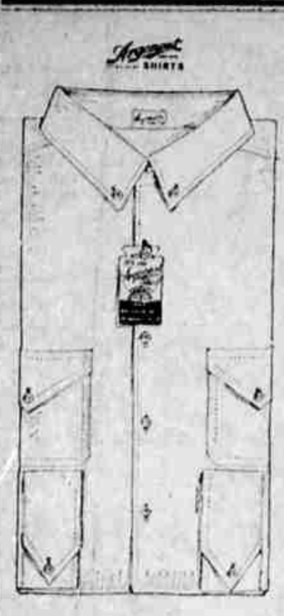

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CHAPTER XXIX (Continued)

Rouletta pressed her closer, murmuring: "Colonel Cavendish is a fine man—I'm sure he understands. You've undergone a dreadful ordeal, but—it's nearly over. He's sending for Laure now. She can tell a good deal, if she will."

"About the theft, yes. But what about the—murder? Joe McCaskey did it. There's no doubt about that. Henri weakened, after I gave him his chance. He got to drinking, I hear, and evidently he conceived the notion of telling these men. He may have gone to warn them, to appeal to them. I don't know. Then they must have quarreled. It's all clear enough when you understand the inside facts. Without knowing them, it was natural to suspect Pierce, so—I did what I had to do. I doubt if Laure knows anything about this part of the affair."

The two women were still talking when Laure entered, in company with the Mounted Police officer who had been sent to fetch her. At sight of them she halted; a sudden pallor came into her cheeks; she cast a glance of alarm about here as if seeking retreat; but Colonel Cavendish grimly invited her to follow him, and stepped into his private office. The new-comer faltered; then with a defiant toss of her head and with lips curled in disdain she obeyed; the door closed behind her.

Rouletta and the Countess Courteau fell silent now. They found nothing to talk about, and in spite of themselves they strained their ears for some sound from the other room. Even Miss Cavendish seemed vaguely to feel the suspense, for she finally took her stand beside a frost-rimed window and engaged herself in tracing patterns thereon with the tip of her finger. An occasional stormy murmur of voices, deadened by the thick log partition, indicated that Laure and her inquistor were not getting on well together.

Suddenly the girl at the window started; her apathy vanished; her expression of boredom gave place to one of such lively anticipation as to draw the attention of the two other women. A magic change came over her; she became suddenly animated, alive, atingle in every nerve; her eyes sparkled and a new color flooded her cheeks. The alteration interested her observers; they were mystified as to its cause until a quick step sounded in the entry and the door opened to admit Pierce Phillips.

It was natural that he should first see Miss Cavendish, and that he should greet her before recognizing the other occupants of the room. It was natural, too, that he should be a trifle nonplussed at finding Hilda here; nevertheless, he managed to cover his lack of ease. Not so, however, when, a moment later, the door to Colonel Cavendish's office opened and Laure, of all persons, appeared therein. Quickly Pierce inferred the reason for his summons, but, happily for him, he was spared further embarrassment. Cavendish called to him, took him by the hand in the friendliest manner, and again disappeared into his retreat, drawing the young man with him.

Brief as had been the interruption, both Hilda and Rouletta had gathered much from it; their inference was borne out when Laure paused before them and in a voice subdued by the very force of her agitation exclaimed:

"Well, I hope you're satisfied! I got it, and got it good." Her face was livid, her dark eyes were blazing wrathfully. She outthrust a shaking hand and unclenched her fingers, displaying therein a crumpled sheet of pink paper, a printed official form, the telltale tint of which indicated its fateful character. Both of her hearers were familiar with the so-called "pink tickets" of the Mounted Police; every one in the Northwest Territory, in fact, knew what they were—deportation orders. But in a tone hoarse and suppressed Laure read, "'—leave by the first safe conveyance!' That's what it says—the first safe conveyance. I suppose you'd like it better if it were a blue ticket and I had to leave in twenty-four hours. You put it over, but I won't forget. I'll get even with you."

"We had nothing to do with that," the Countess declared, quietly. "I'm sorry you take it so hard, but—it serves you right."

"Who wouldn't take it hard? To be expelled, fired out like a thief, a—" The girl's voice broke; then she pulled herself together and uttered a quavering, artificial laugh. She tossed her head again, with an obvious attempt at defiance. "Oh, it takes more than a pink ticket to down me! Anyhow, I'm sick of this place, sick of the people. I hate them." With a vicious fling of her shoulders she swept on to a seat as far from them as possible and sank into it.

