

SHEEP'S CLOTHING

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"THE LONE WOLF," "THE PRASS BOWL,"
Etc.

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CHAPTER VIII—Continued.

"Then let me see you back to your stateroom, and I'll—"

"No, I—Id rather wait here. I must know tonight—I can't sleep without knowing—"

Admiration kindled in Quoin's regard. He liked that spirit. She had been quick to recover, quicker than the average woman would have been.

"Very well," he assented.

They moved forward. Opposite the companionway Lydia paused.

"Will you be long?"

"Not ten minutes," Quoin promised. His figure momentarily eclipsed the blur of light that stood for the doorway.

Indeed it was hardly more than ten minutes when the doorway was again darkened, and Quoin came to Lydia's side.

"Was I long? I'm sorry. I had to be rather severe before they gave in—and up."

"You succeeded?" He laughed quietly. "Here it is."

Mute in astonishment, speechless with gratitude, she took the puzzle box from his extended hand.

"A crook known as Southpaw Smith—he deals left-handed—had it, together with the father and mother of all black eyes. I was almost sorry for him. 'George Traymore' is his alias on the passenger list. A tall, slender scoundrel—very, very smooth. Not that you're likely to see him before we land, if then. He'll lay very low and make the quietest getaway from the dock he can manage—"

"Mr. Quoin!" the girl interrupted in a tremulous voice.

"Yes?"

Her embarrassment was painful. "What can I say to you? Mere thanks aren't adequate."

"Please say no more. To know I've been of some use is enough. Besides," he laughed boyishly, "I've had a good time bullying Southpaw. I like that sort of thing, you know."

"I shall be always grateful—"

"Then do something to oblige me. I shan't be easy in my mind until you're safe in your room."

Transition from the gloom of the deck to the brilliantly lighted companionway was bewildering. Instinctively Quoin and Lydia paused. The girl smiled wistfully as she offered her hand.

"Good-night—and thank you with all my heart, Mr. Quoin!"

"Miss Craven,"—he retained her hand for a moment—"will you tell me one thing?"

"If I may—anything—"

His eyes searched hers jealously. "Do you know what's in that box?"

"No, Mr. Quoin! Upon my word of honor, no."

Her eyes were limpid pools of ingenuous candor. Quoin could no longer doubt. He nodded, releasing her hand.

"Thank you."

"But," she lingered, "do you?"

"I do," he admitted reluctantly.

"Not through any wish of mine. But Southpaw had only succeeded in puzzling the combination out when I interrupted. I made him put back—what he'd taken from the box. Don't worry. I've already forgotten what it was. And Southpaw won't bother you again—I promise you that."

Her eyes questioned anxiously, his smiled reassurance. With yet another good-night, Lydia turned away.

He watched her down the alleyway to the door of B75, then turned to seek his own berth, shaking his head to rid it of tormenting doubts.

Softly closing the door, Lydia as gently shot the bolt, hoping to gain her bed unquestioned. But as she moved toward it in darkness the Dowager Dragon suddenly switched on the lights and lifted from her pillow an indignant head framed in a nightcap, the most coquettishly beribboned imaginable.

"Well?" she demanded tartly. "Where have you been, if you please?"

Lydia showed her a countenance innocent of any trace of guile. "On deck," she said quietly, removing her cloak with its sprinkling of moisture that glittered like diamond dust. "The foghorn, you know—and I wasn't sleepy, anyway. It's wonderful out there, so still and dark and uncanny. You'd think almost anything could happen, and no one be the wiser."

CHAPTER IX.

"Good old town!" said Peter Traft. Removing his hat, he saluted Town

THE CUSTOMS INSPECTORS AT NEW YORK TAKE A HAND AND THE SUSPICION GROWS THAT LYDIA KNOWS MORE THAN HER NEW FRIENDS SUSPECT

Synopsis—Lydia Craven, traveling under the name of Lucy Carteret, runs away from her English home to go to her father, Thaddeus Craven, in New York, who she hasn't seen in five years. Three nights out on board the steamer Alsatia, she runs plump into her father making love to Mrs. Merrilees, a young widow, engaged to marry him. Later Craven explains his mysterious conduct and supposed bachelorhood by telling Lydia he is a British secret service agent in America. He gives her a small box to keep for him. She is attacked. The box is stolen, but Quoin, a detective, recovers it for the girl.

with grave and affectionate respect. "Graft and all, it's one human young city!"

Intuition enabled Lydia to interpret this utterance as the invocation to the litany of your tried but true Manhattanite.

