

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

The Joy of Living

By Sidney Gowing

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—Distant the prospect of a month's visit to her aunt, Lady Erythra, at Jervaulx, and her cousin, Alexander Lamb, Almee, a beautiful daughter of the Very Reverend Viscount Scroope, is in a rebellious mood. CHAPTER II.—She wanders into the park, there encountering a strange youth in a motor-cycle. He laughingly introduces himself as "Billy," American. The two cement the acquaintance by a ride on the motor-cycle, the "Flying Sphinx," and part. With Georgina, Almee's cousin, Almee sets out for Jervaulx. On the way she decides that Georgina shall impersonate her at Jervaulx, while she goes on a holiday. Georgina's horrified protest is unavailing. CHAPTER III.—Happy in her new freedom, Almee again meets "Billy." He tells her his name is Spencer, and she gives him as Amy Snocka, at present "out of a job." Billy offers to take her into partnership in selling the Sphinx. In a spirit of madcap adventure, she accepts. The two proceed to the town of Stanhoe, taking separate lodgings in Ivy Cottage. CHAPTER IV.—That night Almee visits Georgina and learns that the deception has not been discovered. By her dominant personality she compels Georgina to continue the subterfuge.

CHAPTER V.—On a trial spin next day on the Sphinx, with Billy, Almee almost collides with a carriage in which are her aunt, Georgina and Alexander. The pair escape unrecognized. CHAPTER VI.—Georgina learns that Lord Scroope is coming to visit Lady Erythra, and, realizing what will happen on his arrival, is in hopeless bewilderment. CHAPTER VII.—While Almee is secretly visiting Georgina at Jervaulx, the place is burglarized. Almee escapes.

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," noted thieves, who travel on a motor-cycle.

CHAPTER X.—Billy, aware of his "partners" nocturnal laund, is troubled. He follows her, on the Sphinx, to Jervaulx. He hears the commotion, at once suspects burglary, and follows two figures on a motor-cycle who are apparently in a desperate hurry. Cornering the pair, Billy knocks out a man who attempts to shoot him, picking up a pack which the fellow had dropped. He discovers the other fugitive to be a woman. Stopping to aid her, she strikes him with a stone, rendering him unconscious, and the pair escape.

CHAPTER XI.—Recovering, Billy discovers the package he had picked up is a jewel case, containing emeralds. Realizing they must be part of the loot from Jervaulx, he starts for the abbey. On the way he meets Almee, with the police in pursuit. In a secure hiding place, a cave among the crag pits, Almee tells him the whole story. He urges that she make a frank confession to her father, but on reflection both realize Almee's good name has been compromised by her two night's stay at Ivy Cottage.

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

CHAPTER XIII.—Rejecting any reward, after explaining how the emeralds came into his possession, Billy accepts the position of chauffeur to Lady Erythra, seeing in the situation a promise of a way out of the embroglio.

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

CHAPTER XV.—Alexander recognizes Almee as the woman on the motor-cycle which ran into the Lamb carriage, denouncing her as "Calamity Kate," Georgina divulges Almee's identity. Hearing her story, Alexander consents to keep the secret.

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 Jervaulx is the Viscount de Jussac, Diana's suitor. Diana recognizes Almee and threatens to denounce her.

CHAPTER XIX.—Interested in the Lamb 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 Erythra, believing Georgina to be Lord Scroope's daughter, is delighted.

CHAPTER XXI.—Billy and Almee reach an understanding as to their mutual love.

CHAPTER XXII.—A Scotland Yard official arrives and demands to see Billy. Almee overhears him. Learning Billy's whereabouts, the officer goes after him.

CHAPTER XXIII

Jack the Climber.

Mr. William Spencer, after arriving in the fallow-field where stood the clump of bushes that hid the broken Indian motor-cycle, made a rapid survey of the situation. He resumed his task of quaterning the ground for tracks.

This, being unfruitful, occupied but a little time. He gave it up and went forward again, dipping down into the crag-pits beyond.

Billy had formed upon the factors already in his possession a theory which appealed to him strongly. He hoped to prove it. But the hope was very slender.

First Kid—"Sure," Charlie Chaplin's goin' to heaven when he dies." Second Ditto—"Geel! Pretty soft for St. Peter!"—New York World.

An authority on the fuel situation declares that we must "learn to live" by burning oil, gas, electricity and what not. We are glad re mentioned the whatnot. Mary, hand us the ax.—Boston Transcript.

