

THE MARKED CARDS

By CLINTON ROSS.

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"A man's just will catch him sooner or later." They had been five days over the sea, the young man and the girl. He had forgotten whether this were the Atlantic or the sea that sweeps the shores of Elysium. Now, on the fifth day, they were on deck and talking somewhat in this way:

"You must walk with me," she called from her chair.

"It's a delightful punishment."

"Thanks! I believe that's a compliment."

"Truth's a compliment, eh?" he said, smiling.

"The best compliments, I suppose, are those that pretend to be truths, but are lies."

"I am afraid this is getting rather too fast for me," he said. "Wait until I think about it."

"To carry out what you have begun you should say to me, 'I can't think about it, for I have to think about you.'"

"Is it needful to say that?" he said, looking down at the girl. "How beautiful you are!"

By the rules of conventional conversation it was an utterly lame remark, and the girl's laughter rolled out, full and delightful, but her voice was low.

"I am glad you think so."

A deeper red tinged his bronzed cheeks as he realized his temerity.

"You know I do," he said.

"Oh, do you? This is the fifth day of our acquaintance. Today we shall be at Sandy Hook."

He drew a long breath, and his voice was earnest. New York and work and to see her no more!

Two elderly persons wrapped to their ears were watching the two.

"What a remarkable girl Nell Wolverson is!" one, gray and rosy and fat and imposing, was saying.

"She's certainly carrying on a remarkable flirtation with that young man. Who is he?" said the other, with the severity of position gained by effort.

"Some sort of engineer in the employ of the Winfield company. Mary Winfield introduced him to Nell."

"That girl would flirt with anybody. She seems to find all men infinitely amusing. Isn't she handsome? Now you would suppose she was somebody or other. But the Wolversons—oh, you know!" quoth the other lady.

"Her mother was one of the most pushing women I ever knew," asserted her companion.

"Of the dead, nihil nisi bonum," said the imposing one. "She was an extraordinarily ambitious woman. With a placid and ten millions and a daughter like that, an ambitious, clever woman can do anything in New York. The Wolverson money is said to be indefinite millions instead. And now they belong in Far Westchester. Oh, dear, how many men have been after that girl! There were the Marquis di Rodiri and the little Duke of Sussex and Freddy Van Brule and—she flirts and laughs at 'em all, just as she does with that young man."

Mary Winfield was watching the two with much the same thoughts. This poor young man didn't understand sophisticated young women. It was admirable of Nell Wolverson; she was sorry she had introduced them; she might have known that Nell would play with any man as she would with a cat or a dog. Oh, dear, this Melville was so out of it; so busy and capable and such an efficient servant of the Winfield company. But Nell was Nell, and Mary ought to have known better.

If Nell were Nell, she was proving it with a vengeance. She was making Melville tell her of himself, and she was giving him nothing of herself in return. They were seated now, looking out at the frothing white and green in the ship's wake. She was glancing at him again and again with mild, interested eyes. He was forgetting himself and was telling how his father left him only money enough for school and college, which he had increased by some tutoring; of how he had worked and won a position in a machine shop of the Winfield company; of how he had progressed further and now

suddenly swept away by the thought of this story. But had he a right to



"What did you say that man's name is?" she asked.

"Tell her? No; she wouldn't, couldn't tell her; that was so long ago and forgotten."

"And your father? Go on; I am interested."

"He might have had the things, the money, to have put me in your friend Bertie's position if luck had been his way and if he hadn't been cheated."

"I never can think of you as a man like Bertie," Miss Wolverson said decisively, with that calm confidence in her eyes. The eyes may have been rather more expressive because this was the last day of all and he would slip out of her life so soon. She was fair to look upon, clever, accomplished, charming. This fence of the sexes was her delight. She could no more avoid it than she could breathing. Her unsophisticated young man failed to understand her. Later common sense was to reach out from the grim, master of fact depths of his nature and grasp his sentimentality until it hurt him.

"Oh, it's a little story of what might have been years ago in Red Nugget gulch, California. My father was out there after gold, like the rest, and he fell in with a man with whom he made a partnership in a general store. Some times in exchange for goods they took claims. At first they made a lot of money, and then they lost nearly every penny in trying to develop a claim that failed. Well, each blamed the other, and they decided to separate. They could decide on no other way than to cut the cards. So they sat down one day and cut, and some things fell to my father and some to his partner. And the papers were drawn up and the division made. A week after that a claim which had gone to my father's partner began to develop. It proved a find. My father's partner made the beginning of a great fortune that way."

"Well?" said the girl.

