



It all started when Cosgrove set out to arrest the girl whose turban was of forbidden herring gull plumage, topped off with a snowy egret.

COSGRAVE first saw the snowy egret as he turned into Fifth avenue at Thirty-third street.

Nor was it the snowy egret alone that awakened his anger. The thing seemed doubly offensive because the wind-tossed white feathers cascaded about a small and slightly tilted turban most unmistakably made of herring gull's plumage. And both were interdicted; were illegal as hat ornaments. He had no knowledge as to who was wearing these forbidden decorations, but he had his own opinion of the woman who would deck herself out in such things. She was a violator of the law, an enemy of the precious wild life that her petty vanities had all but exterminated.

Yet so briskly did she walk up the early morning avenue that Philip Cosgrove was compelled to follow her for three blocks before catching up with her. When he did so he tapped her on the arm, very much as a patrolman might. She turned sharply at that unlooked-for affront and made her shoulder move away from him a perceptible one. But his stern eye was fixed on the snowy egret.

"I suppose you know you're breaking the law in wearing those feathers," he proclaimed, noticing for the first time that the soft gray of the herring-gull plumage matched the soft gray of her eyes.

"Would you be good enough to tell me about that law?" she said, quite solemnly. And Cosgrove explained to her the enactment of the migratory birds' convention act, after which he told her, as graphically as he could, how the dorsal plumes of the American egret, the *Ardea candidissima*, were plucked during the breeding season, and how such pot-hunting for the venal milliners had almost succeeded in exterminating one of the loveliest of the native herons.

"You know, I never thought of that," she said, favoring him with her first oblique glance of appraisal.

"Too few of you do," snapped Cosgrove, determined not to be sidetracked by any last-moment parade of humility. "You accuse me of cruelty, of unthinking cruelty," the girl beside him was saying. "But don't you think that deliberate cruelty is quite as bad as the other kind? And you are being deliberately cruel with me."

"My own feelings," he announced, "are not important. The law exists, and you broke it."

"And you insist on this public humiliation?" she asked, without looking at him.

"I insist that a law which I helped to frame should be respected," he maintained. And she nodded, comprehendingly, after turning that statement over for a moment or two.

"You must hate me very much," she said, with her meditative Mona Lisa smile.

He resented that essentially feminine tendency to reduce everything to the personal. His one desire, he reminded himself, was to remain judicial. And he strove to sustain that pose by staring pointedly at her forehead as he remarked: "I am a member of the Audubon society."

"Which means, I take it, that you love birds much more than you do human beings," she suggested, not without bitterness.

"I'm afraid you will be quite unable to argue me out of what I've accepted as a matter of conscience," he announced to the Philistine in silken hosiery and serge beside him. The only soul she could claim, he began to feel, was that shining shell of one which she got every morning from her milliner and her masseuse.

"Oh, it's conscience!" she said, with a small hand gesture of enlightenment. And he flushed, in spite of himself, as she added: "That, of course, leaves it quite hopeless!"

Yet, even as she spoke, she quickened her pace and stepped slightly ahead of him. Before he could fully realize the meaning of that maneuver she stopped short before the approaching figure in the blue uniform.

"Officer," she promptly proclaimed, "this man is annoying me."

The opaque Celtic eye leisurely and none too approvingly inspected Cosgrove's person. Then it quite as leisurely and much more approvingly inspected the girl wearing the herring-gull turban.

"Do you know him?" inquired the policeman.

"I never saw him before he accosted me here on the street," was her spirited reply. And Cosgrove winced perceptibly at the accosted.

"Do you want him arrested?" inquired the officer.

"I certainly do not want him annoying me," retorted the girl.

"Will you lay a charge?" insisted the arm of the law, with another none too flattering inspection of the man beside her.

Cosgrove, at that, felt that he had endured about enough.

"On the contrary, officer, I want this woman arrested!"

"So you want her arrested?" repeated the still impassive Celtic giant.

"And just why should you be wanting her arrested?"

"For breaking the law in wearing those egret feathers on her hat," announced Cosgrove.

Timothy McArthur, the officer, inspected the egret feathers. He did so with a jeering approval which did not add to Cosgrove's peace of mind.

"And how'm I t'know them's egret feathers?" inquired the large-bodied man in blue.

