

THE TREY O' HEARTS," 9 Part, at Gem Theatre.

CHAPTER XXX.

JUDITH.

The period of restraint in distance was softened by Mrs. Thomas Barcus in consequence of certain notices, an account, and in general, propelled to the public gaze of the New Bedford waterfront of Bedford town in the morning, and in the night bar more heed than had been fondly hoped for only by the just judge, but, simply enough, by the modern and not himself.

Taking everything gravely into consideration, including a person anything but professional, the judge remarked that in default of a fine of one hundred dollars, a ten-day layup for repairs and repainting was not too much to make out to the prisoner at his bar.

"It was sentenced at 10 a. m. and it was little short of 10 p. m. when his post-conviction repose was disturbed by the rattle of a key in the lock of the door to his cell."

Sitting up, Mr. Barcus rubbed his eyes and rubbed his hair with his fingers. "What did I tell you?" he observed resignedly. "It begins again already."

Conducted with every evidence of disesteem on the part of his jailers to the office of the warden, he was acquainted with the fact that his fine had been paid by no one less than the judge himself, then present in portly and selectious person.

"If only you had told me you were a friend of Mr. Digby's," the judge hastened to say as soon as the two were engaged in the privacy of the judicial luncheon. "I would have known better how to guide myself in this unfortunate affair."

"And if you will be good enough to indicate how else I may serve you in my line, I shall be glad."

"Naturally I'd like a bath and a change of clothes," Barcus pursued while the judicial breakfast was being explored, "and I could do with transportation to New York by the first train out of this God-forsaken hole."

"This is what Mr. Digby says," the judge interrupted, laboriously deciphering the message by the light of a match. "Please see to immediate release of one Thomas Barcus, probably in jail in your jurisdiction for rioting on waterfront this morning. Pay his fine and instruct him to report to me in New York at earliest feasible hour. Give him all the money he wants and look to me for remuneration."

"Oh?" Barcus interrupted, sitting up smartly. "What's that last said?"

Patently the judge repeated the sentence from the message.

"Thanks. Please don't read farther. You might come to something that would spoil it. It's almost too beautiful as it stands," Barcus observed. "Law gives me five thousand or so liquidated damages—but I'll be reasonable. Frick this burg for a fifth of that sum before train time—and I promise to ask nothing more."

His private comment was: "I've suspected that this was a fairy-tale all along. Now I know it is!"

And this phase of incredulity persisted in coloring the complexion of his mind until the moment, some hours later, when the train connecting at Providence with the Midnight Express for New York pulled out of New Bedford leaving a transformed Barcus—almost imperceptibly disguised in a

from the booth memorizing the address of the alleged officiating clergyman. "I don't believe it; it's too sudden."

Forthwith he engaged a taxicab to convey him to Jersey City, at top speed, for an exorbitant reward.

And when, from the forward dock of a ferryboat, he beheld a dense volume of smoke advertising a conflagration on the Jersey shore, not far from the waterfront, he shook a modestly sagacious head.

"It Alan had mixed up in that, somehow," he declared, "he's missing a lot for once—and I'm a sorry failure as a prophet of woe and disaster!"

There was as much intuitive apprehension as humor responsible for this remark, witness the fact that, on landing, he risked the delay required to turn aside and have a look at the fire.

It proved to be situated in the heart of a squalid slum—a wretched tenement of the poorest class, whose roof had already fallen in and whose walls were momentarily threatening to go by the time Barcus arrived on the scene.

At a considerable distance from him a small disturbance had broken out—a clamor of protesting voices lifting about the rumor of the mob—as a number of men, case-hardened roughs one and all, began to force their way in a V-shaped wedge through the throng, making toward its very heart, the point on the fire-line nearest the burning building.

What this meant, Mr. Barcus had not the slightest idea. But his attention was first distracted by the man who was following in the hollow of the V—an evil white face that seemed somewhat vaguely familiar, somehow reminiscent of something strange that had happened in the history of Mr. Barcus.

At the same time, at the point where the V had passed, a wild uproar lifted up and, coincidentally, a wilder confusion became noticeable. A cry was audible—"Firebug! Lynch him! Lynch him! Lynch the firebug!"—and at this the mob turned as one man and screamed away in pursuit of an invisible quarry, who chose to attempt his escape by a route directly opposite to that which would have led him within view of Mr. Barcus.

Flattened, and of a sudden persuaded that there might have been more in his "hunch" than was santly to be credited, Barcus started up and was on the point of stepping out of his cab, if with a rather aimless purpose, when he was stayed by sight of that evil white face returning the way it had come—still in the hollow of the flying V, which now made faster progress thanks to the disorganization of the mob by the chase of the alleged incendiary.

And now, Barcus saw the man of the white face was not alone. There was someone with him—someone whose head was bent and face concealed, but who seemed to be feminine.

And so, Barcus argued, why might it not be Rose Trine, suffering new persecution at the hands of her unnatural father's creatures?

He was too far away to make sure and attempt any interference; but he pointed White Face out to his chauffeur as the V reached a touring car on the edge of the mob and the woman was lifted in unresisting and apparently in a dead faint, and when the touring car swung round and picked up its heels, the taxicab of Mr. Barcus trailed it as unostentatiously as if it was a pertinacious shadow.

Ten minutes later, from the rear deck of a ferryboat in midstream—a boat bearing back to New York not only the touring car of White Face, but the cab of Mr. Barcus—the latter gentleman formed one of a small but interested audience witnessing an incident of uncommon character.

