

IT IS DIFFICULT to imagine anything more fascinating than our new serial story

The Joy of Living By Sidney Gowing

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—Disliking the prospect of a month's visit to her austere aunt, Lady Erythea...

CHAPTER II.—She wanders into the park, there encountering a strange youth in trouble with a motorcycle...

CHAPTER III.—Henry in her new freedom, Almee again meets "Billy." He tells her his name is Spencer...

CHAPTER IV.—That night Almee visits Georgina and learns that the deception has not been discovered...

CHAPTER V.—On a trial spin next day on the Sphinx, with Billy, Almee almost collides with a carriage...

CHAPTER VI.—Georgina learns that Lord Scoopie is coming to visit Lady Erythea...

CHAPTER VII.—While Almee is secretly visiting Georgina at Jervaux, the place is burglarized...

CHAPTER VIII.—Georgina learns, with much relief, that Almee has got away.

CHAPTER IX.—Police Inspector Panke decides that the robbery is the work of "Jack the Climber" and "Calamity Kate"...

CHAPTER X.—Billy, aware of his "partner's" nocturnal jaunts, is troubled. He follows her, on the Sphinx, to Jervaux...

CHAPTER XI.—Recovering, Billy discovers the package he had picked up is a jewel case, containing the emeralds...

CHAPTER XII.—Assuring Almee he has a plan to save her, Billy leaves her in the cave and, proceeding to Jervaux, restores the emeralds to the astounded Lady Erythea.

CHAPTER XIII.—Rejecting any reward, after explaining how the emeralds came into his possession, Billy accepts the position of chauffeur to Lady Erythea...

CHAPTER XIV.—Realizing what her father's visit to Jervaux would mean, Almee goes secretly to her home, disables the family auto, thus preventing his journey, and induces a parlormaid to let her take her place at Jervaux.

CHAPTER XV.—Alexander recognizes Almee as the woman on the motorcycle which ran into the Lambe carriage, denouncing her as "Calamity Kate"...

CHAPTER XVI.—Alexander finds himself very much in love with Georgina.

CHAPTER XVII.—The approaching visit of Alexander's sister, Lady Diana (who, of course, knows Almee) brings consternation to the two girls.

CHAPTER XVIII.—Another visitor to Jervaux is the Vicomte de Jussac, Diana's suitor. Diana recognizes Almee and threatens to denounce her.

CHAPTER XIX.—Interested in the Lambe collection of armor, De Jussac, during the night, tries on a suit. Diana, investigating an alleged ghostly apparition, meets him. He declares his love, and is accepted. Almee finds them together and binds Diana to secrecy concerning her affairs.

CHAPTER XX.—Alexander and Georgina become engaged. Lady Erythea, believing Georgina to be Lord Scoopie's daughter, is delighted.

For once Alexander was at a loss. He had turned very pale. Georgina came nobly to his rescue.

"Alexander," she said faintly, yet articulately, "has asked me to be his wife." And, with desperate confusion, she added—"may I?"

The ear-trumpet clattered on the gravel. Lady Erythea gathered Georgina into a triumphant embrace.

"My dear child," she exclaimed, kissing Georgina warmly on both cheeks, "I am delighted!" Lady Erythea released her and kissed Alexander.

"You have made me very, very happy. The match is in every way ideal. Alexander, you will have just such a wife as I should have chosen for you—and I never thought you would have the sense to choose one at all. My dear Almee, your excellent father, I am sure, will be as pleased about this as I am."

Georgina felt her knees giving way. She stooped and recovered the ear-trumpet.

"Would you mind not telling anybody for just a day or two?" she said desperately. "We have told you, but we—I feel—"

Lady Erythea smiled. "Foolish, romantic child!" she said, patting Georgina's cheek. "Well, well—we shall see."

She turned and disappeared towards the house. The betrothed couple looked at each other. Alexander squared his big shoulders.

"What on earth will happen now?" said Georgina faintly.

Alexander's reply was practical. He lifted her suddenly off her feet and kissed her.

"I don't care what happens!" announced Alexander. And he kissed her again.



He Kissed Her Again.

CHAPTER XXI

A New Partnership.

"It rains all the time in this country," said Billy, discontentedly, "except when you want it to."

He addressed the remark to the dry and unresponsive soil. Billy's attitude at the moment was unusual. He was close to the footpath along which he had wheeled the Sphinx, after the encounter with the motorcycle thieves on the night of the burglary.

That event was now many days old, yet no rain had fallen in the meantime and here and there the track of the Sphinx's tires was faintly visible in the dried mud—to anyone who had unusually good eyes.

"If they've got a Scotland Yard sharp down here now," reflected Billy, "and he goes over the ground, it's just possible he might see what that fool inspector at Stanhoe never tumbled to. That there were two motorcycles, and not one, at the place where Jack the Climber got ditched. If they were to track up the Sphinx now it would be mighty awkward. They'd soon connect her with Almee and me. But I guess it's an outside chance."