"Egret," corrected Cosgrove.

"Well, whatever you call 'em, they suit the lady fine, to my way o' thinkin'! They may be egret feathers and they

may be rooster feathers. But yuh've got a devil of a lot to do, you big amad-baun, wanderin' around and pokin' your long nose into what a gerri's wearin' on her head. Yuh'd better be gettin' back to the millinery department. I don't care who yuh are or what yuh are. Yuh be on your way. And if yuh speak to this gerri again I'll gather yuh in so quick yuh won't know an egret feather from the tail of a Cochon-China!"

The one thing Cosgrove noticed was that the oval face under the herring-gull turban was wearing the softest of smiles.

"We'll meet again, perhaps," she said, over his shoulder.

"I hope that never happens," retorted Cosgrove, with a glance at the night-stick of the intervening Celtic giant, implacable as fate, pointing in a direction opposite to that which the girl in the snowy egret was taking.

But Cosgrove and the snowy egret girl did meet again. They met quite unexpectedly on the second evening after his lecture on "The Gulf Bird Sanctuaries," when he was dining at the Wolcotts.

He was unaware of her presence there until a footman, going from group to chattering group, passed around the cocktails. She turned to him suddenly as he took a diffident sip of the amber mixture which meant so little to him.

"Doesn't your conscience trouble you?" she demanded, with an accusatory eye on the glass in his hand.

"Why should it?" he asked, noticing that she was looking lovelier than ever in her dinner gown of nasturtium red. But there was no mistaking the enmity behind her pose of levity.

"Don't you know that you are breaking one of the laws of this land?" she magisterially inquired.

"I never thought much about it," he retorted as he put down his glass.

"But there are so many who never think much about it," she pointed out with mock solemnity. He was able to laugh a little, but he could see that she was still intent on making him seem ridiculous.

"Few of us are perfect," he observed, though he was wondering at the time why nothing stood so devastating as the scorn of a beautiful woman.

"Yet so many of us demand perfection in others," she proclaimed. She said it light-heartedly enough, but he was not unaware of the saber sheathed in rose leaves. He stood studying her face with an impersonal intentness which brought the faintest touch of color into her cheek.

"I fancy it's going to be hard for us to be friends," she observed with her discounting small smile.

"I rather imagine it's going to be quite impossible," he found the brutality to retort.

He was sorry, the next moment, that he had said it, and he was still sorrier when, a few minutes later, he found himself confronted by the lugubrious pleasure of taking her to dinner.

"It's a small world, isn't it?" she observed toward the end of a dinner which could still show perversely pleasant moments to him. "Especially to the evildoer!"

He asked her why she said that.

"Because I've discovered that it's on Lake Trevor you have your bird sanctuary. And I find that I'm to spend a month with the Wolcotts almost side by side with it."

"I shudder to think of the consequences!" He was able, however, to smile as he said it.

"Your fears, I feel, are quite groundless," she countered with her quiet smile. "I intend, in fact, to find out a great deal about bird life."

"I trust it will change your point of view," he remarked, wondering why she should sit studying him with such a meek and meditative eye. Yet his sense of triumph in scoring against a once too open-handed enemy was not as enduring as it might have been. For a few minutes later he had the dubious pleasure of hearing her recite to a youth whom she addressed as "Kennie" the lines of a new song which she lightly asked him to set to music.

"It ends up, Kennie, something like this:

"Remember, gentle neighbors, then,
'Tis wrong to tease the bat;
Embrace the badger in his den,
Be friendly with the rat,
And love the little birdies when
They love you, tit for tat;
And never pluck the jenny-wren
To decorate your hat!"

Cosgrove turned slowly about and looked at the girl with the flushed cheeks. It seemed strange that he could both despise her and admire her in the same breath.

"Your poem," he solemnly informed her, "is much prettier than the motive which inspired it."

She merely shrugged a slender shoulder under its slender metal strap.

"Motives," she casually remarked, "are so terribly hard to fathom!"

