

The Innocent Cheat

By Ruth Dewey Groves
AUTHOR OF "RICH GIRL—POOR GIRL," ETC.

THIS HAS HAPPENED
Helen Page feels indebted to and in love with her guardian, Leonard Brent, who changes his plans for her future after meeting a dying man named Nellin. At 18, he presents the girl to a millionaire, Cyril Cunningham, as his heiress, and offers proof which the lonely old man accepts without question, as he has been searching for his dead daughter's child for years.

Among Helen's new friends are Eva Ennis and her brother, Robert. Brent finds another lockstep like the one he had taken from Nellin to prove Helen the heiress and plots to get Cunningham out of the way quickly. He slyly administers a shock which proves fatal and the servants find the old man dead in bed. Then he wins Helen's promise to marry him. Later she and Bob realize they love each other, but she tells him she is engaged. She tries to get Brent to release her, but he refuses, and makes dire threats if she dares to marry Bob.

Eva resents Helen's treatment of her brother, which has driven him to flirting with Shallimar Morris. She scolds Bob and tells her Helen is engaged to Brent. She collapses after admitting that Brent has been making love to her. Bob goes to expose Brent to Helen, and while they are talking an urgent call comes from his mother. They rush over just in time to prevent Eva from taking poison in a fit of hysteria. Helen tries to tell her what a cad Brent is, but she insists that she must see him. Helen decides to see him first and phones for him to come up.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XLII
Brent dived leisurely and lingered over his breakfast, taking a third cup of the crystal clear coffee his man had prepared for him—adding a tiny pinch of salt in place of sugar or cream. Its steaming fragrance, mingled with the smoke from his Turkish cigaret, filled him with a sense of well being that brought the look of a lately fed jungle beast into his eyes. His satanic smile played over his lips now and then as certain pleasing thoughts came to him. Helen must be stewing over his delay. Let her. The more upset she was the better for him. Carmel had promised to be good, being clever enough to know the limit of all things. Eva was a mouse. No trouble there.

That girl Shallimar—well, if she hadn't landed Bob Ennis it didn't matter. She'd soon be sent packing—he'd see to that. Not having her hanging around to give Ennis an excuse to call. The young puppy might have the nerve even with the door closed in his face at Helen's orders. But what did it matter? What did anything matter? Brent drank deep from the cup and steeped himself in his satisfaction.

Helen was his. He could take her when he willed. She was utterly helpless. Finally he glanced at a small clock on his desk, stretched himself agreeably, and went to change his dressing gown for his street coat.

His Japanese, ever watchful, came in to help him. Brent told him to telephone for his car.

The garage was just around the corner, a convenience for which those who hired space in it were required to pay heavily. The car was brought to the door of Brent's apartment house within ten minutes, and he went down to take the wheel, thoroughly convinced that the ultimate success of his scheming was at hand. Fears he had entertained formerly that Helen would refuse

the new role he would offer had subsided. No one could be so mad, he believed.

Give up millions? Face poverty—a girl who had been carefully protected all her life? Yes, perhaps, he admitted, but the publicity? Could she stand up to all that exposure would mean to her? He thought not.

Not caring for slow driving, he made good time to Yonkers.

Helen was watching for him. She ran to open the door herself, having lost much of her self control while waiting for him in nervous anxiety.

He attempted to take her hand for a kiss in greeting, but she drew it angrily away from him and turned to lead the way to the living room.

Brent followed without a word. She must be the first to speak—it suited his purpose to have it so.

In the privacy of the vast room she whirled upon him and her words came like the lash of a whip.

"I've heard about you and Eva," she said.

Brent stiffened slightly, the only outward sign that she had disturbed his poise. One eyebrow went up inquiringly, but he remained silent.

"Well, what do you mean to do about it?" Helen pursued.

"Do?" Brent repeated blankly.

"Are you thinking of marrying her?" Helen asked tensely.

"My dear girl!"

Brent was amused. "I see," Helen said icily. "I am glad to know that you have no such impossible intentions," she went on, her eyes fairly burning with scorn for him.

