The Double Cross

By
A. E. THOMAS

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THE STORY

Jim Stanley, New York business man, orders his desk audiphone taken to his home, intending to finish his dictation there. Rollo Waterman, his partner, comes in. Both are in love with Doris Colby. Stanley proposes tossing a coin to determine which shall first propose to Doris. Waterman wins. Nina Morgan, Waterman's secretary and mistress, has overheard his conversation with Stanley and resents Waterman's plan to desert her. Waterman says he is penniless and must make a rich marriage. He urges Nina to tell Doris that Stanley has wronged her (Nina). Doris admits to her father her interest in both men, but is unable to decide which to marry. Nina tells Doris her story, exacting a promise that Doris will not tell the source of her information. Doris is convinced of Stanley's duplicity and is broken-hearted, realizing that it is Stanley she loves. Waterman proposes and Doris accepts him. Stanley accepts the situation, and as a wedding present gives his share of the business to Waterman. He arranges with his secretary, Frank Wilson, to take charge of his other business interests. He is going to India. Doris tells Waterman part of Nina's story and he promises to "try" to find the girl. Frank Wilson, aware of Waterman's crookedness, leaves his employ. The latter begins to importune Doris for money. Bromfield, the gambler, is pressing Waterman for payment of gambling debts. At Waterman's urging Doris wears her magnificent diamond necklace to the opera. That night it disappears. Doris' father enlists Bromfield's aid in tracing the stones. Stanley returns to New York with an East Indian friend, Swami Ramanara. Doris realizes now that she loves him, and always has.

CHAPTER X—Continued

—11—

"Oh, quite, quite," he said, "and many thanks, old girl." As he spoke he took her hand, and tried to draw her to him. But she said quickly, "Please, don't do that. I don't like it."

"I was only trying to show you how much I appreciate it."

"Do it some other way, if you please."

He drew himself up stiffly. "As you like."

He turned to go, and she stopped him. "Rollin, one moment. What's the use of our going on like this?"

"Like this?"

"You know what I mean. You're not happy with me—I'm not happy with you. Why not end it?"

"You mean divorce?"

"Yes, that's what I mean."

Waterman was taken wholly unawares. He knew, of course, that he had imposed upon the generosity of his wife. He knew,too, that he had neglected her. He had taken her too much as a matter of course. But he was so self-centered that he had not realized that he was as yet in any danger that she would resent it. It now became suddenly clear to him that he had gone too far.

"Doris, old girl," he exclaimed, "you don't mean that! I know I haven't been as good a husband as I should, but I've been distracted and worried and bothered by so many things that perhaps I—"

"No," she said, "no, Rollin. That isn't it at all. If you really loved me, all these things would only have brought us closer together. As it is they have driven us further apart. From the very beginning I had my doubts, and now I know that it's all been a terrible mistake. I wish to end it. I've been thinking about it for weeks. And now I want your consent to an undefended divorce."

Strangely enough, though it had not been above an hour since Doris realized for the first time that she loved Jim Stanley, her present conversation was not consciously an outcome of that realization. That realization had, however, clarified like magic her growing point of view about her husband. Doris' realization that she loved Jim Stanley had made clear to her the intensity of the loathing that she felt for the life she was now leading with her husband. This aversion became almost intolerable as she waited for his answer.

Waterman tossed his cigarette into the grate and turned upon her, frowning. "I'll never consent," he said.

"Why not?"

"I don't believe in divorce. Also, despite certain obvious drawbacks, I like my home as it is, and I've no intention whatever of being separated from the society of my wife. And besides that—"

"Oh, please, please," she said. "Let's not discuss it any more just now. Try and look at it from my point of view. I'm sure that before long you'll see that I'm right."

"Not a chance," said he. He turned to go.

"By the way," said Doris, "Jim Sanley is back."

He turned sharply on his heel. "Ah-h!" he said.

"Why do you speak like that?"

But Waterman knew better than to express the thought that the mention of Jim Sanley's name had inspired, so he only asked, "When did he turn up?"

"He telephoned me this afternoon. He's coming here tonight."

"Oh, good, good. How is he?"

"Very well, he said."

Waterman was startled by this news. He had known, of course, that some day Stanley would return, but he had not expected it so soon, and he was not prepared. The announcement filled him with uneasiness, yet he swiftly reassured himself. Stanley's return could do him no harm. He was safe. In fact, it was probably a good thing. He was perfectly aware that Stanley's affection for him was genuine. He had pulled him out of many a hole in the past, and it was more than likely that he would come to his help now. Yes, yes—on the whole he was glad.