So the girl had confessed, Hilda reflected. She was glad, for Pierce's sake, that this miserable complication was in process of clearing up and that he would be finally and completely exonerated; she was glad, too, that her efforts in his behalf, her humiliation, had borne fruit. He would never know how high he had made her pay, but that was all right. She felt very gently toward him at this moment, and experienced a certain wistful desire that he might understand how unselfish had been her part. It might make a difference; probably it would. Things now were not as they had been. She was a free woman. This thought obtruded itself insistently into the midst of her meditations. Yes, Courteau was gone; there was no reason now why she could not look any man honestly in the eye. Of course, there was the same disparity in years between her and Pierce which she had recognized from the beginning, but, after all, was that necessarily fatal? He had loved her genuinely enough at one time. Hilda recalled that windy night on the shores of Linderman when the whimper of a rising storm came out of the darkness, when the tree-tops tossed their branches to the sky, and when her own soul had broken its fetters and defied restraint. She thrilled at memory of those strong young arms about her, those hot lips pressing hers. That was a moment to remember always. And those dreamy, magic days that had followed, the more delightful, the more unreal because she had deliberately drugged her conscience. Then that night at White Horse! He had told her bitterly, broken-heartedly, that he could never forget. Perhaps even yet— With an effort Hilda Courteau roused herself. Never forget? Why, he had forgotten the very next day, as was quite natural. No, she was a foolish sentimentalist, and he—well, he was just one whom fate had cast for a lover's role, one destined to excite affection in women, good and bad. Some day he would find his mate and—Hilda believed she loved him well enough to rejoice in his happiness when it came. There spoke the maternal instinct which Phillips had the knack of rousing; for want of something better, she determined she would cherish that.

Meanwhile Laure sat in her corner, her head bowed, her very soul in revolt. She was tasting failure, disappointment, balked desire, and it was like gall in her mouth. She could have cried out aloud in her rage. She hated these other women whom she blamed for her undoing; she hated Cavendish, Pierce Phillips, herself.

"It serves me right," she told herself, furiously. "I deserve the pink ticket for making a fool of myself. Yes, a fool! What has Pierce ever done for me? Nothing. And I—?" Before her mind's eye came a vision of the opportunities she had let slip, the chances she had ignored. She knew full well that she could have had the pick of many men—the new-made millionaires of Dawson—but instead she had chosen him. And why? Merely because he had a way, a smile, a warm and pleasing personality—some magnetic appeal too intangible to identify. It was like her to make the wrong choice—she always did. She had come North with but one desire, one determination—namely, to make money, to reap to the full her share of this free harvest. She had given up the life she liked, the people she knew, the comforts she craved, for that and for nothing else, and what a mess she had made of the venture! Other girls not half so smart, not half so pretty as she, had feathered their nests right here before her eyes, while she was wasting her time. They had kept their heads, and they would go out in the spring, first class with good clothes and a bank-roll in the purser's safe. Some of them were married and respectable. "Never again!" she whispered to herself. "The next one will pay." Chagrin at the treatment she had suffered filled her with a poisonous hatred of all mankind, and soundlessly she cursed Phillips as the cause of her present plight.

Such thoughts as these ran tumbling through the girl's mind; her rage and her resentment were real enough; nevertheless, through this overtone there ran another note: a small voice was speaking in the midst of all her tumult—a small voice which she refused to listen to. "What I ever saw in him I don't know," she sneered, goading herself to further bitterness and stiffening her courage. "I never really cared for him; I'm too wise for that. I don't care for him now. I detest the poor, simple-minded fool. I—hate him." So she fought with herself, drowning the persistent piping of that other voice. Then her eyes dropped to that fatal paper in her lap and suddenly venom fled from her. She wondered if Cavendish would tell Pierce that he had given her the pink ticket. Probably not. The Mounted Police were usually close-mouthed about such things, and yet—Laure crushed the paper into a crumpled ball and furtively hid it in the pocket of her coat; then she raised wild, apprehensive eyes to the door. If only she dared slip out now, before Pierce reappeared, before he had a chance to see her. It seemed as if she could not bear to have him know, but—Cavendish had ordered her to wait. "My God!" the girl whispered. "I'll die, if he knows! I'll die!" She began to tremble wretchedly and to wring her hands; she could not remove her gaze from the door.

This waiting-room at the Barracks had housed people of divers and many sorts during its brief history; it had harbored strained faces, it had been the scene of strong emotional conflicts, but never, perhaps, had its narrow walls encompassed emotions in wider contrast than those experienced by the four silent women who waited there at this moment. One object of interest dominated the thoughts of each of them. These thoughts were similar in nature and sprang from the same starting-point. Curiously enough, however, they took channels as wide apart as the poles.