"If I'd only got wise to this two days ago," he said gloomily, "I might have done something. But there's no saying how old the tracks are. And there's no little time."

He looked about him thoughtfully. The area of the crag-pits covered some twenty acres; a wide bottom of red sand studded here and there with tangled bushes. The place was shut in by low red bluffs of coralline crag with a few gaps in them through which winding paths sloped up to the higher ground.

"The soil tells me nothing," said Billy to himself; "too loose and wind-blown to hold a trail more than two days. But there's five—maybe six caves, most of them too plain and easy—anybody can see 'em. Still, I'll go over them. My own first. I guess there's nobody could have found that."

He wound his way through the bushes to the screen of brambles that masked the cave where Almee had taken refuge on the night of the burglary, and after scanning the ground near its approaches, pushed the briars aside and entered cautiously. The cave was empty—save for that super-motorcycle, the Flying Sphinx, which stood waiting in patient dumbness at the far end, weeping slow tears of oil into a little pool beneath the silencer.

Billy laid a hand upon his Arab steed, and sighed. Then his face brightened amazingly.

"Your time'll come again—and mighty soon!" he said with affection. He turned, and left the cave. It was holy ground to him now; for one night it had been Almee's refuge.

He passed farther along the pits. Inspecting a second and much more obvious cave on his way. He was just about to emerge from it when something caught Billy's eye, on the far side of the pits. He shrank back quickly into the cave's mouth and flattened himself against the wall, watching.

The object which gave him pause was very small, and fully four hundred yards distant. But it showed against the sky-line and to the eye of a frontiersman anything that cuts the sky-line, and that moves ever so little, is at once apparent. What Billy saw was the upper part of a head, peering over the edge of the little cliff on the opposite side.

A pair of shoulders followed the head, and their owner was obviously watching the pit with a desire to discover whether the coast was clear. There was a curious furtiveness about the figure that presently appeared, and dropping down the cliff by a steep path reached the lower ground and crossed it at a run.

Billy crept from the gloom of the cave's mouth and, crouching behind the briar bushes, peered through them



The Running Figure Was a Woman.

eagerly. The running figure was a woman—a small woman clad in a khaki-colored dust-cloak, carrying a little red bundle. She ran with a stooping gait, bending low as she threaded between the bushes. She reached a point against the cliff on Billy's side, three hundred yards farther along, close by a tangle of undergrowth. There she halted, and, looking round her quickly, disappeared with extreme suddenness.

"Great Christopher!" said Billy. He rose to his knees, staring at the place where she had vanished. His eyes were bright, his face had lit up. "I was right," he said in a hushed tone. "But, gee! I never thought of this."

He rose, as if to follow, but on second thoughts subsided again and waited. He remained there fully ten minutes, when the figure reappeared, and hurried along the pit bottom in his direction.

Billy wormed himself hurriedly under the tangled briars at some cost to his skin. The woman passed him within seventy yards, walking rapidly. She was no longer carrying the bundle.

When she had passed, Billy peeped after her. Though he could not see her face, he had not the slightest doubt who she was. She disappeared round the bend of the pits.

Billy extricated himself cautiously from the bush and waited for some time on his knees, staring in the direction she had taken. There was nothing more to be seen of her. Then springing to his feet he sprinted to the spot where she had first vanished with the bundle.

The bushes partially cloaked the mouth of one of the many crag caves the entrance was not difficult to find when one was close to it. Billy walked in without hesitation. He found precisely what he expected.

On the floor of the cave, stretched upon a couch of dry bracken, lay a man. He was not a spectacle which in any way gladdened the eye.

He was big and lusty of limb; what little could be seen of his face through a week's growth of brown stubble was haggard. His head of a nose jutted between two fierce deep-sunk eyes. One of his legs was extended, and swathed from foot to knee in dripping-wet calico bandages that looked as if they had been ripped from a woman's garment.

Billy found himself looking down the muzzle of a small repeating pistol, held in a hairy but very steady fist. "Stop right where you are," said the occupant of the cave, reclining on one elbow. "Don't move a step forward, nor yet a step back. Get me?"

Billy stopped obediently. He calculated the distance between them to be a dozen feet; there was no likelihood of capturing the pistol before the bullet struck him. The eyes of the man showed that he meant business. He was in fact, less like a man than a crippled wolf.

"Jack the Climber," said Billy blandly, "I am pleased to meet you. I've been looking for you quite a while."

"Don't give me that fool name!" snarled the cave-man. "My name is Jake."