The slight impression of a tire mark, a little to the right of the path, caught his eye. It had passed over a soft mole hill, and was clearly defined. Billy paused, and inspected it with a new interest. The fashion of his countenance changed; he went down on hands and knees, and looked very closely indeed.

"Snakes!" exclaimed Billy. He rose, and quartered the ground carefully for a considerable distance in either direction. The ground was too hard to show any continuous track. But mole hills were plentiful, and some way farther on he found another one, also showing the print of a tire.

"It's the same. And not the Sphinx's tire, by a mile!" said Billy, knitting his brow. "This one was steel-studded."

With growing perplexity he made a close examination of the soil, and presently discovered other traces. There were a few footprints and, faint though they were, they bore some very marked characteristics.

Billy stood up straight and gave a liquid whistle. The furrows in his brow deepened. He carried his investigations still farther afield, but toward the healthy common the soil was light, wind-blown sand that shifted with every fresh breeze. There were no tracks left. The seeker was at a loss.

Billy stopped and reflected rapidly. "It came this way, whatever it was," he said. "But why on earth did it—and how? Let's start from the beginning."

He struck across country and, breaking through a hedge, came out into the blind lane where Jack the Climber's machine had crashed on the fateful night; the spot where he had recovered the emeralds, and made acquaintance with Calamity Kate's resourcefulness.

The muddy lane still showed slight traces, very much noised up and trampled, of the place where the thieves' machine had fallen; the ruts were now dried and hard. Billy also recognized what were evidently the hoof marks of the Stanhoe police.

"A herd of steers wouldn't have made more mess," said Billy. "And Panke found nothing after all, or he'd have—Well, I can't blow much, either. I've been here twice since, but never got wise to it till now."

He turned back down the lane toward the highway, his eyes noting the smallest details of the ground.

When a dress or hat has a strong decided color, it is not advisable to use a complementary color of the same strength or luminosity, as it would form too striking a contrast. A safe rule is to select lighter tints or darker shades of the original color for trimming. The remarks made regarding good combinations hold good for trimming also.

"Here's my track; pretty near washed out. And here's the other's. That cycle was a big Indian, by what little I saw of it. And likely it was half crippled when it got away. And here it got on the high road, and headed straight on past Jervaux again. That's mighty queer. I always reckoned they'd have gone the other way. Something must have turned them."

He passed along the wider lane in the direction of Jervaux, his eyes scanning the ground and the ditch. A little distance short of the gate through which Billy had wheeled the Sphinx when dodging the police, he stooped quickly and poked up a scrap of metal. It was the broken end of an exhaust silencer.

"I was right!" ejaculated Billy. "Here they crashed again—or the engine gave out for good. And they came the very way I did myself. And one of the two was lame—dead lame. One sure thing—they couldn't have got far that night. And if they weren't able to ride the thing, what did they do with it?"

He hurried to the far end of the field, where the last of the tracks had faded. He hesitated, and glanced towards the distant crag-pits.

"What should I have done myself—if I hadn't known the ground?" he thought. "I'll try here first."

Less than a hundred yards to the right was a clump of brushwood, growing alone, a little oasis on the bare field.

The bushes masked a narrow clay pit, twenty feet deep, that had been delved in times past to bring up the heavy marl subsoil and spread it over the sandy field. It was now completely caked with brambles. Billy pulled them apart, and saw something gleaming dimly at the bottom of the pit.

It was the buckled frame of a big twin Indian motorcycle.

With a whoop of triumph Billy clambered down the steep side of the pit and disappeared through the brambles. He remained below some time.

When at last he emerged and stood on the brink, Billy's face was rather pale, and his eyes troubled.

"Great Caesar's ghost!" he said. "Who'd have expected this? Now—if I can pick up the other track, I'll have the game in my hands!"

He hurried in the direction of the distant crag-pits, then suddenly pulled up short and glanced at his wrist-watch.

"Almee!" he exclaimed. He had an appointment with Almee at five, and an urgent one. It was already past the hour. Billy set off at a run, and in ten minutes reached the rendezvous. Almee was there already, in a rough serge walking-cloak and a Snooks hat trimmed with calico violets. In spite of the costume she looked vividly lovely.

"Mr. Chauffeur," said Almee, severely, "I don't know if you think I want to waste my afternoon off like this. You're late."

"I'm sorry," panted Billy. "Came as quick as I could."

"What are you looking excited about?" she said, eyeing him suspiciously.

"Oh—just seeing you," blurted Billy. "That isn't true. I've never seen you look excited before. You've found out something. What is it?"