Josephine Cavendish had heard just enough about the incidents of the previous night to awaken her apprehensions and to stir her feeling of loyalty to the depths. The suggestion that Pierce Phillips was in the slightest degree responsible for the death of Count Courteau had roused her indignation and her fighting blood. Unable to endure the suspense of idle waiting, she had sought relief by assuming a sort of sentinel post where she could watch developments. It was something to be close to his affairs. It was next to being close to him; hence the reason of her presence and her insistence upon remaining.

In her mind there had never been the slightest question of Pierce's innocence; any doubt of it, expressed or implied, awoke in her a sharp and bitter antagonism quite remarkable; no bird could have flown quicker to the aid of her chick, no wolf mother could have bristled more ferociously at threat to her cub, than did this serene, inexperienced girl-woman at hint of peril to Pierce Phillips. And yet, on the surface, at least, she and Pierce were only friends. He had never voiced a word of love to her. But—of what use are words when hearts are full and when confession lurks in every glance, every gesture; when every commonplace is thrilling and significant?

In her eyes no disgrace whatever attached to him as a result of the notoriety he had suffered. On the contrary, she considered him a martyr, a hero, the object of a deep conspiracy, and his wrongs smarted her. He was, in short, a romantic figure. Moreover, she had recently begun to believe that this entire situation was contrived purely for the purpose of bringing them together, of acquainting them with each other, and of testing the strength of their mutual regard. These other women, whom she saw today for the first time, she considered merely extra figures in the drama of which she and Pierce played the leads—witnesses in the case deserving no attention. She would be grateful to them, of course, if they succeeded in helping him, but, at best, they were minor characters, supers in the cast. Once Pierce himself strode into the scene, she forgot them entirely.

What a picture her lover made, she reflected; how he filled her eye! What importance he possessed! Surely the world must see and feel how dominant, how splendid he was. It must recognize how impossible it would be for him to do wrong. The mere sight of him had set her to vibrating, and now inspired in her a certain reckless abandon; guilty or innocent, he was her mate and she would have followed him at a word. But—he was innocent; it was her part to wait here as patiently as she could until the fact was proved and until he could ask that question which forever trembled between them.

Such thoughts as these were impossible to conceal; they were mirrored upon the face of the colonel's daughter as she stood raptly gazing at the door through which Pierce Phillips had disappeared. Her lips were parted; the shadow of the smile his coming had evoked still lingered upon them; her soul was in her shining eyes. Unknown to her, at least one of the other women present had read her sudden emotions and now watched her curiously, with an intent and growing astonishment.

Rouletta Kirby had been as quick as the Countess to correctly interpret Laure's chagrin, and she, too, had experienced a tremendous relief. Oddly enough, however, she had felt no such fierce and jealous exultation as she had anticipated; there had been no selfish thrill such as she had expected. What ailed her? she wondered. While groping for an answer, her attention had been challenged by the expression upon Miss Cavendish's face, and vaguely she began to comprehend the truth. Breathlessly now she watched the girl; slowly conviction grew into certainty.

So! That was why the colonel's daughter was here. That was why, at sound of a certain step, she had become glorified. That was why Pierce had been blind to her own and Hilda's presence in the room.

It would be untrue to say that Rouletta was not shocked by this discovery. It came like a thunder-clap, and its very unexpectedness jolted her mind out of the ruts it had been following these many days. But, astonishing to relate, it caused her no anguish. After the first moment or two of dizzy bewilderment had passed she found that her whole being was galvanized into new life and that the eyes of her soul were opened to a new light.

(To be Continued.)

NORTH POWDER SOCIAL NEWS

NORTH POWDER (Special)—Mrs. Lizzie Gilkison returned home last Monday from a visit with friends in Huntington.

Mr. and Mrs. Everett Pearson spent Tuesday afternoon in Baker.

Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Craig and Mrs. Mollie Pilcher were business visitors in La Grande Thursday.

The Taylor family, who have been living in North Powder for some time, returned to their old home in Casper, Wyoming, last Thursday.

Mr. and Mrs. Toney Hempey of Union visited the McGrath family Sunday.

Mrs. Jake Simons made a trip to La Grande the last of the week to have dental work attended to.

Mrs. W. A. Hudelson has been confined to her home for several days with an attack of the "flu."

Mrs. Rene Anderson and Mrs. Gale Gibbons were Baker visitors Monday.

