

He had a lot of time on his hands and he liked to sit on the brow of the hill and take views of the city.



made the old man promise, went to bed early. But a good wind came up at half past 10, and he sent the kites out. He believed in the new wire, of course, and he was as impatient as a child.

At half past 11 he wakened her, and said the wire had gone again, and some of the city lights were out. He had started the motor as soon as the wire broke and brought it in, but the camera and the kite were gone, as usual.

His loss was his chief concern. But Hazel was frightened. The streets were full of people leaving the theaters, and if anyone in an open car had run into it, Martin had told her, it would cut a head off as clean as an ax.

SHE had a vision of fearful things as she dressed. Her anxiety, since it was too late to avoid trouble, was, if anything had happened, to keep the old man out of it. The messenger was not so important. It was unlikely that anyone would know what it was. It was a square of canvas on a wire frame with a center hole for the wire.

But the camera was different. The old gentleman was known to some of the dealers in town. He had made the camera himself, and suspended it from the carrier by four small springs. But it was known, among a limited few, that he was taking aerial pictures. It looked very bad, any way you take it.

"I don't know whether he was frightened at the possibilities or not," she said. "I was terrified. But he is not young, and I did not tell him what I feared. He let me go, when I insisted, but I think he was only afraid someone would steal the camera. He knew where it had fallen. It was near Boisseau's, or in the park. I wandered around all night, but it was so dark that I might as well have been at home. I did not sit down, for fear I would think. I kept saying over and over, 'It happened before and no one was hurt.' But the night before it had been later. It was different."

"Then, when you saw the paper in Boisseau's—"

"I knew. We had killed two people and injured a third."

"The policeman?"

"Father reeled in the wire at once, and it must have been the end that cut like a moving knife."

I think it helped her to talk about it, to get it off her chest, so to speak. I told her how I had traced the camera, and I called myself a few pleasant truths

for having left the camera to be repaired. If we'd got it and burned it there would have been no proof against the old man.

"Not that they could do much to him, anyhow," I added. "The thing was an accident."

"But he doesn't know anything happened. It would kill him to know."

Well, he looked as able to stand it as she did, to my mind. But if she felt that way—

"Then the thing you throw over the hill was the motor, engine, whatever you call it?"

"Yes. We cannot afford another, and there will be no more kite flying." The grit of her! No wonder she had breathed hard.

"I used a pole as a lever. When I got it started I was frightened. I'm always being frightened. Suppose there was somebody on the river in a small boat—underneath?"

"And this cut of mine?"

"You said it was brush."

"Something struck me. It's not much of a cut. Probably an end of the wire."

And to this day I do not know. I am aware that in a story of this sort it's rattling bad form to leave any loose ends, but I can only write what I know. I do not know what struck me in the face.

There are other things that I do not know, or at least I can only surmise. The identity of the blithe bandit is one. And until two days ago I never knew what became of Olive Thomas' sapphire bracelet. I'll tell you about that later.

"We must destroy the camera," Hazel said. "He must never do this sort of thing again, Ollie."

"We must get the camera and then destroy it," I corrected her. I had a perfectly distinct idea that if I ever got it, it would be over the N. C.'s dead body.

Hazel never knew that she'd called me "Ollie" that night. It gave me a sort of ache to have to sit there after she'd said it, and not dare to notice it. In spite of what I'd just heard, I kept thinking what a pal she would be to the fellow that married her, interested in things you know.

I'd seen the bridge-playing, cocktail-drinking sort until I was sick of them, and here was a real girl, the kind to check me up when I took hold of the road and wanted to step out a bit too fast. And she belonged to somebody else. It made me sore. Well, that's not the way to put it. It hurt.

If caring had had anything to do with it, I thought I'd have been a good husband.

The old man came out to the porch and called her querulously.

"Coming, father," she said. And got up.

"You said you would do anything to

you have done, what you are going to do—"

Her voice broke. "Good night, Ollie," she said. And that time she knew she said it.

I kissed her hand. I couldn't help it. I might see her again, but this was our good-by. Into that bit of a kiss I tried to put something of what I felt. I couldn't tell her I loved her, but it wouldn't hurt to let her know it, and that she could count on me to the finish.

Well!

I robbed the house. I'm rather a nifty little robber. I learned something, too, doing it.

Crime is like golf. If you try too hard, you cramp your form.

I didn't care a whoop in hades that night what happened to me, and I

help. Would you commit a robbery?" It startled me, rather.

"I'm not experienced," I said humbly. "But I could learn."

"Are you in a hurry?"

"Hurry? No."

She outlined the crime to me. The old man had a room full of apparatus, different lenses, cameras in the making, formulas, a lot of junk. She wanted it stolen.

"The way things are now," she said with a sigh, "we can't replace them. I'll pack them all in an old suitcase and leave it just inside the window. In a half hour you can break the glass, unlock the window, and get it."

"And throw it in the river? Why not send them after the engine?"

SHE hesitated. "He loves them," she said. "In a way, they are his children, the things he lives for. And when we go to the country—"

"You are going to the country?"

"Out of town," she said quietly. "I am going to be married next week."

Were you ever in love with a girl, the real thing, so that you broke out in a perspiration at the thought of meeting her, and did you ever have her tell you she was going to marry somebody else next week?

I'd known I couldn't have her. In a way, I'd known somebody else would. But I'd put it in the indefinite future, like death. Next week! I couldn't breathe.

She held out her hand. "You don't like to be thanked. I won't even try. But I'll never forget you. Never. All

couldn't even make a noise! I put my hand against the pane to find where to smash it with a brick, and the whole glass fell in on a pillow or something without a sound.

Can you beat it?

I got the suitcase and carried it out to my car. It was heavy, but I didn't notice it. With what brains I had left I was trying to picture Hazel married to Martin, and the rest of the world, a sort of empty place, with me in the middle.

I had an idea, for a while, that I was being watched. It wasn't a matter of noise. I didn't hear anything except my own footsteps on the pavement.

Once I stopped suddenly and looked back. There was nothing in sight, and I went on.

I had plenty to think of. For one thing, it was clear, or I thought it was, that after all the holdup at Boisseau's had had nothing to do with the other events of that ghostly night. If I'd had any idea of making a grand stand play, and dropping the mater's pearls in her lap, it had vanished.

I say I was thinking of that. But in the back of my brain there was only one thought, and if you've ever been 23 and have seen the only girl about to marry one of your friends, so that you can't even try to make a case for yourself, you'll know what that thought was.

I'll tell you, the river looked good to me that night. Foolish? No. Twenty-three.

My car is a roadster. I reached in and dropped the suitcase, started the engine, and walked around and kicked the tires to see if they were all right. Then I got in.

I had just put my hand on the gear-