

A TAKER OF CRUMBS

By Channing Pollock

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"The red sun slipped over the edge of the earth and left her sitting there. She was very lonely. After a moment she walked to the window and began reading her letter for the fiftieth time. 'Dear Lady o' Mine' was its first line—'Dear Lady o' Mine.'"

Anne Stacey's laggard fingers dropped from the typewriter keys into her lap, and she whispered the last words of the paragraph to herself almost lovingly. The story was too nearly finished to be written all over again, and yet that was the very phrase which opened the note lying at her side.

To epitomize the romance of her own life was one thing, she thought; to use its language was another. For an instant she was disgusted at the recollection that she had intended to offer any part of the little history for sale, and she was about to tear the page from the machine. Then came the reaction. She remembered how many empty hours she had spent in an attempt to force something purely imaginary from her brain. She knew the story she had lived and written was an interesting story and that she could dispose of it. After awhile the tired fingers returned listlessly to the keys, and the sentence in her mind staggered across the white sheet before her.

The end of the procession had been reached when the dinner bell rang. Anne Stacey laid the completed manuscript on her desk and added the note to a small bundle locked in her bureau drawer. Then she stood before the mirror and patted her soft brown hair in several places. The face that stared back at her was a plain face—sweet and honest, but far from beautiful. The mouth was too large, the nose too small, the eyes sufficiently far apart to denote intellectual ability, but not nearly close enough for that prettiness which is worth so much more to a woman. Anne had been told these things almost from the time that her eldest brother had been able to talk, but she sighed as she crossed her tiny room and walked into the hallway. A mingled odor of cabbage and burned beef ascended the stairs with the noise of many voices. Then the bell rang again, and Anne went to dinner.

She had expected to make corrections in her story afterward and to post it when she went out for her usual car ride. Instead, she unlocked the drawer,



SHE LOCKED THE LETTER, ENVELOPE AND ALL, IN HER BUREAU.

took out the packet of letters and began reading them. An observant bystander would have noticed that none of them was inclosed in an envelope. There was every reason why all should have been hidden from the prying gaze in that manner, for they were love letters. Anne had burned the envelopes three years before, doing her best to avoid seeing what was written on each. Not one of the lot had been addressed to her. Not one of the lot had been meant for her. They were the love letters of another woman.

"What's the harm?" Anne had asked herself when she had adopted them. The other woman had been married the day of the adoption and not to the author of the letters. She was a bright little creature, fluffly from the hems of her various skirts to the topmost curl of her fair hair, and she had kept as many men wrapped around her smallest finger as there were rings around the other seven. An author of love letters more or less had not meant very much to her. So, when she finally decided upon Fred, the epistles of Joe and Will had found a mutual resting place at the bottom of an extremely dainty Japanese wastebasket which occupied at least a twentieth of the floor space in the room the girls had tenanted together. On top of them the bright lit-

tle creature had piled numberless dance programmes, fans with names scrawled across them and a couple of periodicals containing verse from the pen of the irrepressible Will.

Of the three men Will had been most in earnest. The afternoon of the marriage he had gone west to work for a Chicago newspaper and to forget. The latter part of this purpose was set forth beautifully in one of the letters in the packet.

Anne Stacey, who had written "on space" for a living since girlhood and who had never had a sweetheart, had

rescued the bundle from the Japanese wastebasket. She recalled Will as a fine, broad shouldered young fellow who up to the time that he had ceased visiting her chum, a few months before, had paid no attention whatever to the large mouthed, small nosed, intellectual girl who always came a point of having an engagement somewhere within ten minutes of the hour of his arrival. Anne had never been noticed, and she didn't expect it. She promptly forgot being snubbed and remembered only that once Will had pressed her hand quite tightly while he said, "Little woman, I think you understand what this means to me."

Recollecting this, Anne had adopted the letters. At first she had enjoyed them only as love letters—letters which were real and which said just what she had been making her people say for ever so long. Then, as the desertion of the bright little creature came to be realized as an endless desertion and as she made no new friends, those ardent notes had commenced to seem her very own. Their author was her lover. She read them over and over and over, making them more personal with each reading. For three years she fed her hungry soul with them, and then, being temporarily destitute of ideas for stories, it had occurred to her that they were the cue to one ready-made—a story of which she was the heroine.