His wife had been regarding him with a reflective air. "You're glad that he is coming here?" she asked.

Instantly Waterman saw his mistake. He covered it. "Well, of course," he said, "it's going to be awkward, feeling as we do about him."

"I don't feel as I did about him."

"Eh?"

"No. I don't believe a word of that girl's story."

He was startled. Had Doris found out anything?

"May I ask why you have changed your mind about it?" he asked.

"I don't know, but I have."

"Well, I must say," said he, vastly relieved, "I've heard a lot about the illogical quality of the feminine mind, but this beats anything in my experience. What are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to behave exactly as if I had never heard that story."

"Bit late, isn't it?"

"Yes," she said darkly, "it is—very late."

"Well, you can do as you like, I suppose."

"And as to that check," said Doris, "you'll find it on your desk tonight.

"Doris, Doris, My Dear Doris!"

Or, if you're not in a condition to notice it then, it will still be there in the morning."

"Are you insinuating that I'll be drunk?"

"You often are, aren't you?"

"Well," he said insolently, "there's a key in your bedroom door, isn't there?"

"The end of our romance," she murmured. "A key in my bedroom door."

He shrugged his shoulders and went out.

It will be seen that Doris had solved one of her problems—how to behave toward Jim. She was going to behave as if nothing had happened, and she was sure that nothing had happened—except that her life was spoiled.

Thus she sat and waited for the man she loved.

* * * * * * *

It was perhaps fortunate that when Stanley went that evening to see Doris he took the Swami Ramanara with him. He had a feeling that it might be just as well. He was not certain he could altogether trust himself.

She still sat before the fire where Waterman had left a few moments before, as he swiftly crossed the room and took her hand. "Doris—Doris—my dear Doris!" he cried, as his eyes devoured her. "This is wonderful!"

Speechless, she smiled up at him.

"Wonderful!" For the moment he had actually forgotten the Swami. Her eyes, wandering from his own across his shoulder, recalled him. "Oh, allow me, Doris—allow me to present the Swami Ramanara. Swami, this is Mrs. Waterman."

"Madame," said the Swami.

"The Swami and I," went on Stanley "have been traveling companions all the way from the East. He has come to study America and to interest us in his own particular cult. He has interested me in it so deeply that my first thought was to put you in touch with him."

"That is very sweet of you, Jim."

"You see," continued Stanley, "the Swami is a mystic of uncommon powers. Many things dark to us are clear to him. I am sure, for example, that though it is not two minutes since he saw you, he knows quite well the kind of person you are. Yes—more than that, I am sure he knows whether you are happy or not, and why."

"Really?"

"Don't be alarmed," he laughed. "He speaks English quite well, though with some difficulty, but he has an astounding gift of reticence. You see, he speaks only when he has something of importance to say."

"How charming. If the rest of us were like that, what a lot of trouble it would save."

"Wouldn't it, though! But come now—how are you? Well, I hope—awfully well?"

"Oh, yes, yes—awfully."

"Splendid! And—happy?"

"Of course."

"Fine! You'd better be happy! I remember that about the last thing I said to Rolly was that he must make you awfully happy, because if he didn't he would have to answer to me."

"I remember." But the blue eyes did not meet his gaze quite frankly.

"Hm. Well, where is the old rascal? I want to see him—trot him out."

"He'll be here presently."

"Lord! But it's good to see you again. Your letters were not so numerous—just a line from Rollin once, but I don't remember getting any from you."

"No?"

"No—not one."

"That's strange, though perhaps it isn't. Whenever I send a letter across the world I always marvel if it is received. It seems a miracle. But how surprising to see you—we had no idea!"

He noted her avoidance but he passed it over and replied, "I didn't warn anyone—just woke up one morning homesick, for the first time, and started the same day. I haven't quite got my bearings yet, but it does seem as of the town is noisier than ever. I wish Rollin would hurry up. I can't stay but a moment. Lots to do. You see I'm going down to the country tomorrow to open up the place."

"Has it been occupied while you've been gone?"

"No—locked up just as it was. There'll be lots to do if I'm to be a going concern in a few days. But I want you and Rolly to spend a week-end with me pretty soon."

"Why, of course."

"How about next Saturday?"

"I think, perhaps, if Rollin has nothing else."

"Good—next Saturday, then."

With this, Waterman stood in the doorway. Stanley made a rush and seized him by the shoulders. "Old man! Old man!—By George! This is great!" He shook him playfully before he took his hands.