"You need not have worried," Brent said hastily. "I shall marry no one but you, Helen."

For a moment Helen was too furious to speak. Then: "You are mistaken," she said, using all her will to say it calmly, "if you expect to marry me."

"Because of Eva?" Brent taunted her. "My word, you are jealous, aren't you?"

"I thought you at least too intelligent to be facetious at a time like this," Helen promptly returned.

"Why at a time like this?" he inquired blindly.

Helen came close to losing her temper completely. "Don't you know that you're simply broken Eva's heart?" she cried.

"Nonsense."

"Some day I'm certain she will think so too," Helen agreed, "but for the present she imagines herself in love with you. She wants to see you. That is why I have sent for you . . ."

"She isn't here?" Brent asked with a touch of consternation.

"No, she isn't," Helen relieved him. "She doesn't know how futile it would be to make an appeal to you for any kind of decent treatment—but I know, and I wish to spare her further disillusionment."

"Yes?" Brent smiled over her opinion of him, thinking of what she was yet to learn. "How do you propose to do that?"

"I want your promise never to see her again. No fate could be worse for her than to go on with you."

"Thanks," he answered dryly. "I'm willing to make that promise. The kid's a damned nuisance. But don't think you're dictating to me, my dear. I simply find it convenient to comply with your wishes in the matter."

"But should you change your mind," Helen began warningly, "let me tell you that her brother will thrash you within an inch of your life—and maybe he won't stop there."

"An inch to live," Brent exclaimed. "Sounds like a popular questionnaire: 'What would you

do if you had an inch to live?' 'Just, if you like,' Helen told him; 'but you can't go forever trampling on other people without some day being trampled on in turn.'"

Brent smiled broadly. "What a dear little lecturer you are," he said enthusiastically. "You ought always to be in a temper, Helen. You literally blaze."

"I mean what I say," Helen cautioned him.

Brent sobered. "Where does young Ennis come in?" he shot at her suddenly.

Helen's head reared haughtily. "I am going to marry him," she stated.

With her words a grim distortion replaced Brent's sarcastic smile.

"You are going to marry me," he retorted snarlingly.

Helen answered rather quietly, considering how his words fired her anger.

"I promised to tell you when I made a decision like this," she said. "Well, you may persist in taking a ridiculous attitude if you choose, but I am going to marry Robert Ennis."

They had been standing. Brent waved her to a chair. "Sit down," he said, and seated himself on another.

"This is going to take time," he warned, as Helen disdained to comply.

"There really isn't anything more to be said," she hinted.

"There is a great deal, and it will take some time," he differed. "It won't be pleasant either—for you. You'd better sit down, my dear."

Helen glanced at her wrist watch. "I am taking Miss Morris to the station in a few minutes," she told him. "Please say what you have to say as quickly as possible."

"I'd advise you to make other arrangements for getting her there," Brent remarked. "You do not take me seriously, I see, but you will shortly, and I predict that you will not be in a mood to drive out when this interview is over."

Helen refused to be frightened. "Very well," Brent began, as she stood waiting. His practice of politeness compelled him to rise and stand also. "You may as well have it straight from the shoulder. Here it is: You will never marry Ennis."

Helen smiled disdainfully. "You won't have the nerve to tell him that you're a criminal," Brent went on; "and if you marry him without telling him I'll expose you."

Helen's eyes were wide with mixed emotions, chiefly astonishment and disbelief, but there was fear lurking in them as well. Fear that Brent was evil enough to have found some way to wreck her happiness, however innocent of any wrong she herself might be.

She made a wordless sound of protest, and shrank back from his closer, threatening approach.

"What have you to say to that?" he demanded.

Helen rallied her courage. "Only that you are a contemptible coward," she cried, "and utterly insane."

"Am I?" Brent mocked her. "Possibly, but not too insane to have put you in the Nellin girl's place—to have won an immense fortune for you—and to have you just where I want you."