"A Taker of Crumbs" was duly finished that very night and dispatched to the mail box in charge of the young woman in the room adjoining, who was going out to buy ice cream. Anne thought about it a great deal in the days that followed. A dozen times she would have given the world to have had it back, if only long enough to have substituted fanciful terms for the ones she had taken from the letters. "Dear Lady o' Mine!" Twice at night she dreamed that Will had come out of the west to rebuke her for stealing his love words and to take the packet out of her keeping. At the end of a month she got a check from the magazine to which the manuscript had been sent, and after that she merely waited for the appearance of the story in type. When it did appear, illustrated with a picture of a very tall girl holding two extremely long arms toward an astonishingly low door in the middle distance, she was surprised that no one seemed to take the least notice of the tale.

Anne went back to her work and wrote other stories. By grace of these and a kindly providence she was able to pay \$7 to her landlady regularly on Saturday evening and to take three car rides a week. Every Wednesday morning she walked uptown and drew a little money from a newspaper for which she wrote a column called "Hints for Home Makers." She dined at 6, revised manuscripts until 10 and cried awhile over the bundle of letters before going to bed. Now and then she stood at the window, looking out upon the hurrying throng and remembering that not one person in all that throng cared whether she lived or died.

Three weeks after the publication of "A Taker of Crumbs" she found lying on the table in the lower hall an envelope without the name of a newspaper on it. The postmark was New York. She climbed the steps leading to her room and sat down on her couch to read the letter. "Dear Lady o' Mine"—yes, it was addressed to her. "Who would have believed that there was so loving a little woman in the world? May I call tonight? That's rather soon, I admit, but—well, I am very lonely too. Will."

Anne Stacey got up and dropped the packet of letters in the Japanese wastebasket. She locked the one letter just received, envelope and all, in her bureau drawer in a place left for it.

Just Out of Them.

A lawyer who is fond of a joke went to supper after the theater with a party of friends, and he ordered coffee:

"Please bring it in a cup with the handle on the left side," he said confidentially to the waiter. "I'm left handed, and I can't use any other kind of a cup."

"Yes, sir," stammered the waiter. "I will, sir."

He was seen to hasten away and confer with the head waiter. The head waiter bore down on the party.

"What sort of a cup was that you wanted, sir?" he asked.

"Cup with the handle on the left side. I'm left handed," said the lawyer.

The head waiter disappeared to return a little later obviously perturbed.

"The cup you?" he began.

"What?" said the lawyer. "Do you mean to tell me that in a first class cafe you haven't such a thing as a cup with the handle on the left side? Absurd! Why, I couldn't possibly use any other kind. You must have plenty

"Well," said the head waiter, "we usually has, but I regrets to say, sir, that the last we had was broke this morning."—Washington Post.

Animals That Shed Tears.

Humboldt states that he had a monkey that shed tears when it was seized with fear. Renger noticed that the eyes of a small South American monkey filled with tears when it was prevented from getting some coveted object or was much frightened. Darwin cites a third case of a monkey from Borneo which in the zoological gardens was frequently observed to cry when grieved or even when much pitted. Sir E. Tennant, describing the capture of elephants in Ceylon, says that when bound some of them lay motionless with no other indication of suffering than the tears which incessantly flowed from their eyes. The keeper of the Indian elephants in Regent's park has several times observed tears rolling down the face of the old female elephant when her young one was taken away from her.

A Woman's Ruse

(Original.)

Many years ago Edward Bixby left a loving wife and their little ones to seek his fortune in the west. Bixby became a prospector in Colorado and bought a claim which he worked with a man by the name of Clark. One day Clark took Bixby to a little pocket of rocks near the mine and showed him where he had placed some articles he did not care to keep on his person. There were some money, a revolver, a gold pencil case, a bunch of keys and a picture of a woman.

"I want you to know where these things are in case anything happens to me," Clark said, and, having covered the pocket with a broad, flat stone, left no sign of the concealed articles.

Some time after this Clark was taken ill and, having no relative to leave any property to, made a will leaving his interest in their claim to Bixby, though there was then no great apparent value in the hole they were sinking. Clark recovered, but the will was not destroyed.

