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"Third Floor Rear"

By ARTHUR C. SAUNDERS

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MRS. SEATON was a demure little old lady, whose greatest worry in life was "the gentleman in the third floor rear."

He had been in the house three weeks, and as yet the good woman had caught no glimpse of the color of his coat. To be sure, he was a clean cut, handsome fellow, with a winning way and a genial twinkle in his eye, "but then," as Mrs. Seaton told herself, "looks and manners don't buy bread."

When the postman left a letter addressed to "Robert Chestwick, Jr., Esq.," the first that gentleman had received since his arrival, the good lady seized the opportunity to press her claims. Chestwick had just returned from a late breakfast, consisting mainly of a newspaper and a perusal of the mean card.

Mrs. Seaton entered in response to his "Come in" and, laying the letter on the bureau—the room contained no table—proceeded to business.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Chestwick, and it's convenient, my guests—Mrs. Seaton always spoke of her lodgers as guests—"my guests pay every."

"My dear lady," interrupted the guest solemnly, "if a house and lot cost

side, "the only girl I know within a thousand miles is Miss Marion Seaton."

The girl looked at him swiftly and flushed scarlet. Then she laughed low and merrily.

"Are you game?" he asked. "I know it is a lot to ask, but I need the money."

The girl gazed at him compassionately.

"Poor boy!" she said. "You must be in bad straits."

And so it was settled. The invitations were to bear the address of the little office where Miss Seaton assisted her impoverished mother by conducting a small business.

Within a week 300 presents were speeding eastward from the little California town, among them a letter to Robert Chestwick, Jr., which read in part:

Dear Father—I know you will be glad to learn that I am about to follow your advice and settle down in life. Miss Seaton is poor, but of good family and in every way such a person as you will consider an addition to the family.

All of which was true, save for the minor detail that Robert junior had no intention of marrying the estimable Miss Seaton.

In time the presents began to arrive. The rush was preceded by an enthusiastic letter from Robert senior, containing a check with three figures and the offer of a junior partnership in a paying business should his son desire to return east.

Each day Chestwick visited Miss Seaton's office, where the pair enjoyed their secret hug.

"It is the most impudent thing I ever heard of," the girl would announce between bursts of laughter.

After carefully removing the addresses, Chestwick, laden with packages, would return to his now first floor front, for as funds went up Chestwick came down.

The spacious room soon resembled a jeweler's shop. Brics-brac, china, cut glass, silver and even gold sparkled in every corner, like the treasures in a pirate's cave.

By the third day the amusement of good Mrs. Seaton knew no bounds. To think that this youth, who a short time ago had been without the price of his room rent; this philosophical young man, who despised the treasures that moth and rust do corrupt, who had even thrown them away, should be the recipient of such wealth as this! Here was an enigma indeed! At length the worthy woman could restrain her curiosity no longer. "On a pretext she visited Mrs. Seaton's room, where she found him examining a wardrobe fresh from the tailor's. Mrs. Seaton glanced around and blinked her feeble eyes in the gleam and glitter of so much precious metal.

"You have a lot of silverware," she ventured. "Or perhaps it is not yours?"

"Oh, yes. It is mine," Chestwick assured her. "They are presents."

"Presents!" echoed Mrs. Seaton. "Presents! And from whom, pray?"

"From my friends. It—it is my birthday."

"Your birthday?" gasped the landlady. "Your friends must be very fond of you."

"They are," said Chestwick. "I am quite touched at their generosity. But," he added to himself, "I mean my friends are touched."

Mrs. Seaton left the room more bewildered than ever. His birthday, indeed! What young man, she would like to know, would receive treasuries and salticrises as birthday presents! There was something suspicious here. Could it be—Ah! She had it! Robert Chestwick was a burglar! A criminal, probably escaped from some eastern penitentiary! He said he came from the east. She would call the police at once! She wouldn't have the jail bird in her house another hour—not she! On second thought, though, she would wait for Marion. Marion must be consulted.

So Mrs. Seaton placed her valuables under lock and key and in fear and trepidation awaited her daughter's return.

Meantime Robert Chestwick, enmeshed in a generous Morris chair (the

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