Billy paused. "It's true. I have found out something," he said quietly, "but there's more to do, and I haven't quite all the cards in my hands. It's the most amazing stunt yet. I'll tell you about it the moment I've got it set."

Almee looked at him wistfully. "I don't think you ought to have any secrets from your partner," she said. "I always tell you everything."

"Give me till tonight," pleaded Billy. "I hate to talk about it now. It's ugly."

CHAPTER XXII

Not Guilty.

The guilty pair arose to their feet. Almee, from rosy red, had turned extremely pale. There was every excuse for it. Lady Erythea's expression was enough to unnerve the stoutest heart.

"And this," in a voice like the clashing of a motor's gear-box, "in the face of my express warning! You are discharged." She took a step towards Almee. "And as for you—"

Billy interposed his large figure between them.

"Madam," he said, "if you have any comments to make, please make them to me. Or, better still—do not make them at all."

His voice was quiet and respectful. But his chin was lifted remarkably high, and his lips compressed dangerously.

Lady Erythea struggled for breath. "Are you presuming," she said, in a strangled voice, "to dictate to me?" Mr. William Spencer bowed.

"I hope—my lady—that it will not be necessary. What I do presume is to defend Miss—Snooks—against any reproaches whatever. This is her afternoon off."

Almee looked at them both—especially at Lady Erythea. And for once the "sand," on which she had so often been complimented, deserted her. Almee turned suddenly and fled.

The terrier, under the impression that it was all an extremely interesting game got up for his amusement, pursued her out of sight round the bushes, giving tongue excitedly.

Billy kept his eyes fixed on the intruder. "If you require an explanation, Lady Erythea," he said quietly, "I guess I can give you one very briefly. I have just asked Miss Snooks to marry me."

"You?" exclaimed Billy. "Exactly. Aunt Erythea's idea is that Alexander's marrying me. You're not very bright today, Billy. They'll have a funny tangle to straighten out, when the crash comes."

"Gee! They will. We'll have to help them somehow."

"Of course we shall. But I wonder how we'll do it. And that's not all—the Vicomte has suddenly become betrothed, as he calls it, to Alexander's sister—Cord Lambe."

"She'll tone him down," said Billy. "Not a bit. He'll tone her up!" replied Almee confidently, "and a jolly good thing, too. So there they all are. I oughtn't to have mentioned it to you. Billy—I know how it depresses you. It's horrible—all this sentiment!"

Billy stared before him gloomily, and was silent.

"Isn't it?" insisted Almee. "S'kinging!" said Billy, bitterly. Almee glanced at him and, looking away, stirred the grass with the point of his shoe. There was a long pause.

"What was it you were saying about things?" said Almee. "I told you," replied Billy, "that before tomorrow it will either be a complete crash—or all clear."

Almee nodded. "I see. That means, in the first case, that I'll be exploded—broken—done for—"

"No!" said Billy, sharply. "It does, though. But in the second, if things go better—I shall just be back at Stanhoe, in a sort of mild disgrace—stood in the corner. That's nothing much. I'm used to it. And there you are! Well, the curtain's soon going to ring down. Our partnership—"

Billy turned to her quickly. "Is finished," continued Almee quietly, looking out across the park. "I shan't be able to ride the Sphinx for you, Billy. I'm sorry about that. It would have been fun."

Billy caught his breath. "You mean," he said slowly, "that I shan't see you again?"

"I mean that. How can you? Our little holiday is over, Billy."

His fingers closed on the turf on either side of him, and dug deep. "I understand. It's up to me. Tomorrow—we don't even know each other."

He let go the turf, and caught her hands. "Almee!" "Billy!"

Before either of them knew how it happened, he had her in his arms.

"I can't let you go!" said Billy wildly. "You're the darling of the world. The loveliest, brightest thing that ever breathed. Almee—do you think—you could try and love me?"

"Love you?" said Almee, trembling. "Who could help loving you, Billy?" He held her tight and kissed her.

"I was so frightened—" said Almee, in a stifled voice. "Frightened—?" He held her tighter. "That you'd be frightened—"

"Me!" "—of being sentimental," panted Almee.

Billy felt stunned. "If you knew what I've been through," he said a little hoarsely, "this past week—trying not to let you see it!"

He kissed her again—more than once. Then he sat back, his head in a whirl. There was the longest pause yet; a silence that seemed interminable.

They were recalled to earth by a staccato noise. "Yap! Yap! Yap! Yap! Yipe-yipe!"

Almee and Billy started violently. A small white Highland terrier, with its four legs braced, was barking at them excitedly, but not wholly with disapproval.

Almee felt stricken as though by a sudden paralysis. Behind the terrier stood Lady Erythea, erect and rigid. The glare in her eyes was the glare of a destroying Gorgon.

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Lady Erythea Inspected Him.

receded some little distance, and then recalled him. "Spencer!"