"Anything to oblige. Mr. Jake, there's the little matter of the Jervaulx burglary against you, among others."

"What are you givin' me?" retorted Jake.

"The bluff doesn't go," said Billy. "Your motor-cycle's yonder in the clay pit. All the cards are out."

The man's face twitched.

"Are you the police?"

"No," said Billy.

Jake stared at the tall form in front of him, and emitted a startled oath.

"I believe you're the guy that slugged me, last Saturday night," he said.

"Quite correct."

"You're on your own, eh?" Jake's head craned forward, his eyes on Billy's face. "And alone, I guess!"

"Do you take me for a fool?" said Billy calmly.

The man shivered. The expression in his eyes was dreadful.

"See here!" he said sullenly. "You've got me set. I can't move. I'm up against it. I know they'll pull me. Well, I'll take my dose. I'll throw my hand in."

"Wise of you."

"But," said Jake with devilish ferocity, "I've got you, too." He raised one knee, and rested his pistol hand on it. "If I give up to you, there's something I'm going to have you do first. You'll take my terms an' do what I ask—or I'll drop you, right there and now."

There was not the faintest doubt but that he meant what he said. A glance into his eyes told the listener that.

"Nothing doing," said Billy quietly. "I don't take orders from a malfeactor. Least of all at the point of a gun."

"Then," said Jake thickly, "you're cold meat. I guess it's the best way. It gives me a chance yet."

"They don't electrocute in this country," said Billy, "they hang. But they do it very efficiently. You can shoot me in the back though, if you want to. I'm going to see about your exit."

He turned deliberately and walked to the mouth of the cave. Jake's finger trembled on the trigger.

"Come back!" he said hoarsely.

There was something so broken and piteous in the tone, that Billy turned his head. Jake flung the pistol toward him; it fell on the sand at Billy's feet, and he picked it up.

"I can't get you with a gun," gasped Jake, "but listen to what I got to say, if you're a man! For God's sake, listen!"

And Billy listened.

Some minutes later Billy stepped out of the cave into the sunlight. He was looking unusually grave, his lips were tight set; his eyes were positively hurried. He walked a few steps, muttering to himself. He started as a voice called him excitedly by name, and he was aware of Monsieur de Jussac running toward him.

"Spencer!" he cried. "I have been looking for you everywhere. Where the devil have you been? The police have inquired for you at the abbey, and I think they are not far behind. I thought it well to come and warn you."

"The police?"

Bertrand turned round sharply. He permitted himself a military expression that would not pass the censor.

"And here they are!" he said, with a gesture of despair.

The helmet of Constable Polson appeared on the brink of the opposite cliff, about the same time as Panke's peaked cap obtruded itself over the one behind them, and the felt hat of Inspector Arkwright hove in sight among the bramble bushes below. In a very short time all three men were in the pit, closing strategically upon Billy and Bertrand.

"I don't think," murmured Billy, "that I ever knew policemen arrive so—what's the word?"

"A propos," said the Viscount grimly, twisting his mustache.

"Thanks. That's it."

"Is there anything I can do?"

"Thanks again, but I think not. We'll see how they play the hand."

"That's him—the young one!" exclaimed Panke, as the three approached. Inspector Arkwright walked up to Billy, and addressed him by name.

"William Spencer?"

"That same bird," replied Billy pleasantly.

"And an admirable chauffeur," murmured de Jussac. "He drives like the Angel of Death."

Arkwright's cold gray eye swiveled upon the speaker.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

"The Viscount de Jussac, at your service. A guest at the abbey. Knowing Spencer was here, I came to inform him he was wanted."

"Oh. All right, sir. He's certainly wanted." The inspector turned to Billy. "Come along, my lad. We are overdue at Stanhoe police station."

"Does that mean I'm arrested?"

The inspector looked at him searchingly.

"That will depend on circumstances. Have you any objection to accompanying me?"

"I've no objection to anything. This is my afternoon off. But may I take it you are looking for the enterprising fellow who burgled the abbey?"

"I include that among my activities," said Arkwright sardonically.

"Then this is your lucky day. He's in the cave there."

"In the cave?" said Arkwright, staring.

"If you'll step this way," said Billy, "I'll show you."

He turned toward the bushes. Arkwright, after a moment's hesitation, accompanied him, and motioned to Inspector Panke to follow. Bertrand brought up the rear. Billy led them into the cave.