Helen was now completely

General Butler Wins in Second Battle for Civic Law and Order



Major General Smedley D. Butler, right, got the cooperation of Mayor A. E. McIntire, left, in the clean-up campaign in Quantico, Va. On penalty of guard house sentences, men from the Marine base were forbidden to enter the town. Hut, as indicated in the lower photo, the Marines had no place to loaf except the guard house, anyway.

confused, quite unable to follow him. He saw that she would not know where to begin to ask the questions that were seething in her mind and decided to tell her everything of her story from the start.

Helen listened helplessly. It was so appalling, so shocking, to hear the dead parents she had revered revealed as crooks, to learn that Brent was even worse than she had thought him—she could do nothing but stare glassily at him while her world fell about her head.

He told her the whole truth—how he had stumbled upon the facts of the Cunningham case—how he had conceived the idea of imposing her upon the aged man as his granddaughter—and what it meant to him.

"And now you know why you can't refuse to marry me," he ended.

Helen's lips opened stiffly—her words came with great difficulty. "But you . . . you are the criminal," she cried hoarsely.

Brent's tenseness slackened, his tigerishness left him, and he

CONFERENCE AT WILLARD HOTEL

About 25 Oregon hotelmen were present in Klamath Falls Saturday to attend a meeting of the southern branch of the Oregon Hotelmen's association. Many at the meet were guests affiliated with hostilities in the northern part of the state.

A business meeting was held late Saturday afternoon, followed by a banquet at Hotel Willard when there were talks by A. N. Pierce, of the Benton hotel at Corvallis, and past president of the state association; Frank Beach of Portland, publisher of Hotel News; and Vera Haig, writer, traveler and lecturer, who told of the many different hotels he had visited during his tours of the world.

Frank Beach, the publisher, was one of the first hotel clerks in Klamath Falls. He was affiliated with the Link River hotel here 42 years ago.

Bert Hall of the Halj hotel and Charles Richardson of the Willard were hosts to the following

association members: Senator and Mrs. Edward Miller, Hotel Del Rogue, Grants Pass; Al J. Martineau, Redwoods, Grants Pass; George E. Smith, Rose, Roseburg; Mr. and Mrs. Lew Hansen, New Ashland, Ashland; Mr. and Mrs. R. R. Westbrook, Lithia Springs, Ashland; Mr. and Mrs. William Clemenson, Jackson, Medford; Mr. and Mrs. Charles O. Van Duyn, Hotel North Bend, North Bend; Mr. and Mrs. Jim Grieves, Hotel Prospect, Prospect; H. J. McKeown, North Bend; W. W. Chadwick, Senator, Salem; C. A. Bartell, Hotel Bartell, Cottage Grove; Mr. and Mrs. Lafe Compton, Coquille Hotel, Coquille.

Hotelmen present who were guests included: F. W. Beach, Pacific Northwest Hotel News, Portland; R. F. Compton, Pacific

Northwest Hotel News, Portland; George M. King, Hotel Heathman, Portland; Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Starr, Breakers Hotel, Gold Beach; A. N. Pierce, Benton Hotel, Corvallis; H. V. George, Portland; Mrs. E. Bergendorff, Valley Hotel, Klamath Falls; Mr. and Mrs. Ora McKeown, Hotel Redding, Redding, Calif.

A Congressman yawned the other day during the course of one of his own speeches. Maybe he was soliloquizing and became bored.

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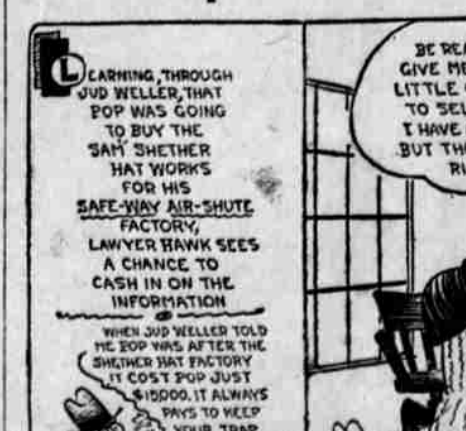


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