"Now, the shanty that served for the store had fallen to my father, not the stock, which went to pay the firm's debts. Three weeks after this my father sat talking with a mining expert, who spoke of the big find on my father's former partner's lucky claim, and he stated boastfully, to show his value as an expert probably, that he had told my father's partner—we will call him Smith—that the claim was extremely valuable. This set my father to thinking. Smith believed the claim to be valuable. But my father could not acknowledge that the man had given him a chance, even if he had dishonestly hidden his notion of the claim. That day my father happened in the abandoned store. On the table were the two packs of dirty cards just as they had been left the day of the division. They had cut in the bare inner room, which hadn't been disturbed since. My father picked up these instruments of his bad luck, and he saw that the pack Smith had used had been marked."

"How awful!" the listener said. "And you might have had money if it hadn't been?"

"If it hadn't been for Smith's dishonesty, yes, Miss Wolverson. But to return to the story. My father went to Smith, whom he accused, but Smith looked him in the face and laughed: 'You are crazy, man. And you haven't any proof. Who'd believe you?'"

"Was that the end of it?" the girl asked gently.

"No; not the end of it. My father could prove nothing indeed. His affairs went from bad to worse. He left California aimless. Later in the east he accumulated the little money he was able to leave me. But it was always a hard struggle for him and my mother, who died shortly after I was born."

"And Smith? That's not the name."

Melville hesitated.

"No; that's not the name. It's a well known name, but we will let it remain Smith. Everything Smith touched became money. He was accused of dishonesty many times in the course of his career, but nothing ever was proven. He succeeded and is today one of the powerful men of the country."

"If you would care that much," said he half lightly, half earnestly.

"Oh, I like you," she said cheerily, as she might have said she liked a fox terrier.

"And the man's dishonesty was really your blessing. It made you do things. Oh, I know. I know a lot of men, and the men of the Far Westchester set are so tiresome."

"Oh, thanks," said he lamely.

"But you mustn't be tiresome. Do you see that line there? That's Sandy Hook. I know it. I have seen it that way a dozen times. And—I must be going home. Oh, I have been so much interested."

And she went away brightly smiling, and he felt suddenly the least like a fool. The feeling was increased when he found in the bustle of landing that she had only a cool hand and a distant "So glad to have met you" and no acknowledgment of the fact that he had asked to call, which she plainly had evaded. He felt revengeful and a bit of an anarchist. And the next morning when he was reporting to Mr. Winfield his success in London and being complimented by the company's head his success seemed cheap. He had a picture before him of a bright, high bred looking, exquisitely groomed young woman surrounded by a company of gentlemen whose world was not his and nev-

er could be, for when one is making his way ploddingly, with no particular capital, he can't reasonably expect that way to be made before he may be gray and all the desire for pleasure, life's good things, quite gone.

It may be supposed that Miss Wolverson put the young man of the Atlantic out of her mind. Perhaps she had some thoughts of him or else she never would have repeated the story he had told her at a dinner where her father was most unusually her escort. At a dinner one owes it as a duty to do his part. Nell did not care to be lacking and wanted her bonnet to be as natty as another's and her story as spirited. For she waged a little strife to make the world she knew hold her clever. Now she couldn't, try as she would, think of another story than the one Melville had told her.

"Mary Winfield introduced me to a very entertaining man on the Lucania, a man who does things, you know?"

"What does he do, horses or yachts?" said Bertie Townley.

"Oh, I say, Nell, you don't mean that serious faced chap you were mooning about with so much?"

"The very man," Miss Wolverson said without turning color.

And she told Melville's story.

"How extraordinary!" gasped Mrs. Pemberton. "You do meet such strange people at sea."

"Business methods are oftentimes dishonest," said Judge Torbid pompously.

"Your story isn't funny enough," criticized Bertie Townley.

Samuel Wolverson—I should say "Sam," the great Sam—held his rose in his port. He's a thin, sharp featured, silent man, and looking at him one always wonders how he succeeded in possessing such a daughter.

Driving home he said to Nell: "If I were you, I don't think I'd try to tell stories at dinner."

"Why, papa?"

"It's unkind."

"Do you think so?" she said petulantly. She usually had him well in hand.

"What did you say that man's name is?" he asked after a moment.

"Burke Melville."

Suddenly she turned.

"Papa, you were in California?"

"Yes. What of it?"

"Did you ever hear a story like that?"

"I have heard a lot of stories. California is full of 'em. Read Bret Harte. As for your acquaintance, he was probably yarning."

"No, no; he wasn't."

"What makes you think that?"

"He isn't that kind of a man."

"Nell, I think that you can take care of yourself, but I don't believe you can judge men."

