

had not struck me as being made of criminal material.

Then I went indoors.

Miss Willoughby was waiting for me in the big drawing-room. She stood opposite the door leading into the hall, and with her back to the wide fireplace, wherein burned a ruddy pile of great-girthed logs as I stepped across the threshold.

I caught my breath in delight and appreciation at the vision of beauty confronting me. She was clad in a loosely-fitting house gown of dark gray. I said that it fitted her loosely, and that is true, but somehow, doubtless due to its clinging texture, it managed to follow and reveal the superb lines of her figure—the figure which had struck me as being exceptionally beautiful the night when I first looked upon Clarice Willoughby as she struggled with her terror-stricken mother at the head of the staircase.

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Miss Willoughby came eagerly forward to meet me and held out her hand with a rare grace and total lack of that condescension that one occasionally encounters in those who have the least right to assume it.

Somehow the effects of all those trials which she had recently undergone seemed to fall from this beautiful girl as she came across the room with an easy long-leg movement, that Diana might have envied.

She held my hand for the fraction of a second, during which I felt the warmth that was in her pervade and envelop me.

"I'm so glad the messenger found you," she said, her rich contralto voice lingering over each word as if in caress.

I stood staring down at her, on my face a vacuous expression and all my love for her shining in my eyes. She was the most beautiful woman that I had ever known and the sweetest, barring my mother, and there was that indefinable something about her that coaxed to life the nameless quality which completes love and makes it perfect. And she had voiced nothing more than a banal greeting and a no less banal expression of pleasure that her note had not miscarried. How much may silence express when windy words would fall by the wayside!

She threw herself in a reclining position on the lounge and motioned me to a chair near by. I seated myself, in a maze of wonder as to why she had summoned me to her. Until that night her appeal to me had been strong, but touched with an innate quality of girlishness. Now it seemed as if she had swept aside this virginal curtain, revealing herself for the full-blooded, vital woman that she was.

I sat silent, waiting for her to speak, to tell me why she had called me to her through the night. Her first words sent the blood singing through me with quickened movement.

"I sent for you tonight because I was lonely and because I want someone strong to lean upon and have close to me in the time of our danger."

There was a short pause, as if she waited for her words to take effect. I had been gazing into the fire, but in the interval I stole a glance at her. She was leaning back among the cushions, the tips of her slipper touching the rug, her hands clasped behind her head, and on her face a deeper flush than had stained it at the moment of my coming.

"And," she went on, "I wanted to ask you again if you—if your friend also believes that the facts related to you by mother have any bearing on our present trouble. I thought that maybe after you had seen and talked to him you might have arrived at some conclusion."

She was looking me straight in the eyes as she spoke, but as her voice—her wonderful golden voice—sank again in silence, the long lashes drooped and her eyes closed.

"I tried to sleep," she went on, "but I couldn't. Mother is asleep and Reggie. And the nurse must watch him. With all these strange men about the house, I am nervous and shaken and lonesome. I wanted some one to talk to—some one who knew of our trouble—you knew; I wanted you."

Now as Clarice spoke the sudden realization came to me that the same new and wonderful thing which had come into my life at the moment when I first looked upon her and which had been made certain and irrevocable in my heart during the few brief times when we had been together had come also to her. She loved me. She loved me, and had taken this method of showing me—

me, whom she knew would never have dared lift eyes to her, anyway for a long time to come. For she was hedged about by wealth and my way to success and fortune stretched a long road before me.

Sheer happiness for a time made me speechless. That she, the petted darling of millions and the daughter of two houses that were great in two old-world countries, had given me her love was a consummation that I could hardly realize at first. I tried to speak, but couldn't. She still kept her position among the pillows, her cheeks flushed and her eyes closed. Her breathing was caught in quick little gasps, as if a great fear might be in her that after all she might have misread my heart and that I did not love her.

Then with a low cry I sprang to her side and gathered her close.

I held her thus for a full minute, tasting of such happiness as I had never before known. Suddenly she pushed me from her. Unconsciously I looked across the room and every nerve and muscle in my body became suddenly taut. For there framed in the open door stood the menacing figure of a man, unshaven and unkempt, and with an evil smile on his lips. My eyes caught the gleam of the long, keen knife in his hand.

Clarice's attention was caught by my rigid position and her eyes followed mine. She voiced a little scream of fear. I bade her be quiet.

Halfway across the room lay my great coat across the back of a chair and with my revolver in one of its pockets.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I Make a Discovery.

IT SEEMED to me that he who confronted me from the doorway was almost as taken aback as I was, despite the evil smile on his face, and yet I could not tell, for there was that ghastly immobility about his facial contraction that could be misleading. For an instant he hesitated, and then turned as if for flight. It was a fatal move for him to make, for the next moment I had dashed across the room and was close upon him. He whirled, with his weapon lifted, but before he could strike I was at grips with him and held his right wrist in a grasp as near to iron as I could make it.

For a minute he fought me like a wild-

cat, albeit noiselessly, while Clarice stood speechless and spellbound. But the man was no match for me, for I suddenly felt him wilt under my hands, and the next moment I had him on the flat of his back, with the knife in my possession.

I called to Clarice, and under my direction she took a handkerchief from my coat pocket. It was short work tying his hands, for he seemed now as weak as a kitten and thoroughly cowed.