The Alsatia was trudging sedately up the bay from the Narrows, Quarantine ten minutes astern, New York looming over the port bow through a tenderly iridescent haze in whose illusion it became a city of mother-of-pearl suspended between the blue of haze-veiled sky and the blue of confluent waters.

"Arthur Rackham must have colored it," Lydia mused aloud.

"Wait—this is only the overture—wait till you see it as I mean to show it to you—bridlepaths in Central park of a sunny morning, Broadway at night with a full head of steam on, South street at noon with the old sailing ships asleep in the sun and their forefeet up on the sidewalk, Fifth avenue at evening, lights like big pearls popping out through the purple dusk—"

Ostentatiously drawing a handkerchief from his cuff, Peter mopped his brows. "Beg pardon. Being poetical under forced draft is a bit exhausting."

"Your prose isn't anything to boast of. Henry James at his most arrogant was never more unintelligible." "Oh, you'll wise up to it quick enough. But mind there'll be nothing doing in the poetry line after we're married. I know my limitations, and I couldn't stand the pace."

Here an apologetic steward caught Peter's eye. "Beg pardon, Mr. Traft, but you're wanted in the dining saloon to acknowledge your declaration."

"Thanks," said Peter sulkily. "I presume it's got to be tended to. You, too, Miss Craven."

"But I've already made my acknowledgment, Mr. Traft. I'm so sorry!"

"I wish I could believe you were!" said Peter vindictively, and went a morose way without her.

He would have been less downcast could he have guessed how soon the girl was to miss him. Alone and without distraction, imagination was haggard by the care of that wretched puzzle box. It was still safe in her possession—that was the worst of it! Nevertheless, she had as yet said nothing to Craven about the attack in the fog, fearing lest he might insist resuming charge of the puzzle box; and so, perhaps, put himself in the way of some perils more vital even than that which had befallen her. And her father was all she had!

When they were free to stream down the gangway to the pier Craven, consigning Lydia to the care of Peter Traft, rushed off to commandeer the first available customs inspectors for himself and Mrs. Merrilees. So that it was Peter who piloted Lydia to C section, hunted up her trunk, and took her place in the rank at the chief inspector's desk; with the result that the luggage of "L. Carteret, Splinter," was quickly passed, and, Peter reluctantly leaving her to pass his own impedimenta, she was at liberty to garner what diversion she might from the trials of others.

In that section her father was dutifully but perspicaciously optimistic endeavor to persuade his particular inspector that he hadn't perjured himself in his sworn declaration. Noting Lydia's indignant interest, Craven paused only long enough to lift a furtive eyebrow and draw down the corners of his mouth, thus signifying a conviction that his troubles were wholly due to the pernicious interference of his political antagonists, even as predicted.

She returned the least of nods, indicating that the puzzle box was safe—as it was, in her suede handbag, which, dangling from her wrist by its leather strap, had quite escaped the attention of the inspector.

Then, remembering Craven's hint that it would be well not to attract too much attention to their relationship until clear of the customs, the girl turned away to kill time until her father should be free.

Over the way, in Section B, Lydia found Mrs. Beggarstaff, surrounded by an array of luggage to do credit to an army corps, light of battle in her eyes, words of bitter wit upon her ready lips, in pitched combat with a graceless skeptic of an inspector.

Near by, three dock porters, two ship newsmen, half a dozen assorted citizens, and a brace of customs appraisers whose duties were immediate and

elsewhere, hung in breathless interest upon the issue of the fray, one and all grinning broadly.

Lydia gathered an impression that the Dowager Dragon had found a foe man worthy of her steel; then hurried on to Section M and Betty Merrilees.

Greeting Lydia serenely, this last resumed her conversation with her assigned inspector. "You'll find everything dutiable in the hat trunk and that big dresser trunk over there—the two upper trays—the receipted bills in the first tray—all except—necklace. I have that here," she indicated the metal box in her hands, "and the bill as well."

"Thanks, Mrs. Merrilees." The inspector looked up from her declaration in futile attempt to maintain his official imperturbability; then his eyes twinkled in a network of wrinkles. His lips twitched, and he grinned outright.

"That's all very well," said the lady impudently. "Laugh if you like! But please do your worst as quickly as possible."

"Very well, ma'am. I'll hurry you through as fast as I can."

It became immediately apparent that the man wasn't disposed to doubt the sincerity of her conversation. The luggage she had indicated as innocent of dutiable goods he passed with the most perfunctory examination, while the millinery and other declared purchases detained him only briefly.