"Oh, trust me for that," she said airily, and at the moment she was indeed trying to judge no less a person than her father. She had thought that she understood him. His she? He was fond of her. He denied her nothing, and she loved him. But—there were depths she could not fathom, and she knew no more of his real life, even less, than an outsider.

But now a sudden fear possessed her. She rushed up stairs to a little room which she used for her writing table and her books, and eagerly she looked for a paper in a certain English magazine, "American Millionaires, No. X, Samuel Wolverson." Had she been mistaken? And she read: "The beginning of this extraordinary fortune was in '68 in Red gulch, California. Melville and Wolverson were storekeepers who exchanged a supposedly bad debt for the now famed Bullfinch mine. Wolverson bought out his partner."

For a minute the room seemed to swim.

"Oh, if mamma were only here!" the girl said monningly.

"It's true—true. This is all his and not mine, every penny of it. And he knew when he was doing it. And she stole down to her father's room."

She went toward him, the magazine in hand and held it before him. Wolverson started. He had never seen her like this, and her pallor frightened him. And then he saw to what she pointed.

"Was the story he told me true?"

"What if it were?"

"What if it were?" she said mockingly. "You can't understand what if it were."

But the father said quietly, with a mastery of himself.

"If it were true, that Melville couldn't have succeeded. He hadn't it in him. He would have failed at anything. I cut loose from him."

"But you haven't told me whether the story is true."

"I won't acknowledge or deny it. He said at last. 'What of it? You ought not to find fault. My money has made you a position as fine as any of 'em.'"

"Good night," said the girl.

At the door he called to her: "Nell, you haven't kissed me good night."

"I can't tonight."

"And she was gone.

"A woman can't understand business. She'll get over it." But he failed to sleep well that night. She was not at breakfast. He went to her room. She was sleeping with a look that frightened him. On his way down town he stopped at his doctor's. "I am 'troubled with that insomnia.'"

"Mr. Wolverson," said the practitioner, "I have told you again and again that you must let up on work and worry."

"I know. I know," said the great man. "By the way, I wish you would see Nell. I am worried about her."

He kept himself busied down town until about 3 and then drove through the park in the parade, a tired faced man people pointed out.

As he entered the house he heard Nell's voice. He paused in the hall and listened.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Melville," she was saying.

"I had your note and came here promptly, I think."

"Yes; promptly."

"I have passed you several times, but I don't believe you saw me," Melville said rather bitterly.

He was thinking how charming she appeared here in her own house. He was blaming himself for all that he had thought of her, when her world, of which he had that brief glimpse, had been shut out.

"I sent for you," Nell went on, "to ask you why you told me that story when you knew that your father's partner then—was—my father."

The listener started and moved toward the door and drew back.

At last he heard:

"Miss Wolverson—yes, it was so, it is so, and I was a coward to tell you."

"I am glad you told me," Nell said humbly, for this was no longer the proud Miss Wolverson. She wondered at herself, tears were in her eyes, and self control was far away.

"I don't know what made me tell you, and yet I do know. I have lied. I do know now. You seemed so far out of my reach, and I wanted you to be in my reach. Do you understand?"

"I don't know that I understand," the girl said. "I can't seem to understand."

"And—Oh, you are crying. I have hurt you. I wouldn't hurt you for the world."

"Don't," she said. "Please don't."

But he was saying:

"I know the reason now. It was—don't you see—didn't you see?"

After a moment the listener heard Nell's voice:

"It's best so. If you do, it rights itself. And—I see it clearly. I know now why I didn't want you to be of Bertie Townley's class. You are a man who does things—and will—a man for a woman to be proud of, and—and—yes."

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BOLTON'S LAST YEAR.

The Way He Spent It Preparing For His Death.

"Billy Bolton, the Lansburg brewer, was a very rich man and one with a host of friends," said an old state man to the New York Sun. "His brewery in Lansburg was a profitable concern, and he practically owned about all the saloons in that town."

"One day after a consultation his physicians told him that he had Bright's disease and that he surely would not live more than a year. Billy took it hard for word it and made up his mind to make the fur fly while life was left. He had never traveled much, and so he decided to go around the world."

"He took with him a congenial friend and plenty of money, and away they went. They left a trail of fire and ashes through all the capitals of Europe and the queer and strange places of Asia and Africa. After nine months they came back, and Bolton brought with him the most marvelous collection of souvenirs and presents that any man not a professional collector ever brought into this country. The duties amounted to \$3,000."

"Arrived in Lansburg, Billy hired the town hall, sent his packing boxes filled with these oriental and European treasures up to the hall and had them all taken out and put on exhibition as though for a church fair. Upon each article he marked the name of some friend whom he wished to remember with a gift. There were hundreds in this category, but Billy had presents for them all."