Mrs. W. V. McGrath and Mrs. Will Pearson motored to Baker Tuesday afternoon.

Mr. and Mrs. Will Davis are the proud parents of a baby daughter born to them at the Hot Lake sanatorium November 4. Both mother and baby are doing nicely.

Mrs. Ellen Yates of Baker is the house guest of Mrs. Mollie Pilcher this week.

Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Pearson of Pendleton are visiting with relatives in North Powder this week.

Medford Presbyterians to Build

MEDFORD, Ore.—The congregation of the First Presbyterian church of Medford has just voted to build a new edifice for $50,000 on several lots owned by the church and adjoining the present church structure.

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"Oh, What A Flirt"

Our sales yesterday amounted to over $1,600. That is not the largest day we have had by any means. Our whole crew is on the job to keep ahead of the great rushing fall trade. The greatest problem we have to face is getting the material here as fast as the people need it. We had to turn down a large order yesterday as we could not get the material here in time. Another car of the No. 2 Cedar shingles expected to arrive tonight. These we will continue to sell out at $1.95 as long as they last. Please call up before you send your teams in after them, as they might be delayed a day. We have about all the coal orders we can deliver. 7-ft. tamarack posts, 14c apiece. Acme quality paint, $1.95 a gallon. Roofing is selling good.

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No Sunday Business

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Copy for this column must be in by 9:00 a. m.

REMEMBER.

Sunday, Nov. 15 Mot'o Sporting club's turkey shoot. 2-11-9-6t

If you want to sleep warm, drop in and buy a real value in hot water bottles that are warranted for two years at Silverthorn-Wright's family drug store. 11-10-tf

St. Peter's Episcopal Guild will hold a Rummage Sale at Honan Hall Sat., Nov. 14th at 10 a. m. 11-10-3t

NOTICE.

Sold—All my stock and interest in White's Second Hand Store to C. E. Bailey of Union. All outstanding accounts payable to me.

J. F. WHITE. 11-10-1tp

Hemstitching, pleating, button holes, etc. Norton's Kiddy Shop. 10-14-tf

The prettiest and latest styles in colors and patterns in stationery are now in stock at prices all can afford at Silverthorn-Wright's family drug store. 10-11-tf

St. Peter's Episcopal Guild will hold a Rummage Sale at Honan Hall Sat., Nov. 14th at 10 a. m. 11-10-3t

Baker's Cash Grocery 406 4th St., phone 426-W. Prices right. 11-3-1m

ARMISTICE DAY.

Seven years have passed since the signing of the Armistice which marked the close of the Great War. Tomorrow we pause in commemoration of that event taking a day off to celebrate this special occasion. We join with you in the spirit of the day and in the significance of its memory; extending to the ex-service men and public the spirit of good fellowship and cooperation. Richardson's Art & Gift Shop. 10-11-1t

Stop dandruff in five days. Stop falling out of hair in three weeks by using a 75c bottle of Germicide and Dandruff Eradicator. Silverthorn-Wright's family drug store. 11-10-tf

ANNOUNCEMENT.

I have decided to discontinue my practice and take a rest, which is much needed to both Mrs. Mayville and myself. All our property is for sale at very reasonable prices. Also all who are indebted to us are requested to come in and settle or send their checks to us within the next thirty days. We thank the public for the patronage shown us.

Respectfully yours,
Dr. A. N. Mayville. 11-9-3t

Notice of Final Settlement.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned, administrator of the estate of Charles A. Myers, deceased, has filed in the County Court in the State of Oregon, for Union county, his final account as administrator of said estate, and that the 5th day of December, 1925, at the hour of ten o'clock in the forenoon of said day, at the County Court Room in the Court House of said County, has been fixed by the said Court as the time and place for hearing of objections to said account and the settlement thereof.

CLYDE MYERS,
Administrator of the estate of Charles A. Myers, deceased.
E. R. Ringo, attorney for administrator.

J. C. Penney Co.

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This Store Will Be Closed All Day, Wednesday, In Honor of Armistice Day

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New Crop Seedless Raisins, 3 pkgs.	35c	New Pack Tomatoes, 4 cans, No. 2½	95c
Delicious Apples, box	$1.39	New June Peas, 3 cans	49c
Sweet Oranges, dozen	43c	Worcester Table Salt, 3 pkgs.	25c

Free Citrus Washing Powder—last week of this special offer! One Large Citrus Powder with A purchase of Large Package Citrus Garnulated Soap—Both for 50c. Buy a liberal supply now.

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