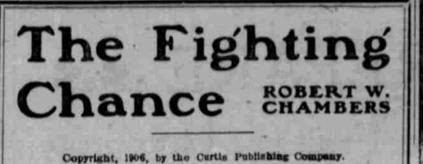
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(A continued story.)

"Very well, Howard," she said, recognizing in him the cowardice which she had always suspected to be there. She bade him good night. He touch-

ed her hand, but made no offer to kiss her. She laughed a little to herself, watching him striding toward the elovator.

She turned letsurely, her alim hands balanced lightly on her narrow hips, and strolled into the second dressing room, where Mrs. Vendenning sat suilenly indulging in that particular species of solitaire known as "The Idiot's Delight."

'Well?" inquired Mrs. Vendenning, looking up at the tall, pale girl she was chaperoning so carefully during their sojourn in town. "What did Howard Quarrier want?"

"He knows, I think, but he hasn't yet informed me."

"I'll tell you one thing, Agatha," said Mrs. Vendenning, gathering up the packs for a new shuffle, "Grace Ferrall doesn't fancy Howard's attention to you, and she's beginning to say When you go back to Shotover 80. you'd better let him alone."

"I'm not going back to Shotover," said Agatha.

"What?

let you know tomorrow. It all depends --but I don't expect to." She turned as her maid tapped on the door. "Oh, Captain Voucher. Are you at home to him?" flipping the pasteboard on to the table among the scattered cards.

'Yes," said Mrs. Vendenning aggressively, "unless you expect him to flop down on his knees tonight. Do you?" "I don't-tonight. Perhaps tomor-I don't know. I can't tell yet." row. And to her maid she nodded that they

were at home to Captain Voucher. Quarrier had met him, too, just as he was leaving the hotel lobby. They exchanged the careful salutations of men who had no use for one another. On the Englishman's clean cut face a deeper hue settled as he passed; on Quarrier's not a trace of emotion, but when he entered his motor he sat bolt upright, stiff backed and stiff necked, his long gray gloved fingers moving restlessly over his pointed beard.

The night was magnificent. Myriads of summer stars spangled the of your men would march me out" heavens. Plank, driving his big motor northward through the night, Leila his men had reported the first episode Mortimer beside him, twice mistook the glimmer of a firefly for the distant lamp of a motor, which amused Lella, and her clear young laughter floated Fells. However, she knew it, because back to the ears of Sylvia and Siward, a garrulous gardener, proud of his curled up in their corners of the huge tonneau. But they were too profoundly occupied with each other to heed the sudden care free laughter of the young matron, though in these days her laughter was infrequent enough to darkness. And she teased him for set the more merciless tongues wag- awhile, very gently, even tenderly, and ging when it did sound. her of her husband's scarcely velled indrawn breath, a sigh and silence. menace that day he had encountered him in the rotunda of the Algonquin Trust company. His first thought was flected stars. Mirrored lights gleamed to do so-to talk it over with her, consider the threat and the possibility of its seriousness, and then come to some logical and definite decision as to what their future relations should be. Again and again he had been on the point of inn. doing this when alone with Lelia-uncomfortable, even apprehensive, because of their frank intimacy. But he of trees and shrubbery, then on a level, had never had the opportunity to do so sweeping in a great circle up to the without deliberately dragging in the steps of the inn. subject by the ears in all its ugliness and implied reproach for her impru- flautly lighted versions the gay tudence and seeing that dreadful, vs. mult broke out like un uproarious welcant change in Lella's face which the come after the swift silence of their mere mention of her husband's name journey. The stir of jolly people keen was sure to bring turn into horror un- for pleasure, the clatter of crockery, speakable. A man not prone to fear his fellows, guests, of transoms, coupes, victorias he now feared Mortimer, but that fear and scores of motor cars wheeling and struck him only through Leila or had | turning through the bilnding-glare of so reached him until the days of his their own headlights. closing struggle with Quarrier. That threat of Mortimer's to involve Plank fitful crescendoes and throbbing suswith Leila in one common ruin, that boast that he was able to do so could not be ignored as a possible weapon if Quarrier should by any chance learn of ers was in the air. In all his life he had taken Lella for a table," said Siward as a head into his arms but once, had kissed her watter came up smiling and bowing to but once. But that once had been Plank. "I confess in the new exciteenough to arm Mortimer with danger from head to foot. Some prying servant had either listened or seen-perhaps a glimmer of a mirror had betrayed them. At all events whoever had seen or heard had informed Mortimer, and now the man was equipped, the one and only man in all the world who could with truth accuse Plank, the only man of whom he stood in honest fear.

