

Half A Chance

BY FREDERICK S. ISHAM.

Author of "The Strollers," "Under the Rose," "The Lady of the Mount," Etc.

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"Four lordship will pardon me; the human mind has its aberrations. At the moment, by a curious psychological turn, a feature of another problem seized me. It was like playing two games of chess at once. Perhaps your honor has experienced the sensation."

His lordship beamed. "Quite so," he observed unctuously.

The business of the morning ran on, and John Steele at length concluded his cross examination. "I think, your lordship, the question of the reliability of this man as a witness in this or—any other case—fully established. 'Any other case?' said his lordship. 'We are not trying any other case.'"

"Witness may go," said his lordship brusquely.

Dandy Joe, a good deal damaged in the world's estimation, stepped down. His erstwhile well curled mustache of brick dust had seemed to droop as he slunk out of the box. He appeared subdued, almost frightened, quite unlike the jaunty little cockney that had stepped so blithely forth to give his testimony.

The witnesses all heard, John Steele, for the defense, spoke briefly, but his words were well chosen, his sentences of classic purity. As the girl listened it seemed to her not strange that Captain Forsythe, as well as others perhaps, should be drawn hither on occasions when this man appeared. Straight, direct logic characterized the speech from beginning to end. Only once did a suggestion of sentiment—cut pity for that gin besotted thing, the prisoner—obtrude itself; then it passed so quickly his lordship forgot to intervene, and the effect remained, a flash, illuminating, Rembrandt-like.

Time slipped by. The judge looked at his watch, bethought him of a big silver dish filled with amber hued specialty of the Ship and Turtle and adjourned court. His address interrupted by the exigencies of the moment, John Steele began mechanically to gather up his books. He absently separated them again. At the same time Sir Charles and his party walked toward the bench. They were met by his lordship and cordially greeted.

"A privilege, Sir Charles, to meet one we have heard of so often in the antipodes."

"Thank you, His lordship, Judge Beeson, m'dear, whose decisions—"

"Allow me to congratulate you, sir!" The enthusiastic voice was that of Captain Forsythe, addressing John Steele. "Your cross examination was masterly. Had you been in a certain other case years ago when the evidence of that very person on the stand today in the main convicted a man of murder I fancy the result then would have been different."

John Steele seemed not to hear. His eyes were turned toward the beautiful girl. She was standing quite close to him now. He could detect the fragrance of the violets she wore, a fresh sweet smell so welcome in that close, musty atmosphere.

"My niece, your lordship, Miss Wray."

Steele saw her bow and heard her speak to that august court personage. Then as the latter, after further brief talk, hurried away—

"Sir Charles, let me present to you Mr. Steele," said Captain Forsythe. "Lady Wray—"

"Happy to know you, sir," said the governor heartily.

"Miss Jocelyn Wray," added the military man, "who," with a laugh, "experienced some doubts about a visit of this kind being conducive to pleasure!"

John Steele took the small gloved hand she gave him. Her eyes were very bright.

"I enjoyed—I don't mean that—I am so glad I came," said the girl—"and heard you!" she added.

He thanked her in a low tone, looking at her hand as he dropped it. "You—you are making England your home?" His voice was singularly hesitating.

"Yes." She looked at him a little surprised. "At least for the present! But how"—she broke off. "I suppose, though, you could tell my accent. I've lived nearly all my life in Australia, and"—

Sir Charles, interrupting, reminded them of an appointment. The party turned. A slender figure inclined itself very slightly toward John Steele. A voice wished him good morning. The man stood with his hands on his books. It did not occur to him to accompany her to the door. Suddenly he looked over his shoulder. At the threshold she, too, had turned her head. An instant their glances met. The next she was gone.

CHAPTER V.

AT THE OPERA.

WHEN John Steele left the court toward the end of the day he held his head as a man who thinks deeply. From the door he directed his steps toward Charing Cross, but only to

wheel abruptly and retrace his way. He was not an absentminded man, yet he had been striding unconsciously, not toward his customary destination at that hour, the several chambers at once his office and his home. For a moment the strong face of the man relaxed as if in amusement at his own remissness. Gradually, however, it once more resumed its expression of musing thoughtfulness.

