



TWELFTH INSTALLMENT.

WHAT HAPPENED SO FAR

The Sheridan Dramatic Club, of which Tom Bilbeck, the narrator, Maryella, the girl he cares for, and Jim Cooper, his rival, are members, start a performance of Pygmalion and Galatea at the Old Soldiers' Home, but are interrupted by a fire. During the rehearsal Tom Bilbeck is accused by the husband of one of the actors, Mr. Hemmingway, of being in love with his wife. Hiding away from the scene of the ill-fated play in their costumes and overcoats, the group of players is held up by two escaped convicts, one of whom is captured by Bilbeck after a struggle.

The captured thief is tied to a chair at the Old Soldiers' Home. Unable to leave the home as the car refuses to tudge, the players must stay there, and Mr. Hemmingway, hearing this over the phone, says he is coming right to the home—as he is suspicious of his wife and Bilbeck. Meanwhile the Sheriff arrives.

Hemmingway arrives just when Bilbeck is assisting Mrs. Hemmingway, who has fainted, and of course thinks the worst. Meanwhile a disturbance is heard in the cellar, and all in the house rush down to it.

The Sheriff's horse has broken loose. Miss Hemmingway suspects Bilbeck more and more, and Jim Cooper mixes in to tell Bilbeck he has arranged that the Hemmingways be divorced and that Bilbeck is to marry Mrs. Hemmingway.

To get back home, Hemmingway must travel by foot, and Bilbeck offers to go with him. In a violent disagreement, they nevertheless start out together on snowshoes and skis and soon Bilbeck tumbles over Hemmingway, the going being difficult.

They lose their sense of direction. NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

Just by way of diversion we now had an argument as to which way the nearest farm-house lay from where we were. We had determined to postpone trying to reach Fair Oaks until morning and wanted food and shelter for the night.

I thought that I had seen farm buildings on our right, about a mile back on the trail. Hemmingway insisted that they were on the left.

"There is no use quarreling about it," I said finally. "There is nothing to prevent each of us going the way he thinks is right. It's a cinch we will both find shelter if we keep going far enough."

So we separated. We had grown intensely tired of one another anyway; especially since hunger had put an edge on our tempers. Hemmingway started southwest and I branched off toward the north. It grew dark very rapidly after the sun was gone, but the snow on the ground made it fairly easy to see and I was able to hit up quite a fast pace.

But the farm-house I thought I had seen did not materialize. I could have sworn it was in that direction, too. Rather than give up I pushed on further. I did not like the idea of going back to Hemmingway and admitting that I was wrong. Surely if I kept on in the same direction I had been going I would eventually reach some sort of shelter and food!

It was a long time, though, before I saw a welcoming light. I can't say just how long, but I would have guessed several hours. Anyway I was so thoroughly fatigued that I could barely drag one ski after the other.

But when I saw the light I quickened my pace and made for it. I was afraid that the people who lived there would go to bed before I could arrive.

As I passed over the snow I had a curious sense of familiarity, a feeling as if I had been there before. It wasn't so much that I recognized anything specific, but I just felt more or less at home. There was something in the air.

All at once the moon came out, and as it did the building toward which I was heading loomed large against the sky.

I knew at once why the neighborhood had seemed familiar. The building was the Old Soldiers' Home, and I had walked all day to return at night to the very spot from which I had started!

I had no very cheerful vision of a warm welcome upon my return to the Home, but it was a case of any port in a storm, so I continued on my way. The Home was still half a mile distant when the light went

out. But I plugged on. I felt pretty sure that I could get in without waking any one up, which I decided would be much the better way because I could avoid explanations.

As I drew nearer in the shadow of the woods that bordered the road I saw a figure dart suddenly from their protecting shade across the path of intervening moonlight to the Old Soldiers' Home.

That struck me as rather curious. Why should any one be in such a hurry and why so furtive?

I thought it over quite a while as I stood there waiting for something else to occur.

Then a solution occurred to me. It was doubtless the other escaped prisoner, the one who had held us up in the road when we had started for home the first time.

The chances were that he wanted to get back into the sanitarium and release his partner.

As soon as I arrived at that deduction I, too, hastened in the same direction that he had gone. By the time I got to the front of the building he had disappeared. An open window, however, indicated very plainly where he had gone, and removing my skis I had no hesitation in following him. It was hard work for me to climb through, but I managed it.

There was enough moonlight coming into the living-room where I found myself for me to see that there was no one there. I hardly expected that he would linger long. He was doubtless searching for the room in which Bill, his partner was confined.

There was nothing on the main floor except the living room and the service quarters. I glanced hastily in each room below and then went upstairs which was a more likely hunting ground. I paused at the head of the stairs scarce breathing. He was not there.

While I waited, senses alert and nerves taut, a figure glided out through a door and went down the hall away from me. It disappeared in a moment through another door. I waited perhaps two minutes. It reappeared again and passed on to the next room.