"I'll say it is," said Waterman. "How're you, old thing? Quite a s'prise."

"Yes, yes—I didn't tell a soul I was coming. Oh, beg pardon, Swami—this is my old friend, Rollin Waterman. You've heard me speak a lot of him. Rollin, the Swami Ramanara."

"The what?" said Waterman.

"The Swami Ramanara," repeated Stanley.

"Oh, yes, yes, I'be sure." He waved a vague hand, "I know—Way down upon the Swami river—what?" He laughed noisily at his own joke. A moment's silence fell upon the group. Doris dropped her eyes. A faint flush mounted to her cheeks.

Stanley looked at his friend between narrowed lids. Only the Swami seemed indifferent. Swiftly Stanley took control.

"Well, Rollin, old fellow, it's fine to see you again—simply splendid. I've got a million things to tell you—but not now. I must be off again. The Swami has an appointment to meet some friends of mine and I've got to chaperon him. I'll look in at your office before long, if that's agreeable to you?"

"Sure, sure, come along."

Stanley turned to Doris, and took her hand again. "Good night," he said. "Remember—on Saturday."

She looked at him a little pitifully. "Good night," she said, and to the Swami. "Good night, sir. I do hope you will come and see me again."

"Madame, I thank you. Good evening." The Swami turned to Waterman. "Sir," he said and bowed again.

"Sir to you," responded Waterman genially, swaying ever so slightly on his heels.

Stanley glanced uneasily from his friend's wife to his friend—but there was nothing to do. Unhappy, he departed. . . .

Stanley passed an unhappy night. His first impulse was to get in touch with Wilson. Not, he reflected, that Wilson was likely to know anything that he wished to know, and yet he might. Still, ought he to talk to anyone about it? How far had this kind of thing gone?

Returning to his hotel in the taxi, the silence was presently broken by the Swami. "The lady has a sweet spirit," he said.

"No one knows that better than I," answered Stanley.

"She is not happy."

"I'm afraid not."

"Her life is not harmonious. There are discords."

"What do you mean?" But the Swami would say no more.

Stanley did not go to Waterman's office the next morning. He did not wish to see him at present. He found it difficult to pardon what he had seen the night before. In the past he had forgiven his friend for many things and now he tried to do him justice. "Idiotic of me," he thought, "to be so disturbed about such a trifle!" Yet disturbed he was and he decided to postpone his talk with Waterman. Instead of keeping that appointment, he telephoned to Wilson, got a motor, and after lunch started for the country.

The sun was warm, the air was still. The motor moved silently, smoothly, with effortless power, as if traveling through the picture of a dream. For a time Jim Stanley was at peace. He said little to Wilson, and asked no questions whatever. Wilson on his part respected his companion's mood. He, too, was happy—happier than he had been in a long time. He was content to be near the man he loved.

Stanley's place in the country had many characteristics of the English manor house. It was rather low, rambling and informal, comfortable and cheerful.

A winding private road, perhaps an eighth of a mile in length, brought the motor to the door. Jefferson, a middle-aged servant who had grown up in the Stanley family, and who had been the caretaker during Jim's absence, stood upon the doorstep to greet his employer.

The tour of the house which followed was brief. Stanley knew that with Jefferson in charge all had been well. Presently the trio reached the library.

"Jefferson," said Stanley, "I mean to occupy the house from now on, at least until spring. So you had better get things going at once. How much of a staff have we at present?"

"Just myself, the gardener, and the housekeeper, sir."

"You see, Mr. Stanley," explained Wilson, "when you went away so suddenly, you didn't give me any instructions; so I did what I thought you'd like and cut down expenses to the minimum."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CONVENIENT FOLDING BREAKFAST TABLE

Using Drop Shelf as Breakfast Table in Remodeled Kitchen.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

The home demonstration agent, who is breakfasting with this farm woman in Massachusetts, is trying out one of her own suggestions—the use of hinged conveniences in a very small kitchen, to save space. This dropped table can be folded up and hooked to the wall when it is not needed, but when a hasty meal is being served or an extra surface is wanted for preparing food or serving a number of individual dishes it can be very useful. When there are only two for breakfast, and perhaps the housewife is alone for lunch, even a dining alcove is hardly necessary, and this little folding device answers every purpose. The ironing board, similarly hinged to the wall, is let down only when necessary.