Jake, prostrate on his couch of bracken, greeted them with a sullen stare. Inspector Arkwright looked at him—at the bandaged leg, the stubble-covered face, and deep-set eyes. The hampered with the broken food was no longer visible.

"That's your man," said Billy, "known to the popular press as Jack the Climber; but I gather he prefers to be called Jake—I think we ought to humor him so far. His motor-

cycle is in the clay pit up the slope. His leg is rather badly hurt."

"See if he's shamming," said Arkwright briefly to Panke.

"Do I look as if I was shamming, you gazaboo!" growled Jake.

He certainly did not. Inspector Arkwright put a question to him, which Jake did not answer; nor did he look at the inspector—his eyes were fixed on Billy. Not a word of reply would the captive vouchsafe to any of Arkwright's queries. Billy took the Viscount by the arm, led him outside, and drew a long breath.

"Got a cigarette?" he said anxiously. "I gave my last one to Jake."

Bertrand produced his case.

"But what a triumph!" he said with a dazed air.

"It's not the sort I enjoy," replied Billy, "but I had to see it through."

The two inspectors emerged.

"Panke," said Arkwright, "there's a gate in the field-fence just up there. I think. Will you and Polson lift it off its hinges and bring it here? We must get the man out; he can't walk."

He turned abruptly to Billy. "And now—will you explain, Mr. Spencer?"

"Sure," said Billy. "I believe you know it was I who came across the thieves on the night of the holdup, and got knocked out. It seems to have been taken for granted the pair of them made a get-away on my machine, and likely were half across England by morning. I wasn't so sure. The case was important for me, too, for it looked as if I was going to be suspected."

"I happened to come across some tracks of a cycle tire on the field here; they were old and faint, but they set me thinking. I wish I'd struck them before. I'm used to following trails—had a lot of experience in it. Went to the place where the argument happened, up the lane, and made out that the motor-cycle, after the scrap, came back along the road yonder. The tracks are there yet if you've eyes to see them. I guess the machine was half-crippled, and they were driving it too hard. I made out that it crashed again—a bad crash that time. Do you follow me?"

"Yes," said the amazed Arkwright, "but how—"

"Here's a piece of the machine—found it on the road," said Billy, handing him the scrap of metal. "The tracks didn't go on. So what because of the machine? I found the tire-marks passing through a gateway into the field."

"What did that say? That they could wheel the machine, though they

couldn't drive it. Engine done up. What would they do with it? Hide it, so nobody would know they didn't get clear away. You'll find the machine, a twin Indian, over in the old clay pit, under some brushwood."

"What did the two of them do then? You can see by the tracks in the field that one of them was dead lame. So lame that he had to be carried or dragged, half of the way. It must have taken quite a while. They couldn't be far off, and, to cut it short, I searched the pits through and found Jake where he is. I didn't get wise to it till now. He's got a leg so badly sprained that a compound fracture wouldn't have laid him up much more thoroughly. And here you are, Inspector, just in the nick of time, as the story-books say. Of course," added Billy, "you'd have found it out yourself as soon as you got to work. I happened to be on the spot, that's all. And I shall be obliged if you'll say nothing about my share in it, at headquarters. Thief-catching isn't really in my line—I'm a motor-engineer, and it might do me harm to have it known I was wasting time on things that aren't my business."

Inspector Arkwright gazed at Billy dumbly. Arkwright was not a man of ungenerous instincts.

"I call that a very remarkable piece of work for an amateur," he said ungrudgingly.

"I suppose I've set your mind at rest, that I'd nothing to do with the burglary myself? You're not aching to haul me off to the station house any more? Or are you?"

Inspector Arkwright regarded Billy thoughtfully.

"No," he replied quietly, "but there are one or two points that have to be cleared up yet."

Billy took some papers from a pocket-book and handed them to Arkwright.

"If you want information as to my identity," he said, "you might look through those."

The inspector did so. His usually immobile face gave a twitch of surprise.

"Thank you. I'll keep these for the present," he said, with a change of manner. "I will have a word with you at the abbey, Mr. Spencer, when this business is off my hands."

"I'll be there," said Billy, with an inward twinge of anxiety.

Panke and the constable arrived, carrying a gate between them, which was taken into the cave. The prostrate Jake was lifted onto it, and borne out into the open.

"Wait! Set him down," said Arkwright suddenly. "He's safe, anyhow. We've got to get the other one."

He turned to Billy. "You've seen nothing of her—the woman?"

Billy gave him a stare of undisguised amazement.

