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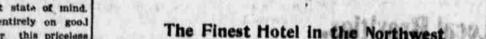
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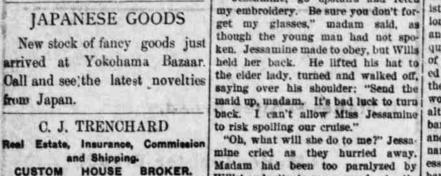


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Madam had been too paralyzed by Wills' audacity to say a word. Austin drew Jessamine's hand farther over his arm and smiled down at her, saying: "I hope it will be 'Out of my house, ingrate!" Then, you see, you will have to come to my house whether or no."

self!" Jessamine said, pulling away ber hand, her eyes dancing wickedly. "I

en our little affair seriously"-

ly you lift a weight off my conscience." Wills interrupted in her own tone; then, after a chuckle: "Jess, I must lecture you-point out the sinful folly of your course. Here you might be, by taking 434 Bond St. pains and showing yourself properly devout and submissive, Mrs. Beveridge -possibly Mrs. Bishop Beveridge-1 really believe the gentleman has it in him to go high ecclesiastically, he's so snave and silken, just the sort to worm himself into the minds of rich churchmen, not to mention their check books

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"A very commonplace sinner," Jessa mine broke in.

Wills gave her a look of pained sur-prise. "I was going to say "for the sake of having your own willful way," he protested.

It was early afternoon, and the long, smooth river reach, flecked with sun and shade, mirrored perfectly the summer world either side. Jessamine hung over the boat side, staring at her own image. Austin watched her with happy eyes, but after a little be drew her upright, saying softly: "Vanity, thy name is Jessamine. I can't have another case of Narcissus and his image

upon my conscience." "Really! Have you a conscience?" Jessamine retorted.

"Pirates even have consceinces-about some things," Austin answered, shipping his oars and letting the boat drift toward the other bank. "For example, it goes against their consciences to let treasure manifestly within reach go to some other fellow. That other plrate, Beveridge, shan't have the treasure of Brookmere."

"What is the treasure of Brookmere?" Jessamine asked demurely. "How much is it worth? And how are you going to save it from clerical clutches?" "Let me see. I believe the Brookmere rating is about three millions,"

at that," he went on, "all in glit edged securities. If you were more than a baby, Jess, you would see a liftle beyond the end of your nose. Bishop-to-be Beveridge did want you-in fact, he still wants you, being a man of taste, for all his sins."

"Thanks!" Jessamine interrupted. Wills shook his head at her.

"He wanted you rather badly, but not so badly as he wanted the Brookmere money. And that he means to have-in spite of our teeth. Madam is only sixty and young for her years"-"You can't mean he is trying to mar-

ry her?" Jessamine cried, aghast. Wills nodded. "That's his present

laudable aim. Therefore he would like nothing better than to have us openly defy madam. Our elopement would be a trump card for him. Now, although we are not mercenary, neither are we destitute of common prudence. Three millions, or even one or two, might come in handy a heap of times. Moreover, we owe madam a certain duty. We can only discharge it by meeting guile with guile. That means, in plain

English, you have got to turn from your evil way of preferring my company and smile instead upon the bishop

he lady feel that she was not too old to inspire grand passion number four. Presently he began to see light. He

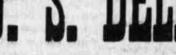


lightly upon his. He tried to hold it, but she snatched it away, turned from him and began to sing very softly. He watched her with burning eyes, his breath coming hard and fast. As she made to rise he put his arms about her and gathered her to his breast, saying hoarsely: "Jessamine, darling, won't you make music for me always? Unless you do my life will be wasted."

"You-you are not in earnest!" Jessamine said, slipping from his arms and averting her face. "You, who are so great, so wise, so good, need another sort of wife-somebody who can help you. I-I should be only a burden." "A blessed burden, one I shall rejoice to carry," Beveridge said, trying to take her hand. She drew away from him, saying as though in despair: "You -you are playing with me. You really want grandmother"--

"Grandmother! Oh, you jealous darling! How dare you name any-thing so preposterous?" Beveridge said, catching both her Manda. "Graudmother is the most estimable of old ladies, but even if I knew she would take me I could not think of marrying her-not for all the money in the world."

"H-m-m! You've been trying to do It for a very moderate part of the





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