Cosgrove, with the advance of spring, found himself an unexpectedly busy man. He was not so preoccupied, however, that he failed to note when the over-elaborate "camp" of the Wolcotts was opened for the vacation season. Nor was his trained sharpness of vision altogether unconscious of the arrival of an alert bodied young lady, who in rather resplendent sweaters and peg-top breeches went paddling and tramping and angling about his beloved demesne. She hallooed to him once, across the bay, and he quite solemnly hallooed back to her. So when he came face to face with her, while fungus hunting, in a bit of woods on the mainland, she seemed reprovingly reserved in her manner and he went on his way again oppressed with a vague sense of disappointment.

It was when returning from an investigation of certain depredations that he unexpectedly encountered Caroma Reeder. He found her beside his hilltop trail, huddled against a rock. He stopped short, disturbed by the quiescence of that customarily active figure.

"Are you hurt?" he asked.

"I'm afraid I've sprained my ankle," she replied with her fingers clasped

about one of her high-laced tan brogans.

He knelt down beside her and examined the injured foot. She winced as he pressed on the leather-covered ankle.

"I'm afraid we'll have to get this shoe off," he announced, and he proceeded to unlace it. And he noticed that she winced again as he carefully worked her foot out of the shoe.

"Now the stocking," he proclaimed.

But she demurred at that.

"It hurts too much," she objected, coloring a trifle.

So he re-examined the ankle through its ribbed woolen stocking. He could detect nothing alarming in its conditions. There was no swelling that he could see, and there were obviously no broken bones, though she ventured a little cry or two of pain as his strong fingers explored the injured area.

"Can you walk?" asked Cosgrove, looking for the first time directly into her face. It impressed him as a singularly appealing face, with its misty gray eyes and its turkey-spotted small nose and its mobile red mouth with just a trace of willfulness about the curving line of the lips.

The girl shook her head in negation.

"I tried," she acknowledged. "But I couldn't quite manage it."

"Shall we try again?" he asked, quite impersonally.

"All right," she agreed, with no great parade of hopefulness.

They had considerable trouble in getting the shoe on again.

It was Cosgrove who laced it up, repeatedly asking if he was making it too tight. And it was Cosgrove who helped her to her feet and supported her with one stalwart arm while she essayed a none too promising effort to hobble along at his side.

"It's no use," she said, sitting down on a stone and nursing the injured ankle between her clasped fingers. "I think you'd better leave me here."

"And then what?" he asked.

"You might send somebody up from the Wolcotts to come and get me," she suggested, adding, with unlooked-for meekness: "If you will be so kind."

Cosgrove laughed.

"I imagine I can manage you as well as anybody from the Wolcott house," he announced.

He carried her "pick-a-back," with the weight of her body resting along his spine and her arms clasped about his neck and his own hands linked under her knees. It was, she supposed, a sensible and comfortable way of carrying people. But it began to impress her as deplorably lacking in dignity.

"Would you mind letting me down a moment?" she said in a somewhat stifled tone of voice as they emerged from the wooded higher land and came within sight of the Wolcott lodge.

He did as she asked. He let her down as casually as though she were a child grown tired of a gambol. But his eyes were solemn as he studied her somewhat flushed face.

"I think I can manage by myself for the rest of the way," she found the courage to suggest. But Cosgrove would not hear of it.

"You're tired, of course," he admitted. "So this time we'll try another position."

"But it's you who must be tired," she protested.

"Not a bit of it," he stoutly asserted. "So take hold, and I'll have you home in ten minutes."

The "taking hold," she found, consisted in being compelled to wrap one arm closely about his neck, for this time he was carrying her in his arms. And in this way he carried her right to the wide veranda of the Wolcott lodge, which he mounted with his silent and slightly flushed burden amid a small chorus of ejaculations from the assembled company.

Cosgrove made it a point to ignore those jubilant and slightly derisive cries. The one person he found it hard to forgive, however, was the knickerbockered youth with a languid smile who clicked a camera as Caroma Reeder came up the steps in his arms. That, Cosgrove felt, was going a bit too far.

"No, it's nothing serious," he solemnly assured Mrs. Wolcott. "It's merely that Miss Reeder has sprained her ankle. As you see, she's not able to walk. So I'll send Doctor Angus over as soon as I can get in touch with him. I've found him a very dependable physician."

Then Cosgrove turned to the young man with the camera.

"I'd prefer," he announced with unexpected spirit, "not perpetuating the ridiculous." Whereupon he violently took possession of the camera, flung it to the floor, and crushed it with his heel.