Billy returned. Lady Erythea inspected him through her lorgnette. "Are you sure that this is a wise thing you are doing?" she said slowly. "You seem to me a somewhat superior young man. I think you could do much better for yourself."

Billy twinkled yet more brightly. "I should hate to disagree with your ladyship," he said, "but I am quite sure I couldn't."

Lady Erythea turned and walked away with a dazed air.

Billy passed through the gate into the lane, and made for the abbey at his best speed. He hoped that Almee might be waiting for him somewhere within call, but there was no sign of

her. Thinking it likely she would be in the neighborhood of the garage, he hurried in that direction. He was within sight from the park boundary, when Monsieur de Jussac, approaching the fence from the abbey, saw him and called him by name.

Billy was too far away to hear. The Vicomte whistled, without result. He saw Billy disappear in the direction of the cragpits. De Jussac hesitated, uncertain whether to follow.

"Our amazing chauffeur appears to be in a hurry," murmured Bertrand. He took out a cigarette, and smoked it reflectively. Bertrand was looking a little puzzled and anxious. Finally he wandered slowly back towards the abbey.

As he neared the main entrance the quick of a motor horn was heard, and an automobile drove up rapidly. It contained the stolid Inspector Panke from Stanhoe. Beside him sat a slim and active-looking man in a gray tweed overcoat.

De Jussac, raising his eyebrows, drew near unobtrusively. The man in tweeds got out and stepped briskly up to Mr. Tarbeaux, who was standing on the steps.

"You have a chauffeur here," said the man in tweeds quietly, "who calls himself William Spencer."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Tarbeaux. Bertrand de Jussac moved away, with the air of one retreating from a situation with which he had no concern. He lit a cigarette as he went, but once on the far side of the rhododendrons, Monsieur de Jussac began to move with uncommon swiftness.

"Is he on the premises at the moment?" said the visitor.

"I do not know, sir," replied Mr. Tarbeaux with cold reserve, eyeing the police car. "If you wish to see her ladyship—"

"Do do. Inform her at once, if you please, that the police are here."

Mr. Tarbeaux went indoors, leaving the visitor on the step. It was some little time before Lady Erythea herself came to the entrance, grim and forbidding, ear-trumpet in hand.

"I am Detective-Inspector Arkwright, from Scotland Yard," said the visitor. "I wish to see your chauffeur, my lady—William Spencer."

"For what purpose?" said her ladyship, examining him icily through her lorgnette.

"That will transpire as soon as I have seen him," said Arkwright a little sharply.

A face peered down cautiously from a second-floor window. It was the face of Almee, very white and scared. She drew back quickly behind the window curtains, one hand clutching and kneading them tightly as she listened.

"Does this mean," said her ladyship with distinct hostility, "that you propose to arrest my chauffeur? If not, what do you mean? He is the man who restored the emeralds to me, when the police failed to achieve anything whatever, and I have complete confidence in him. If that really is your intention, it is my opinion you are about to make fools of yourselves."

Inspector Arkwright looked both surprised and irritated.

"I am here with full authority, my lady," he said abruptly, "and my task is to clear this matter up. Out of consideration for you, I have come here quite openly, and what my intentions are I must at the moment keep to myself."

"It is Spencer's afternoon off, I believe," said Lady Erythea coldly. "I do not think he is on the premises."

The inspector was plainly taken aback by his reception. His lips tightened to a thin line. Just then a policeman on a bicycle came riding rapidly along the drive. It was Constable Polson.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said, dismounting and saluting the inspector. "Have you found the man you are looking for here?"

"Why?" said Arkwright abruptly. "Well, sir, I know him by sight, of course," said Polson in a lower voice—"the chauffeur, I mean—and as I came off the Stanhoe road awhile ago, I saw somebody like him crossing the forty-acre field and going towards the cragpits. I thought I'd better hurry on and tell you. I'm sure it was he."

"Excellent! You are a man that keeps his eyes open," exclaimed Inspector Arkwright. "Come, Panke—leave the car here. Polson, show us the way."

The three of them departed together hurriedly in the direction of the park boundary.

Lady Erythea stared after them with mingled anger and anxiety. She waited for some time on the steps, pondering, and then went slowly indoors. Her eyes were troubled.

The three police, crossing the park, left it by a wicket gate near the sweet-briar clump. After a short consultation with Polson, Inspector Arkwright gave an order. The three men spreading out in a wide semi-circle, stalked the cragpits by way of the lower meadow.

(Continued next week)

One of our country correspondents, telling about a fire in his town, wrote: "The Fire Department was called, but not much damage was done."—Capper's Weekly.

Teacher—"Johnny, what is velocity?" Johnny—"Velocity is what a fellow lets go of a bee with."—Forecast.

Don't refuse to marry a girl because she can't cook. She may have money enough to pay your board.