One day Bixby left the claim for a day to buy provisions, and when he came back he found that Clark had been murdered during his absence. There was no trace of the murderer, and Bixby was much puzzled as to who had done the deed. Bixby went on digging and finally struck very valuable ore. Then he filed Clark's will.

He had been suspected of Clark's murder, and now that it appeared he had a motive he was arrested. He could not prove that the murder was committed during his absence, and no one else was known to have an interest in Clark's death. Persons who had sold him and Clark the claim they had bought when it was thought to be of little value, hoping that if Bixby was hanged they might get it back, manufactured evidence against him, and he was convicted. The usual efforts were made by his lawyers to save his life, but they were all failures, and finally they told him he must prepare for death.

It was only a few days before the execution was to take place that a young man, an effeminate, apparently half witted fellow, entered a saloon at the county seat where Bixby had been tried and was to be executed. Going to the bar, he called for a drink and in payment offered a revolver. The barkeeper while examining it noticed scratched upon the handle "Jarvis Clark," the name of the man who had been murdered. The barkeeper took the revolver in payment for the drink and immediately sent it to the authorities. The young man who had offered it was arrested, and on his person were found two of the other articles Clark had buried, the gold pencil case and the picture of a woman. The man could give no account of himself, and since Clark had shown the picture to several persons they were enabled to identify it as his property. Bixby was released and the young man was put on trial for the murder of Clark.

Bixby's lawyers advised him to spare no pains to convict the accused, thus vindicating himself, but Bixby declared that his misfortune had shattered his nerves and he would go east to be nursed back to health by his wife. The prosecuting attorney had objected to his being permitted to depart. Bixby, however, got away before any legal move could be made to detain him.

He had had plenty of time to reach a safe distance when the young man who was about to be tried sent for the prosecuting attorney. When that official appeared the prisoner said to him:

"I'm not a man. I'm a woman and the wife of the man you hoped to hang. My husband wrote me where Clark had concealed certain articles. I came here, found them and produced the revolver for the purpose which has been achieved. I had arranged it all with my husband."

The astonished official ordered the prisoner to be examined by a woman, who found her claim to be true.

POINTED PARAGRAPHS.

Don't be a misfortune teller. If you can't do anything else, try to keep out of the way.

You don't have to be impolite to people because you dislike them.

Don't think up mean things in your mind which you intend to say if you get the chance.

Don't tell your wrongs to your friends unless you want to discover that their enthusiasm is very weak.

When an accident happens, there is always some one present to tell how it could have been avoided.

A man never knows till he gets out of the rut how many jolts and bruises he would have missed by staying in it.

It is figured that one rich man's son who has all the money he can spend will spoil ten poor young men in the course of his life and not half try.—Acheson Globe.

Wrangel and the Artist.

Adolf Menzel did not care much for women, and he was apt to treat them with scant courtesy, no matter what their rank. When he was making his picture of the Konigsberg coronation the Empress Augusta came to the conclusion that the women in it had not been sufficiently considered, so she sent Field Marshal Wrangel to tell him so. The artist took the criticism very ill and bluntly told the marshal that he had better mind his military affairs and leave art to artists. After a violent altercation Menzel pointed to the door, and Wrangel, red with rage, retired with the word, "You are a nauseous toad!"

"And now," said Mrs. Bixby, "I believe the picture of the woman Clark hid with the other articles to have something to do with the murder. Release me, and I will endeavor to find out."

Mrs. Bixby was released and set about the task she had assigned herself. It was not long before she discovered the picture to be that of a woman who had left her husband for Clark. The erring woman's husband was arrested for the murder, but he was not brought to trial. The sympathy of the people was in favor of one who had simply avenged a wrong in a way that they considered legitimate. The prisoner confessed that he had long looked for Clark and when he found him gave him a fair chance for his life. But, fearing arrest on charge of murder, he had fled as far as possible from the scene of his revenge.

There was a great deal of sympathy for Bixby, who had come so near being hanged for a murder he had not committed, and a great deal of admiration for the woman who had saved him. He remained in hiding till his wife had uncovered the real facts of the tragedy; then, on an invitation from the people of the region, he returned, took up the work on his mine where he had left it and became rich.

The Bixby case produced a great change for the better in the court before which it was tried. The court had been placed in an absurd position in convicting the wrong man, but had been set right by the trickery of a woman. Circumstantial evidence was thereafter not in favor.

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