It was a week later, when Cosgrove and Doctor Angus were fishing for rainbow trout in the back hills, that the man of medicine was prompted to comment on the case.

"Say, Phil, I'm afraid they've got the laugh on you down at the Wolcott cottage," he observed as he bent over a book of files.

Cosgrove, without looking up, inquired as to the reason for this.

"You remember that city girl with the sprained ankle I went down to see?"

"Yes, I rather remember her," acknowledged Cosgrove.

"Well, there was nothing more wrong with her foot than there is with mine."

"You mean she could have walked if she wanted to?" asked Cosgrove, with deepening color.

The doctor nodded as he threaded a coachman.

"I may be wrong, but I've got a lurking suspicion she laid a bet she'd make you carry her in."

Cosgrove sat thinking this over.

"Well, I carried her in," he finally said.

"For about a mile and three-quarters, as I figure it out," commented the other, with just the ghost of a smile.

"I don't regret it," announced Cosgrove out of a second long silence.

"I shouldn't think you would," observed Angus with a tug at his water straps. "She impressed me as something pretty easy to look at."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded the solemn-eyed Cosgrove.

"I suppose I mean that she's an extraordinarily attractive young woman," said the man of medicine, who was left wondering why his companion of the reel should remain so morosely silent for the rest of the afternoon.

Philip Cosgrove wakened up to the fact that something was wrong with him. He was moody and abstracted and found little interest in his work. He also found himself thinking about Caroma Reeder a great deal more than he cared to acknowledge. And he ended up by asserting that he had no wish to see a person who had done her best to make him ridiculous.

Yet his customarily steady pulse quickened a little when he caught sight of her, one warm and limpid evening, on the sloping, sandy shore of Lake Trevor.

She was sitting on a many-antlered pine root, as motionless as a beach bird, watching the sunset. And she merely smiled her Mona-Lisa smile as he came and stood before her.

"I've a confession to make," she said, after a moment of silence.

"I don't want to hear it," he told her, almost roughly.

"But I think you ought to know it," she asserted, with her eyes on the black fringe of the pines that brought the sunset closer.

"Ought to know what?" he asked, with an involuntary glance down at her saddle-back shoes.

"That I've contributed \$500 to the new bird sanctuary fund," she quickly announced.

"What prompted you to do that?" he inquired.

"You did," she acknowledged, turning her face to him. It impressed him as a singularly lovely face. And it also impressed him as an honest one at the moment. But he studied it long and earnestly, apparently in search of some trace of guile.

"I see you still don't approve of me," she finally asserted.

"It's your different efforts to make me appear as ridiculous as possible that I don't approve of," he amended.

"I'm sorry," she said with her barricaded smile.

"Why?" he demanded.

"Because I really wanted to know more about these things you're so interested in. I had no chance before of understanding." Then she added, with just a touch of color in her cheeks: "The saints, you know, are only the sinners who kept on trying."

He sat down on the sand in front of her.

"I wonder if you'd actually let me teach you a few of the things I've learned about nature?" he questioned. The twilight was deepening slowly about them, and from far out toward Thor island a bitter cry.

"Would you?" she asked, with her solemn gray eyes on his face.

He stared back at her for a full minute of silence.

"On one condition," he said, with quite unlooked-for grimness, as he rose to his feet.

"What is that?" she asked, following his movement.

"That you marry me!" was his abrupt declaration. And that ultimatum seemed to surprise him almost as much as it must have surprised the young woman confronting him. It became, in fact, her turn to remain silent for a disturbingly prolonged space of time.

"I'm sorry you said that," she finally observed.

"Why?" he inquired.

"Because that's something which Kenneth Fillmore has just asked me to do!" He felt that the bottom had dropped out of his world. But he did his best to bear up.

"Who's Kenneth Fillmore?" he demanded.

"That's the man whose camera you smashed up the other day," she casually explained.

"Then I wish I'd smashed more than the camera," he retorted, though he laughed a little as he said it. "And are you going to marry him?"

"That was what I was thinking about as I sat here, Kenneth, you see, doesn't take life very seriously."

"While I rather imagine you'd accuse me of taking it too seriously," he prompted.

She laughed, but her gray eyes were as sober as the light above the black-fringed pinelands.

"I'm afraid we've made a very bad beginning," she ventured.