"On the day appointed for the presentation he invited his army of friends to the town hall. To each he turned over the present selected for him, and amid the cheers of his grateful and admiring fellow townsmen the hall was stripped of its beautiful things."

"When the last present had been placed in the hands of its recipient, Billy went back to his home and lay down to die. Within the year his physicians' prophecy came true, and the town gave him the finest funeral that any man ever had."

"Why Don't It Bust?"

We quote from The Century an anecdote related as one of "A Woman's Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg":

Speaking of fuses, the reciter told us one day a very funny thing that had been during one of his trips to town. Every day, as long as the siege continued, he crossed that hospital ridge and passed over the most exposed streets on his way to the church, always carrying with him his pocket communion service, apparently standing an even chance of burying the dead, comforting the dying or being himself brought home maimed or cold in death. His leaving was a daily anguish to those who watched him scud away over the top of the line. One evening, coming back in the dusk, he saw a burly wagon slip off his horse and get under it in a hurry. His head appeared, bobbing out first from one side, then from the other. Above him in the air, bobbing, too, and with a quick, uneasy motion, was a luminous spark. After a full minute spent in vigorous dodging the man came out to prospect. The supposed fuse was still there, burning brilliantly. "Darn the thing," he grunted, "why don't it bust?" He had been playing hide and seek for 40 seconds with a line specter of our southern lightning bug, or firefly!

Going into a Safer Business.

It was Cassidy's first morning as newspaper carrier. From side to side of the avenue he hurried, dropping the moist sheets in vestibules and running them in the space between the door and sill. Finally he came to a house that was separated from the sidewalk by an iron studded yard. Cassidy opened the front gate and walked up the stone path. He knelt in the vestibule and started running the paper under the door. An upper window was raised, and a woman's voice called:

"Is that you, Harry? You are awful late. I hear the milk carts rattling."

Cassidy thought it best to remain quiet. The voice continued:

"You needn't think I'm coming down at such an hour! The idea of you, a married man, coming home at such a late hour! Last year, my usual? Well, catch!"

A heavy piece of brass shot two stories. There was a heavy fall, and the vestibule resembled a pressroom.

Some one found Cassidy smoking his pipe in the "accident yard."

"Going back to the carrier route?" they asked.

"Never once more," responded Cassidy. "Of'm go back to wur-ruk in the quarry. There's no fallin' knees there; only dynamited rocks."—Chicago News

An Abandoned Test.

Sir Hiram S. Maxim was once a victim of one of the British war office's sudden freaks. When the Maxim quick firing gun was being tested by the government with a view to finding out its weak points, its inventor was asked to have 10,000 rounds fired at the highest possible speed. Cassidy opened the chest and the cartridges were carried out by the chairman of the committee of investigation was still unsatisfied.

"That's very well as far as it goes," he exclaimed, "but could you guarantee your gun to go on firing automatically at the same rate for, say, 24 hours?"

"I can," was the quiet reply. "And I will—on one condition."

"And that is?"

"That the government finds and pays for the ammunition."

At first the committee were inclined to close with the offer, but when it was discovered that 854,000 rounds would be fired and that the cost of the experiment would be something like £5,700 they dispensed with the trial.

The Cost of Mistaken Identity.

A man was fined at a local court the other day for a queer assault, when he set up a queerer defense. He was charged with having slipped up at the back of two women palavering in an alleyway and knocked their heads together. His defense was that he thought in the dark one of the women was his wife. He had gone home, the better half was out, and so was the fire, the balms were green and the supper was not ready. He became almost tragically eloquent as he pictured a hungry and angry man's misery, but the assault was not excusable, and he had to pay up.—Glasgow Times

An Easy Matter.

"The reason some men don't get along happily," said Mr. Meekton, "is that they don't know how to manage a wife."

"You know this?" was the skeptical query.

"Certainly. It is the simplest thing in the world. All you have to do is to say 'yes' whenever she wants anything and always let her have her own way."—Washington Star

Hotels and Summer Resorts

To be popular require a good table. Cheap groceries don't satisfy and are poor economy. Buy from us, to be sure of the best! Our goods win trade for you, and cost you no more. See open prices, spot cash.

ORDER BY MAIL—Mention this paper.

20-lb case No. 1 Macaroni..... \$2.00
20-lb box Candles, 130..... 1.50
12 lbs. French Prunes..... 1.00
12 lbs. Galton Tomatoes..... 2.00
5 lbs. Guar Baking Powder..... 1.00
20-lb tin W. S. Soap..... 1.50
100 bars fine Laundry Soap..... 3.00
24 plugs good Corn Starch..... 1.00
Largest boxes Blacking..... .50

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