile of wisdom and understanding.

“And by the way,” he continued presently, “it is really too bad that your little plot made it necessary to change your address. Of course that was why you missed my last cablegram. My advice to walk home was meant merely as a temporary pill. I wired you five hundred dollars the following day.”

(The Black Cat, August 1913)