"Everything is quite O. K., thanks to you, ma'am. And now if you will let me have a look at that necklace. I've sent for the appraiser. He'll be along in a minute."

The box was already unlocked. Mrs. Merrilees promptly removed the leather-bound jewel case and handed it to the inspector.

Touching the spring, he let the lid fly up, exposing the pearl collar. As if dazzled, he blinked furiously. "She's a daisy!" he announced with unctious. "Finest piece of the sort that's come through this year, or I'm no judge."

Momentarily his interest shifted to the bill of the Parishan jeweler.

"Three hundred thousand francs—"

sixty thousand dollars," he mused aloud. "You got it cheap, ma'am, if I'm any judge."

"Nonsense!" Mrs. Merrilees retorted indignantly. "As if an American ever got anything cheap in Paris—and from Cottier's, of all places! By every right you ought to assess the duty on not more than forty thousand dollars."

"Well," the inspector suggested indulgently, "we'll just see what the appraiser says. There he is now. Hey, Charlie, step over here a minute, will you?"

In response to this hail, a slender, bespectacled young man in O section nodded assent, picked his way through the barrier of trunks, and, recognizing Mrs. Merrilees, touched the vizard of a cap bearing the word "Appraiser."

"Mrs. Merrilees has declared her necklace, Charlie," said the inspector, handing over the case. "And here's the bill; but she wants you to take a slant at it for value."

Nodding again, the appraiser narrowed his eyes and surveyed the necklace with an expression of some mystification. Then he pursed his lips in a noiseless whistle, looked bewildered at Mrs. Merrilees, and stepped aside with the jewel case to a spot where sunlight, through a wide opening, threw a brilliant splash of gold athwart the tempered gloom of the pier-shed. Here he subjected the necklace to minute inspection with a magnifying glass. Finally, wearing an illegible expression, he turned back.

"It's a corking good thing," he announced in an odd tone. "We don't get many like it; but the workmanship on this is immense! Call it three hundred at the outside."

"What?" Mrs. Merrilees blazed indignantly. "Three hundred thousand dollars! Ridiculous! Look at the bill—"

"No, ma'am," the appraiser interrupted with mournful decision, "not three hundred thousand, but just three hundred dollars; duty a hundred and eighty (sixty per cent ad val.), and if you like I'll get someone else to size it up and see if maybe we can't shade that a bit."

"Wha-at!" Mrs. Merrilees almost shrieked.

"If it was real stuff I'd be sure, ma'am," the appraiser apologized; "but you can't always tell about these imitations like you can regular stones."

The whole party of friends of Mrs. Merrilees get the surprise of their lives when the customs inspectors make a certain discovery. It's all told in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

NO REAL BRITISH "NOBILITY"

No Member of the English Peerage, With Few Exceptions, Can Give Proof of Ancient Lineage.

In England the Saxon "thane" was transformed, after the Norman conquest, into a "baron" unless the dominant power entirely deprived him of his position as a nobleman. It is possible that many thanes were absorbed in the English yeomanry. In France and Germany the prefix "de" and "von," which are essentially local, designated noble rank. Even in poor old Ireland, where nearly every man boasts of his descent from kings, "O" and "Mac" are aristocratic symbols, although many Irishmen of today have for one reason or another discarded the prefix. But in England the custom has died out.

The wearing of coat armor was for centuries a badge of nobility, but the right to wear coat armor was granted so lavishly that the members of the English peerage can, with few exceptions, give no proof of any ancient lineage. There is, in fact, no real "nobility" in England in the sense in which the word is used in continental Europe. It is a curious circumstance that many real "gentlemen" in the heraldic sense of that unfortunate word, have never worn coat armor at all and were neither desirous nor competent to exhibit a coat-of-arms to the persons who attach value to such an empty possession. Heralds have failed to establish any man's right to call himself a "gentleman," and the majority of genealogies given for the British "nobility" and "gentry" are in all probability mythical or, in the American vernacular, "fakes."

Australia Drops Foreign Names. The South Australian parliament recently passed a bill to change the names of all towns and districts in the territory that were of foreign origin. The names are being changed to those of English or native origin. The committee in charge of the task found in South Australia 67 places that had been christened to commemorate some notable alien of foreign origin.

A Hair's Breadth. Technically speaking, a hair's breadth is seventeen ten-thousandths of an inch.

Holland to Send Tobacco.