Turning into a narrow way not far from the embankment, he stopped before the door of a solid looking brick building, let himself in and made his way upstairs. On the third floor he applied another and smaller key to another lock and from a hall entered a large apartment, noteworthy for its handsome array of books that reached from floor to ceiling wherever there was shelf space. Passing through this apartment, John Steele stepped into that adjoining, the sitting and dining room.

A discreet rapping at the door, followed by the appearance of a round faced little man with a tray, interrupted further contemplation or reverie on John Steele's part. Seating himself at the table, he responded negatively to the servant's inquiry if "anything" else would be required and when the man had withdrawn mechanically turned to his letters and to his simple evening repast. He ate with no great evidence of appetite, soon brushed the missives, half read, aside and pushed back his chair.

Lighting a pipe, he picked up one of the papers. Amid voluminous wastes of type an item in the court and society column had caught his eye:

Sir Charles and Lady Wray, who are intending henceforth to reside in England, have returned to the stately Wray mansion in Piccadilly, where they will be for the season. Our well known governor and his lady are accompanied by their niece, the beautiful and accomplished Miss Jocelyn Wray, only child of Sir Charles' younger brother, the late Hon. Mr. Richard Wray, whose estate included enormous holdings in Australia as well as several thousand acres in Devonshire. This charming young colonial has already captivated London society.

John Steele read carefully this bit of news and then reread it. He even found himself guilty of perusing all the other paragraphs, the comings and goings, the fine doings! They related to a world he had thought little about, a world within the world, just as the people who lived in tunnels and dark passages constituted another world within the world. Her name danced in illustrious company. Here were dukes and earls and viscounts, a sprinkling of the foreign element, begums, emirs, the nation's guests. He saw also "Sir Charles, Lady Wray and Miss Wray" among the long list of box holders for that night at the opera, a gala occasion, commanded by royalty for the entertainment of royal and incidentally of certain barbarian personages who had come across the seas to be diplomatically coddled and fed.

Folding his newspaper, John Steele turned to his legal papers, strove to replace idleness by industry, but the spirit of work failed to respond. He looked at his watch, rang sharply a bell.

"Put out my clothes," he said to the servant who appeared with a lamp, "and have a cab at the door."

The opera had already begun, but pandemonium still reigned about the box office. A thunder of applause from within, indicating that the first act had come to an end, was followed by the usual egress of black and white figures impatient for cigarettes and light lobby gossip.

"Divine, eh? The opera, I mean!" A voice accosted John Steele, and, turning, he beheld a familiar face with black whiskers, that of Captain Forsythe. "This is somewhat different from the morning's environment!" "Yes," said the other. "But your first question," with a smile, "I'm afraid I can't answer. I've just come, and if I hadn't—well, I'm no judge of music." A bell sounded. John Steele, excusing himself, entered the auditorium and was shown to his seat. (To Be Continued.)

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People who suffer from sour stomach, fermentation of food, distress after eating and indigestion, and seek relief in large chunks of artificial digestors, are killing their stomachs by inaction just as surely as the victim of morphine is deadening and injuring beyond repair every nerve in his body.

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FELL DOWN SHAFT WHILE VIEWING ROSE FESTIVAL

PORTLAND, Ore., June 9.—In her eagerness to view the "Spirit of the Golden West," held in connection with the rose festival parade, Mrs. J. S. Cooper of Independence, Ore., fell down an elevator shaft last night. At the Good Samaritan Hospital today it is said that she probably will die. Both her arms were broken, and she sustained a basal fracture of the skull in addition to internal injuries. She is 60 years of age.

With her husband and son Mrs. Cooper came to Portland to attend the rose show.

Mrs. Cooper, with her husband, was standing in the lobby of the hotel when the parade approached. She hurried to the elevator. The operator had just started as she reached the guard door. The woman, however, threw open the door and plunged down to the bottom of the well, a distance of 14 feet.

SAN FRANCISCO MAYOR IN INDIANAPOLIS HOSPITAL

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind., June 8.—The San Francisco mayor's office is being conducted in a ward of St. Vincent's hospital here today. Mayor McCarthy, bedridden, with a broken ankle, daily receives and answers scores of letters and telegrams.

I. O. O. F. Notice.

All members of Rogue River encampment, No. 30, are requested to be present at the regular meeting Saturday, June 11. Work in degrees and banquet at close of meeting. Visiting brothers always welcome. WM. A. MILLER, Scribe.

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