"The woman?" he exclaimed.

Jake threw away the stub of his cigarette.

"Yes—Calamity Kate!" said Arkwright impatiently. "Good Lord, man, can't you see she must be somewhere here, too? She's been bringing him food and water, and tending his leg—how else could he have lived there six days when he can't move?"

"Great Christopher!" said Billy. "I suppose you're right."

"The prisoner refuses any information. But I'll have the pair of them," said Arkwright grimly. "I—"

"I suggest," broke in Panke, who was chafing at being thrust into a subordinate part, "that we get this man away as soon as possible, and that two of us wait in the cave. The woman probably visits it only at night, and the next time she comes with supplies, we shall get her."

"The weak point about that," replied Arkwright patronizingly, "is that it's not certain she only comes at night; this is a lonely place, and it won't surprise me if she is close by. She may have observed us already. We'll search these pits thoroughly first. There are half a dozen of these caves, and we'll go through them all. Mr. Spencer, I'll trouble you to remain by the prisoner. Panke, you and the constable try that cave opposite, and I'll take this side."

Inspector Arkwright strode forward with stern determination.

"The bag is not complete," he said grimly, "till I've got that woman!"

CHAPTER XXIV

"Sisters Under Their Skins."

Almee came as near to sheer panic as she had ever been yet when, after overhearing from her coign of vantage in the second floor window the questions of the police, she saw them start for the crag pits.

The only bright feature of the situation, though not dazzlingly bright, was that de Jussac was already on his way, in the same direction. She had seen him go, and guessed his errand. Bertrand, at least, was an ally.

"I'd rather they got me than Billy!" she said with a little sob.

The one obvious and reasonable thing for Almee to do, was to remain where she was. To be low, like Brer Rabbit, and take no part in the coming crisis. As a natural consequence, it was precisely the thing which her mind refused to entertain. If Billy was going to meet trouble, she determined to be on the spot. There was no knowing to what lengths he might go, in his passion for self-sacrifice.

Ten minutes later Almee was in the bushy dip of ground leading into the crag pits. The police were well ahead of her, converging round the far end. Almee had taken some trouble to avoid being seen by them. At the moment she could not see them at all, and took it for granted they could not see her either.

Bending low and running between

the bushes, Almee made for the entrance of the Sphinx's cave. It seemed to her that must be where Billy had gone. On arriving at the mouth, however, she discovered her mistake. Through a gap in the brushwood she caught sight of Billy a considerable distance farther along the pits. And with him was de Jussac.

The police arrived almost immediately afterward. Almee, crouching behind the bushes, watched the meeting. Her throat felt dry and hot, her hands opened and shut nervously. She hesitated, uncertain what to do. Would Billy "get away with it?" A gleam of hope and confidence returned. Billy had a wonderful knack of getting away with things.

She saw the party disappear into the cave nearest them; she witnessed the emergence of Billy, and was aware of a certain relief of tension when the police returned and spoke with him. Finally, wondering, as she watched, Almee observed the arrival of the gate—saw the prostrate body of Jake carried into the open. The distance was considerable. But the significance of that pathetic figure on the gate came home to her. Almee was not slow of comprehension. She began to realize the meaning of it all. The police had what they wanted. The captive could be no other than Jack the Climber himself. Billy had "got away with it" with a vengeance.

Almee was staring dumbly at the group, when she heard a faint animal-like noise close beside her. She turned sharply, to find that she was not alone.

A woman, in a stained and ragged dust-cloak, was crouching behind the screen of brambles a few yards away. She was young, and not ill-looking, save for the deathly pallor of her face and the disorder of her hair. Indeed, there was a wild girlish beauty about her, that survived even the hunted expression in her eyes.

She was staring through the bushes at the distant group.

"They got him!" she said in a strangled whisper. She huddled herself together trembling.

"An' they'll get me, too. Let 'em. No good my runnin' for foot."

"I dunno who you are!" she muttered.

"Are you goin' to gimme away?"

Almee did not move. Her heart beat fast. But there was no menace in the woman's eyes; only an expression so broken and piteous that somehow a lump came into Almee's throat. She had not the faintest doubt who this hunted woman was.

"You know who I am," the woman said thickly; "I can see it in your face." She came a step nearer. "Are you goin' to call out?"

Almee did not answer that question.

"Is he much hurt?" she said quietly, looking towards the distant group round the man on the gate.

"Hurt?" said Calamity Kate. "He smashed himself days ago,