While I busied myself with the knot, the thought came to me that the man whose back I straddled was none other than he who had stabbed Reggie Willoughby earlier in the night; that he had been concealed somewhere in the house and that it would be no mean achievement for me to take him and make him disclose his place of hiding. I lifted him to his feet with a jerk and commanded him to lead me to his place of concealment.

At first he answered surlily: "I ain't been hidin' no place. I jost came in." His bloodshot, muddy eyes gazed into mine with a curiously cunning expression in their depths.

I crossed to where my overcoat lay over the back of the chair, stooping in my passage to pick up the knife from its resting place where I had tossed it on the floor. I laid the knife on the chair, and drawing the revolver from my overcoat pocket, recrossed the room and stood before our captive.

Clarice drew near and gazed on the man with appraising eyes. I saw a little involuntary shudder of disgust shake her. I would have threatened the fellow with his own knife, but somehow it smacked too much of butchery and blood letting. Besides Clarice was watching me.

"Now, my man," I said, with the pistol at a half-cock, and held in a hanging hand, "you'll either show me where you were hidden or I'll see to it that your mates will look a long time before finding you above ground. This little cannon doesn't look dangerous, but I assure you that its teeth are sharp. Will you show us where you were hidden?"

He glared at me a moment before answering: "I'll show yer."

"All right, about face and lead the way," I ordered.

(To be continued next week)  
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ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF LIFE

Some Have to Be

SIR CECIL SPRING-RICE, at a dinner in Washington, praised the pensions and allowances made by the British government in the present war.

"The English government, after this war," he said, "won't have to be charged with neglect, parsimony or ingratitude.

"After this war the schoolboy's definition of a veteran won't have the ring of truth that it may have sometimes in the past.

"A schoolboy, you know, once wrote in his examination paper:

"An old soldier is called a vegetarian."

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No Wonder!

A NEW YORKER, who found himself for some days in a "jerk-water" town of the West, was obliged to submit to the ministrations of the local barber. He had a terrible time—he was cut, knicked, gashed, and generally mishandled. When the job was completed the New Yorker sat up and said:

"Give me a drink of water."

"You ain't going to faint, I hope," said the barber, observing the man's distressed expression.

"No," was the response, "I just want to see whether my mouth will hold water."

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Does a Good Job

"They say that lightning never strikes twice in the same place."

"Well, it doesn't need to!"

Bygone Memories

PHILIP is an amateur artist who praves about nature. One day he was giving all his attention to a painting of a sunset of lurid red, with blue streaks and green dots. An old rustic crossed the meadow and stopped behind him at a respectful distance.

"Ah," said Philip, looking up at the old farmer suddenly, "perhaps to you, too, nature has opened her sky pictures, page by page. Have you seen the lambent flame of dawn leaping across the livid east; the red-stained, sulphurous islets floating in the lake of fire in the west; the ragged clouds at midnight, black as a raven's wing, blotting out the shuddering moon?"

"Well, no," replied the rustic, "not since I give up drink."

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Agricultural Note

Mr. Subbubs—Here's an article in the paper saying that in the spring it is advisable to prune fruit trees.

Mrs. Subbubs—Well, let's prune ours. I just love prunes.

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Argued Loudly

Jimmie had a scolding wife, but was never willing to admit it.

"Now, Jimmie," said a fellow workman one day, "doesn't your wife really scold sometimes?"

"Well," replied Jimmie reluctantly, "she doesn't really scold, but she does argue sometimes so that you could hear her a mile away."

Not Over Yet

JOHNNY had just started learning history, and very proud of himself he was. One evening, as he sat studying his lesson, he thought he would test his grandfather's knowledge of the subject, so he asked:

"Grandpa, do you know what great war broke out in 1850?"

The old man raised his head from the evening paper and looked thoughtfully at the lad. Then a sudden light came into his eyes.

"Why," said he, "that was the year I married your grandmother!"

Playing Safe

THE Man—If I should ask for your hand—

The Maid—I would refuse.

The Man—You positively would not marry me?

The Maid—Under no circumstances whatever!

The Man—Nothing that might occur would cause you to change your mind? You are absolutely sure?

The Maid—I am absolutely sure.

The Man—Fine! Then we can have the time of our lives being engaged this summer!

Be Explicit!

"Scotch mixtures seem to be very popular this season," remarked the dressy person.

"To wear or to drink?" demanded the man with the impressionistic nose.

Expert Testimony

YOUNG Mrs. Cornell was a bride of but a short time. One afternoon she confided to her friends at a pink tea that she was sure her husband never played poker at his club.

"How," queried one of the women, "did you find out?"

"Oh," explained the young bride, "I met a couple of the members of his club the other day and I asked them: 'Can Perry play poker?' They looked thoughtful for a moment and then answered very sincerely: 'No!'"

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Why, Thomas!

WHY is it that the telephone operators are all women?" Mrs. Thomas asked her husband.

"Well," answered Mr. Thomas, "the managers of the telephone exchanges are aware that no class of people work so faithfully as those who are in love with their job; and they knew that women would love their work at the switchboard."

"What is the work of a telephone operator?" Mrs. Thomas further inquired.

"Talking," answered Mr. Thomas.

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