This year's export of tobacco from Holland to Germany is to be financed by the Netherlands Association of Tobacco Dealers, a company specially formed for that object with a capital of \$20,000,000. With a view to maintaining its exchange rate, Berlin stipulates that German treasury bills of two years' term shall be taken in payment for such goods, the bills being guaranteed by the Reichsbank and six other leading German banking institutions. Should the present shipping stagnation continue, or the shortage of cargo space become such that the Netherlands East Indian tobacco crop cannot be transported to the Dutch market, endeavors will doubtless be made to ship the tobacco, or a large part thereof, to America. This would obviate the customary pilgrimage of American buyers to the Amsterdam sales.

Chinese Labor for English Plants.

British consuls in Shantung province have been instructed by their home government to recruit 10,000 Chinese laborers at Tsingtau, Chefoo and other ports in their province within the next three months. These laborers are to be sent to England for work in manufacturing plants. They are to be paid a monthly wage of \$12 silver, together with a monthly allowance of \$10 silver for their families. Passage money will be defrayed by the British government, and the terms of service is to be three years.

British army officers have been recruiting laborers at Weihaiwei for some time. Barracks have been erected there for the accommodation of the laborers, and that port will also be used as a point from which the Chinese coolies will embark for England.

Big Distinction.

He—"Of course there's a big difference between a botanist and a florist." She—"Is there, really?" He—"Yes; a botanist is one who knows all about flowers, and a florist is one who knows all about the price people will pay for them."

To Be Good Patriot.

To be a good patriot, a man must consider his countrymen as God's creatures, and himself as accountable for his acting toward them.—Bishop Berkeley.

DADDY'S EVENING FAIRY TALE

By MARY GRAHAM BONNER

BUDS' SECRETS.

"Some of the trees," said Daddy, "were talking about themselves softly."

"It's so nice to be welcome," the tiny buds were saying. "When we yawn and bud—for budding with us is the same as yawning—with Grown-Ups and Children when they are thinking of getting up in the morning—they like to watch us. Of course that makes us very happy!"

"Yes," said another bud, "it is so nice to have them like to see the green, for we are such a pale and light green when we first wake up. We are really still half asleep."

"Just then a little Fairy happened along."

"Tell me, buds," she said, "why you take so long to come out into leaves? When people get up, it is usually with a bound and a jump—though, of course, sometimes it's not."

"But you are different," said the Fairy. "Leaves, buds, flowers, grass and all such things always have reasons for what they do. Won't you tell me your reasons?"

"The leaves, or rather buds, seemed to grow a little larger. For in truth they were swelling with pride that the Fairy was talking to them."

"We do so enjoy being liked," said the little bud who had grown the most. "We love to be encouraged—helped along."

"But how can anyone help a bud?" asked the Fairy. "I'd be only too glad to help, but I don't know how. Won't you tell me?"

"The Sun encourages us by shining and smiling at us. The South Wind whispers secrets to us and we are helped so much by the secrets—for the South Wind tells us such lovely things. And she promises us more sunshine, more warmth, more brightness. And then there are the clouds and their promises. They tell us they will not forget about the April showers. They never have, and I don't believe they ever will."

"Ah, yes," said the other buds, "how we do love the April showers."

"And," the first bud continued, "it is so glorious to burst into bud and bloom again after a long winter when the branches of the tree are bare, that we like to do it slowly and enjoy every second of it. Besides, the tree has been so used to being lonely that it would be too much of a shock if we came forth all at once. We just peep forth first of all and tell the tree that we are coming, for spring is here."

"Oh, how nice," said the fairy. "And then," said the bud, "we whisper some more and we say that soon we will be in our best spring suits of green and make the tree look very beautiful."

"As the bud was talking the Sun looked down to listen."

"The south wind was blowing gently and she stopped to wave over the tree and hear their secrets while she told them some of her favorite ones."

"Let's see a little more today," said the other buds, and the one who had been talking to the Fairy said:

"Yes, we will peep forth a little more today. The Sun is so kind, the South Wind is so good, and we must see you a little better while we talk to you."

"So the buds came out further than they had on any day and they looked so fresh and green and soft."

"Ah, how young I feel," said the little bud.

"We all feel so young, too," said the other buds.

"You are all wonderfully young," said the Fairy. "You are buds, wonderful spring buds, and you'll soon be leaves!"

"The buds came forth a little more and smiled gently at the Fairy to show her how pleased they were at the kind things she was saying to them, and when they smiled a little more green showed."

"The Grown-Ups that day said, 'How far the buds came out today. They'll soon be leaves if they keep coming out at this rate.'"

"But the little Fairy knew the secrets of the buds."

South Winds Whisper Secrets.

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