I was in a quandary what to do. If I raised an alarm the chances were about even that he would escape. It seemed better to capture him single-handed.

Therefore, when he disappeared into the next room I followed down the hall. As I did I heard a door in back of me open, but was too intent on my quarry to pay much attention to the sound in the rear.

I came to the door where I had seen my man disappear last. It stood open. I stepped in and closed it softly after me. Next I felt gropingly for the electric-light switch on the wall.

Before I could find it there was a woman's scream in the room somewhere ahead of me, and then at my back I heard a clicking sound in the door I had just closed.

My hand found the switch. I turned it on.

Sitting bolt upright in bed, with a revolver leveled at me, was Maryella.

There was no one else in sight.

CHAPTER XII
Several Surprises

"Throw up your hands," Maryella commanded, undecided how to treat a burglar whom she knew by his first name, but choosing at length the conventional procedure.

"I will," I agreed, "if you'll point that shoe horn in some other direction."

She threw aside the weapon.

"If you are a gentleman you will leave this room," she said firmly. "I don't know what you mean by this unwarrantable intrusion."

"A man came in here and I followed him."

"Nonsense! Where is he?"

It did sound a trifle fishy, I'll admit. There was no one in sight. I even looked under the bed.

"Now go," she ordered as if she were addressing an infant who had to be dealt with firmly. "I don't

know what is the matter with you lately, Tom Bilbeck. You used to be a fairly sensible, dependable man; but now you act like a lunatic two-thirds of the time."

"I'll go," I said mournfully; "but some day you'll realize how unjustly you have treated me."

I went to the door and turned the knob. It would not open.

"What's the matter?" Maryella asked when I delayed.

"I can't get out. This door is locked on the outside."

"Absurd!" Maryella got out of bed and slipped on her fur coat.

"How could it be locked?"

She came over to the door. As she stood beside me I had a poignant spasm of heartache at the dainty desirability of her. It was no time for sentiment in a situation that bade fair to become serious, but I challenge any man to be so near the person of the woman he loves and not be conscious of rippling hair, especially if it flows over her shoulders, and the soft tenderness of the skin flushed with sleep.

She tried the door.

"It is locked," she admitted with incredulous eyes that sought mine questioningly. "What does it mean?"

I shook my head. "I don't know."

Just to be doing something I rattled the knob.

"Be quiet in there, consarn you," said a voice outside. "You're arrested in the name of the law, and anything you say will be used agin' you!"

It was the sheriff. How had he become involved in the midnight parade? What explanation could there be of an officer of the law being on the scene of a crime? It was contrary to precedent.

I even told him so through the locked door.

"Don't argue with him," pleaded Maryella in a whisper.

A new look of concern had come into her eyes.

"What is it? What are you afraid of?" I asked.

"Think how this is going to look when they find you and me here! Oh, Tom, how could you compromise me so?"

"I didn't intend to. I wasn't even thinking of you."

"Oh," she murmured as if hurt. "Mrs. Hemmingway occupies all your thoughts, I suppose."

My heart leaped joyfully. Even in a moment of stress she had time to be jealous. Maybe it was all for the best.

"I'm sorry," I said penitently.

"That won't do any good. We ought to be able to do something definite to make this look all right."

bed rose from the floor and fell apart. I backed away from the debris.

(Continued Next Week.)

Commercial Fertilizers Being Tried on Wheat

"A farmer becomes interested in commercial fertilizers only when their use will bring him profitable returns," said C. W. Smith, county agent, today.

"As wheat is the crop that demands a liberal supply of nitrate nitrogen both for good yields and high quality, the application of ni-

trate nitrogen may prove profitable. The use of nitrate in top dressing on wheat is a comparatively new practice that may offer a means of increase in the farm income." Many local ranchers have been wondering about commercial fertilizers for some time. They say in effect that fertilizer will probably make the grain grow faster and yield a few more bushels. Will it pay?

In order to find out, these plots, each just one-tenth of an acre in size, one rod wide and 16 rods long, were carefully measured and staked out. On one of the three plots, ten pounds of Chilean nitrate of soda were applied at the rate of 100 pounds an acre. On the other, 15 pounds were applied and on the third, 20 pounds. On the fourth

plot was placed nothing so as to have a check on the yield. An effort was made to pick out a uniform piece of soil for this test in order to avoid error. The fertilizer test is located on the Heppner Hill road on the east side, 4 1-2 miles out of Heppner on the A. W. Gemmell farm and is something that grain growers may be interested in as the season advances.

Another group of fertilized plots can be found on the Otto Ruhl farm north of Lexington on the east side of the market road. These plots are 4x4 rods and were measured out and staked before the fertilizers were applied.

For Sale—Cow; fresh in June. Geo. Gross, Boardman, Ore. 10tf.

Young Essayist

Brendon A. Finn, 12, winner of the National Traffic Essay Contest. The boy, who attends the Prescott School at Somerville, Mass., will receive a trip to Washington and a gold watch in token of his victory.

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