that never for one moment had it ocsurred to him that the sheer fault of it all lay with Lella; that it was ber imprudence alone that now threatened berself and the man she loved-that throatened his very success in life as long as Mortimer should live.

All this Phank, in his thorough, painstaking review of the subject, had taksa into account, and he could not see how it could possibly bear upon the matters now finally to be adjusted between Quarrier and himself, because Quarrier was in New York and Mortimer in Saratoga, and unless the latter had already sold his information the former could not strike at him through knowledge of it.

And yet a curious reluctancy, a hesttation inexplicable-unless overwork explained it-had come over him when Siward had proposed their dining tozether on the very eve of his completed victory over Quarrier.

It seemed absurd, and Plank was too stolid to entertain superstitions, but he could not, even with Lelia taughing there beside him, shake off the dull instinct that all was not well; that Quarrier's attitude was still the attitude of a dangerous man; that he (Plank) should have had this evening "No, I don't think so. However, I'll in his room alone to study out the matters he had so patiently plodded through in the long hours while Siward slept.

Yet not for one instant did he dream of shifting the responsibility-if responsibility entailed blame-on Siward, who, against Plank's judgment and desire, had on the very eve of consummation drawn him away from that sleepless vigliance which must forever be the price of a business man's safety.

Leila, gay and excited as a schoolgirl, chattered on ceaselessly to Plank; all the sflence, all the secrecy of the arid years turning to laughter on her red lips, pouring out in broken phrases of delight, words strung together for the sheer pleasure of speech and the happiness of her lot to be with him unrestrained.

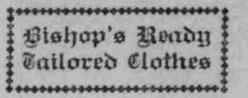
"And would you believe it, Bever-iy," she said, "I formed the babit at Shotover of walking across the boundary and strolling into your greenhouses and deliberately helping myself. And every time I did it I was certain; one

He laughed, but did not tell her that and that he had instructed them that Mrs. Mortimer and her friends were to do exactly as they pleased at the service with Plank, had informed her. "Beverly," she said, "you are a dear.

If people only knew what I know!"

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"He is a man, every inch," said Si-

ward simply. n't it?" she asked. Will Promote Beauty

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And it was characteristic of Plank | toward you."

He began to turn red. She could see it even in the flickering lamp shot their voices grew lower in a half seri-Plank had never seen fit to speak to ous badinage that ended with a quiet,

> And now the river swept into view, a darkly luminous sheet set with rein it. Sudden bright yellow flashes zigzagged into its somber depths. The foliage edged it with a deeper gloom, over which, on the heights, twinkled the multicolored lights of Riverside

Up the broad, gentle grade they sped, curving in and out among the clumps

Now all about them from the brilthe coming and going of waiters, of

Somewhere a gypsy orchestra, full of pensions of caprice, furnished resonant accompaniment to the joyous clamor. The scent of fountain spray and flow-

"I didn't know you had telephoned ment of things I clean forgot It. What a man you are to think of other people!

Plank reddened again, muttering something evasive, and went forward with Lella.

Sylvia, moving leisurely beside Siward, who was walking slowly, but confidently, without crutches, whispered to him, "I never really liked Mr. Plank before I understood his attitude

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