"Then we ought to work hard for a better ending," he valorously informed her.

Her sigh was an audible one.

"I'm afraid," she observed, "we still don't understand each other."

"But I want to understand you," he found courage to say.

"I imagine law-breakers would never greatly appeal to you!"

He winced at that. But the mere fact that he could smile seemed to imply that she had already shaken a little of the solemnity out of him.

"I break a few myself," he countered. And she rewarded him at that with a smile. It was plain to see that he was getting on a bit.

"But if I told you I was already engaged to Kenneth Fillmore what would you do?"

By Arthur Stringer



He had too much to think about. What slowly but surely assumed the aspects of the great hour of his life seemed too close.

That he did long to win Caroma Reeder's confidence became only too self-evident as he made her comfortable in the bow of his slender-bodied Rice Lake canoe and pushed off from shore. But it was more than her confidence he wanted, he realized as he headed for Thor island, lying low on the wind-riffled water, a good seven miles away. He knew that he wanted the woman herself.

"I think I like you best this way," she said as she watched his sinewed brown arms send the tilted canoe along the hooker green surface of the lake.

"Why?" he asked as he noted the odd mixture of gold and mahogany in her hair.

"Because you look masterful," she told him. "And women like masterful men."

That, like so many of her little speeches, gave him a great deal to think about. It also revived in him the impulse to keep on paddling into the ever-receding distances.

But instead of doing so they landed on the desolation of Thor island, where he beached the canoe and lifted out the carefully packed supper things, after which he took her scrambling over rocks and briars and reedy swales and showed her one of his precious wood duck nests.

She knelt beside him as he lifted away the screaming litter of sticks and twigs and showed her the protective down plucked from the mother bird's breast and the warm eggs beneath it, explaining how that covering of down could keep the eggs from chilling for a whole day, if need be, should the mother duck be driven away from her nest. And they wandered about the desolate little island until the sun began to slope down towards the west and Cosgrove awakened to the much more desolate discovery that his day was slipping away.

So he found a sheltered spot and gathered what wood he could and left her to feed the fire while he went back to the canoe for the supper things.

He went with a heavy heart, glancing morosely back at the vital young figure bent over the smoking campfire. He walked dourly and deliberately to the little cove where the canoe had been beached, stopping still again to look back and making note of the fact that the girl's stooping body was no longer in sight.

Then, after a moment of grim silence, he did an unaccountable and an inexcusable thing. He slid the canoe slowly down into the water, let it float there for a second or two, and pushed it out on the lake.

There was a grimness to the set of his jaw as he rejoined Caroma beside the fire. His silence, in fact, caused her to look up and sweep him with a quick glance of interrogation.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"Why?" he temporized as he turned to put more wood on the fire.

"You look so solemn," she light-heartedly affirmed.

"I've just discovered how hungry I am," he equivocated as he fell to work preparing supper.

An odd spirit of hilarity seemed to overtake Caroma during that meal in the waning evening light. She appeared waywardly youthful and carefree, impressing the brooding-eyed Cosgrove as very much like a child intent on getting the most out of her holiday. He tried not to think of the future, but he was not of the breed that can live its moment alone. Yet he wished, above all things, that the clock of the world would stop.

The clock of the world, however, does not stop at the wish of mere mortals. Even the girl looked up, eventually, from the narcotizing glow of the embers, with a glance about at the gathering dusk.

"Don't you think we ought to be starting back?" she asked out of the silence which had fallen over them.

He sat studying her face.

"Supposing we don't go back?" he suggested, more solemnly than he had intended.

She looked up at him and laughed. And he found something fortifying in her matter-of-factness.

"I'm afraid we haven't any choice in the matter," she asserted.

"No, we haven't much choice in the matter," he repeated as he watched her rise to her feet.

"There are certain rules of the game, of course, that have to be observed," explained the girl as she busied herself in gathering up the camp outfit.

"Laws that mustn't be broken?" he supplemented, as he, too, rose tardily to his feet.

"Or some solemn-eyed person will be stepping up to remind us that we've broken them," she was inconsiderate enough to assert.

She stopped suddenly and looked down at the sand, where the mark of the canoe keel was still discernible. Then she glanced about the shallow cove.

"Where's our boat?" she asked, with her eyes directly on Cosgrove's face.