MAKE ALL SCHOOL DRESSES SIMPLE

Fussy or Fragile Frocks Prevent Childish Play.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

Possibly no task gives a mother more real enjoyment than selecting or making the dresses worn by her small daughter when she is between three or four and ten. Sometimes the mother herself feels once more like a little girl with a doll to dress, and she takes so much pleasure in planning her "doll's" wardrobe that she allows her imagination to run riot. The little girl, too, has ideas about frills and ruffles and fancy decorations she has seen on other children's clothes. The result is often an elaborate, overtrimmed, impractical set of dresses which not only give much work in the making but also in "doing up."

Dresses that are too fussy or too fragile for everyday wear prevent a child from indulging in normal active play, and make her too conscious of herself and her appearance; or else they are soon dirty and draggled and much less pleasant to look at than plain, sturdy play suits. Another unfortunate point, too, is that the frocks that make a little girl look like a dressed-up doll are not really in good taste except for "dressup" occasions. If worn to school the child is likely to be criticized rather than admired.

The bureau of home economics, United States Department of Agriculture, has been interested in designing dresses for the little girl that can be easily made and laundered, that are comfortable to wear, pleasing to look at, and easy to put on and take off. Even a three-year-old can learn to dress herself if the fastenings are few in number, with large, findable buttons, placed in front. It is not necessary to choose dull, uninteresting colors, for there are many gay, fast-colored cotton prints available that appeal to any little girl. In winter time they may be replaced by warm washable challies in similar designs. Plain colors, too, are good in such materials as broadcloth or poplin.

Mexican Bean Salad Is Sufficient for Lunch

Kidney beans may be served in a salad after they have been cooked in the usual way, the bureau of home economics suggest. The combination of ingredients below makes a fairly hearty dish, sufficient for lunch.

1 pint dried kidney beans.
1 pint chopped celery.
1 tbs. minced onion.
½ cup chopped nuts.
½ tsp. salt.
¼ tsp. paprika or chili powder.
2 tbs. lemon juice
2 tbs. oil.

Wash the beans and soak them in two quarts of cold water overnight. Add one-half teaspoonful salt and cook them in the water in which they were soaked until they are tender but not broken. Drain and cool the beans, then mix with the celery, onion and nuts. Blend the oil, lemon juice and salt and pour over the mixture. Chill thoroughly and serve on crisp lettuce.

Salt Absorbs Water.

In a crowded dining car the other day a tuckless little four-year-old boy upset a glass of water. While his embarrassed young mother with a baby girl in egg arms tried to remedy the damage, the kind waiter said "never mind mam!" and began to shake salt all over the damp linen. "What will that do?" asked the mother. He explained that the salt will absorb most of the water and then be brushed off, scarcely leaving a trace of the accident.

ACIDS IN FRUITS HELP NUTRITION

Research Work Carried on in Recent Years.

Fruits have been recognized increasingly in recent years as important items of diet, in part because it has been discovered that they are excellent sources of vitamines. However, the fruits have other important constituents, notably the acids, on which constructive research work has been done in recent years by chemists in the United States Department of Agriculture.

Citric acid and malic acid, usually both in the same fruit, have been found to be the principal fruit acids. The acidity of oranges, lemons, grapefruit, limes, and most of the berries is due almost entirely to citric acid; apples and quinces owe their sour tang almost entirely to malic acid, while peaches, apricots, and pears have a mixture of the two. The blackberry acid is called isocitric, and E. K. Nelson, of the bureau of chemistry and soils, describes this as a "peculiar fruit acid not found elsewhere in nature. Isocitric acid is closely related to citric acid, possessing the same empirical formula but a different structure."

In a table giving the acidity of more than a score of fruits, Mr. Nelson records that the tamarind, with 8 per cent acidity, is the sourest fruit, more than twice as acid as the lemon, with 3.88 per cent. The tamarind's acidity is due almost exclusively to tartaric acid. The grape is the only other fruit with a considerable content of tartaric acid.

In the body most of the acids are oxidized readily, the sodium, potassium, or calcium with which they combine remaining to counteract acid conditions in the body and to help prevent excess of acidity.

Rice Patties Nice With Creamed Chicken or Fish

As a basis for creamed chicken or fish, rice patties are dainty and palatable. Leftover rice may be used if it is packed in a mold before it is cold, or you may cook the rice especially for patties, if you allow sufficient time for it to mold. The recipe is from the bureau of home economics.

1 cup rice.
2 quarts boiling water.
2 tsp. salt.
Butter.

