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A GENEROUS FELLOW

By ELBERT T. BENTLEY.
(Copyright, 1909, by American Press Association.)

June, as everybody knows, is a delightful month. A young man was walking on a suburban road on a June morning. The heavens were blue, without a single fleecy dash. The air was dry and warm, an atmosphere that accords with the hum of insects and the occasional piping of a bird.

He stopped and leaned upon a neat fence. Within were spacious and highly cultivated grounds. Directly before him was a flower garden partly hidden by little clumps of low trees.

He was a flower lover. He coveted especially some beautiful Jacqueminot roses he saw within. Surely the owner of the place would not grudge him one or two. The house stood back within a grove. No one was about. He felt again the glow of boyhood in stolen fruit. To his right was a gate—not the main gate—a little one for side entrance. He went and stood by the gate and looked and fell before temptation. With a quickly beating heart he opened it, stepped briskly in, picked a rose and was about to retire when he saw a bed of American Beauties losing themselves in a leafy recess. It occurred to him to gain the recess before doing any more stealing. Hurrying into it, he ran up against a girl sitting on a rustic bench with a lapful of roses. She uttered an exclamation of sudden fright.

"Pardon me," he said. "I—I—" The girl said nothing. She was trying to regain her equanimity. Instead of looking as if she had surprised a thief she looked as if she had been surprised doing something she was ashamed of.

"I am very fond of flowers," he added.

"I love flowers too."
"So I judge by the roses in your lap."
"It was wrong to pluck them, but I couldn't help it."

"Why wrong to pluck that to which I'm sure you are welcome?"

She looked at him inquiringly. She was herself a trespasser. It occurred to her that he was the owner.

"Then I may keep them?"

He saw the situation. He, a thief, had stumbled on a thief who thought him the possessor of the place. Putting his hand on his heart, he bowed low and said:

"All of them and more."
He broke off a dozen and threw them in her lap.

"Oh, how kind of you!"
She was very pretty and, dressed as she was in sheer white, formed a lovely contrast with the green background and the roses in her lap.

"If I were an artist," he said, "I would wish for no better subject."
"Won't you show me your place?" she asked.

"Certainly, but may I not sit for a few minutes in this entrancing bower?"
She moved aside and made room for him on the bench.

"I am fortunate," she said, "in finding one so lenient with me, a trespasser."
"Rather I welcome another choice flower in my garden."

A few quick steps crunching the gravel and a gentleman of middle age entered the recess. He stood looking at the pair in surprise. The girl glanced at her companion, expecting him to excuse her presence to one whom she thought was another of the occupants of the place. He did not speak. He was hunting for a story to cover the situation.

"This gentleman," she said to the newcomer, "has been so kind as to give me some roses."

"You are quite welcome to them," said he who was the real owner.

"I—I knew you would have done as much yourself," said the man trespasser, coloring.

The owner took in the situation—at least enough of it—to give him a cue. He fancied the trespasser had brought the girl there and yielded to a temptation to give her the roses.

"Would you like to see my place?" he said.

The girl gave her companion trespasser a surprised look. "Why, I thought you lived here!"

The owner came to the rescue of a fellow man. "He is always welcome here," he said.

"Oh, a friend?" said the girl.
"An esteemed friend," the owner put in. "Come, we will walk through the place."

The girl gathered up her roses, and they were led through the place, the owner calling their attention to this and that rose, tree or plant. When they had seen it all, he asked them in for a glass of wine and a biscuit. This offer was declined, and they were conducted to the gate.

"Haven't seen much of you lately, old man," said the host at parting.

"Are you going to desert us entirely?"

"Will you be at home this evening?"

"Yes; happy to see you."

"I'll call."

When they were alone the girl said, "How nice it was that I was caught by two such nice men."

"Oh, we men can always depend upon one another. Any guest of mine in that place is a guest of my friend."

"Delightful! I bid you good morning. Thank you very much for the roses."

"Don't mention it."

In the evening the trespasser called on the owner.

"You are not only a gentleman," he said, "you are a man and a brother."

"There is honor among thieves," replied the host, "and in such matters we men are all thieves. Will you take yours dry or sweet?"

"Dry, thank you."

Then the guest told the story.

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