Wash the rice through many waters, or under running water until it runs clear. Drop the rice slowly into the rapidly boiling salted water, and cook until the grains are soft when pressed between the fingers. To prevent sticking to the kettle, lift the rice occasionally with a fork. When the rice is tender, drain, and press into a layer about one and one half inches thick in a greased shallow pan. Cut into rounds three or four inches across with a moistened biscuit cutter. If desired the rice may be allowed to stand in the shallow pan over night before cutting. Place the rounds of rice on a greased baking sheet and pour melted butter over them. Brown on both sides in the oven or under the flame in the broiling oven.

Wasted Food.

"With only 5 per cent of the 28,750,000 American homes having refrigerators, and with only 20 per cent of these using refrigeration all the year, housewives in the United States waste $700,000,000 in food annually through spoilage," acording to an engineering official who figures spoilage at 10 cents per day for most families. Were it possible to check the needless waste it would be found that values would be sufficient to feed one of the major nations of western Europe.

HOUSEHOLD HINTS

Fruit desserts make the best finish for a rich meal.

• • •

Teaching a child fear does not make him more cautious but hampers his development.

• • •

Omit spices from the child's diet. They have no food value and irritate the lining of his stomach.

• • •

Use a low temperature in cooking cheese dishes. This will prevent the cheese from becoming hard and stringy.

• • •

You lengthen the life of rugs and carpets if you clean them frequently and thoroughly.

• • •

To remove coffee stain from the inside of the percolator, fill the percolator with water, add a teaspoonful of soda and boil a few minutes. Then wash the percolator to remove the stain entirely.

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Publishers Who Boost Books With a "Shock"

George Doran, the "old line" publisher, said in New York the other day:

"There is a group of publishers here and in London who make a lot of money by publishing decidedly shocking books. They have brought things to such a pass, in fact, that if a book succeeds we take it for granted that it's shocking.

"A great lady wrote her memoirs not long ago, and one of these publishers accepted them. He gave the great lady $25,000 advance royalty.

"She displayed the $25,000 check to her husband.

"'There,' she said. 'That is my advance royalty on my new book.'

"Her husband studied the check with a worried frown. Then he said:

"'Well, my dear, all I can say is that I hope the volume isn't worth it.'"

To Bring Back Forests

The West Indies do not cover much of the earth's surface, and with the possible exception of Santo Domingo are not going to be important exporters of timber, says the American Tree Association. But they have an interest, because spread out like the pages of a book are the results of past centuries of devastation. They are interesting, too, because of what the various nations are trying to do to bring back this almost totally destroyed forest resource.

Queen Bee Crossed Ocean

A bee and honey exposition was held recently in London and among the exhibits was a queen bee that had crossed the ocean in the mail. There were three tons of honey offered for competition and many by-products of the bee industry were shown. It was claimed by the promoters of the exhibition that as a food, honey takes first place, as seven ounces of honey are said to be equal to 12 ounces of beefsteak.

Meteorite Causes Worship

That the fall of the meteorite near the village of Kanth, India, which killed two men and injured a third, is a sign of divine wrath, is believed by natives of that country. As a result many devotional ceremonies are being held. The meteor is reported to have made a hole in the ground 10 feet in diameter and 20 feet deep. The sound of the fall was heard for 20 miles. The government is investigating.

Potential Wealth in Bog

Oil from peat might be produced at Tregaron bog, a vast stretch of valuable peat land between Aberystwyth and Lampeter, West Wales. Engineers and experts have surveyed the area and taken samples and levels. If their investigations show that the production of such oil there is feasible, a new industry will spring up.

A Merry Game

Traffic Cop—I'm sorry, miss, but I've got to tag your car. You know what that means?

The Sweet Young Thing—Certainly. Now I chase somebody else and tag them and then they're it.—Cleveland News.

Had a Profession

Dentist—Open your mouth wide and I won't hurt you a bit.

Patient (a few minutes later)—Now I know what Ananias did for a living.—Boston Post.

Cause and Effect

"Is she invited out much?"

"No, and that's why she is always put out."

The cow that's first up gets the first of the dew.

Natural Wealth Wasted

Cuba has turned much of its former forest land over to the growing of sugar cane, says the American Tree association. The coast line of Santo Domingo, and the lowlands of Porto Rico, are dotted with plantations of cocoa, coconut and cane.

But a great deal more land has been cleared of tree growth than is ever going to be used for agriculture in the islands of the West Indies. Much of it is a wasting asset today. Porto Rico and Trinidad have depleted their once widespread forest to a pitiful fraction. The republic of Haiti has hardly a stick of accessible commercial timber.

One Way of Doing It

"I see she pencils her eyebrows."

"Well, she wants to make her mark somehow."

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