He saw a young man, hatless, coatless, almost shirtless, tear down to the edge of one of the Jersey wharves, his heels snapped at by a ravaging rabble, jump aboard a square-rigged vessel which lay moored there, and execute a maneuver of despair by climbing up the rigging in a hopeless attempt to escape his persecutors. They were too many for him, and what was worse they were headed by a squad of police apparently as grimly bent on compassing the destruction of their quarry as was the mob.

And they swarmed up the rigging after him without a moment's hesitation.

Hotly pressed, the fugitive climbed higher and still higher, until at length he gained the topmast yard; with three policemen not half a dozen feet below him and popping away for dear life, if happily with the notoriously poor marksmanship of policemen generally.

None the less, there was no telling when some accident might wing a bullet into the young man; and it was evident that he so decided.

For, inching out to the end of the yard, he waved his hand toward his persecutors with a gesture of light-hearted derision that unmistakably identified him as Alan Law to Mr. Barcus, and forthwith dropped to the water, feet foremost.

Alan later took the water neatly, came up uninjured and seaward, and without an instant's hesitation struck away toward the middle of the Hudson.

As this happened the police ran to the stern of the square-rigger, unmoored a dory that was riding there, and threw themselves into it.

During the (to Barcus, at least) breathless suspense of that chase, the ferryboat drew steadily farther and still farther away from the scene. Barcus could not tell whether it was he, or the police-laden dory was real-

overhauling Alan, or whether the illusion of perspective deceived him. At all events, it seemed a frightfully near thing when the interruption befall which alone could have saved Alan.

Out of the very sky dropped a hydro-aeroplane, cutting the water with a long, graceful curve that brought it, almost at a standstill, directly to the head of the swimmer, and at the same time forced the police boat to sheer widely off in order to escape collision.

Immediately the swimmer caught the pulchre of the hydro-aeroplane, pulled himself up out of the water, and clambered to the seat beside the aviator.

Before he was fairly seated the plane was swinging back into its fastest pace.

With the ease of a wild goose it left the water, mounted the long grade of an air lane, described a wide circle above the bluffs of Woodhewken, and swept away southward.

In that quarter it was presently lost to the sight of Mr. Barcus, engulfed in light folds of haze that were creeping in from seawards to dim and tarnish the pristine brilliance of that day.

CHAPTER XXX.

BIRDMAN.

About eight o'clock in the evening of the same day a motorcar deposited at the Hotel Monmouth a gentleman whose weather-beaten and oil-stained motor-cap and duster covered little clothing more than shirt and trousers and asserted oddly in the eyes of the desk clerk with him on his western trip, after all, in such case the only possible way of overtaking the special would be by air line.

Promptly Alan called up the aviation fields at Hempstead Plains and got into communication with a gentleman answering to the surname of Coast, the same birdman who had come to Alan's rescue with his hydro-aeroplane.

Their arrangements were quickly consummated. Coast agreeing to wait for Alan with his biplane in Van Cortlandt park from midnight till daybreak, prepared if need be to undertake a transcontinental flight.

Thereafter Mr. Law proceeded to re-habituate himself in decent clothing and his own esteem; after bathing, he dined alone in his rooms, from a tray.



Shock Out a Trey of Hearts.

communications until he was quit of the public eye.

The first proved to be a characteristic communication.

"Dear Ulysses—Thanks for the jail delivery. I got in this morning just in time to motor over to Jersey in hopes of seeing your finish as a bachelor; instead, I was favored by being made an involuntary witness to your spectacular accident, following your almost equally spectacular high-dive."

"But to business: my time is limited; in half an hour more I am to double in black-face for the purposes of the author of this melodramatic farce which you, no doubt, call the history of your grandiose passion."

"I mean to say—well, several things, to-wit: When I saw you snatched out of the North river I was engaged in trailing a pale-faced villain in a motorcar concerning whom you probably know far more than I; he on his part was busy being a bold, bad kidnaper; Rose was in his power, as was my in such cases. His intentions, however, were nothing more blameworthy than to return her to the arms of her dotting parent. I know, because I slouched after 'em, even to the house of Seneca Trine. Later I slouched some more, following a furtive young man from the house of Trine to the office of the general manager of the New York Central, where he made arrangements for a special to convey the said Trine and return to Chicago and points West. R leaves at three this afternoon. I was unable to ascertain whether or not Rose is to participate in this heira, but I know I shall. On the off-chance of being useful, I have bribed the train crew to let me impersonate the porter. So, should you be moved to follow and succeed in catching up with us, and observe anybody who looks rather off-color in the party—don't shoot; the said party will be me.

"Yours for the quiet life,

"TOM BARCUS."

The second note yielded a communication written on newspaper of the simplest elegance in a woman's hand—a hurried scrawl:

"They are taking me West by special train—I don't know where or why. A servant has promised to see that this reaches you. Save me!"

Over this Alan writhed as barefaced as nose. The hand was the hand of Rose, but the phonography was not in her spirit. He examined it more closely and thought to detect beneath its semblance of haste a deliberate and carefully guided pen. He picked up the envelope to compare the handwriting of the address with that of the enclosure—and shook out a tray of hearts.

This last was covered, so to its face, with a plainly-written message:

"With the compliments of Seneca Trine to Alan Law. We got due in Chicago at eleven tomorrow morning and leave immediately for the Pacific coast via Santa Fe route."

Comparison between this and the message purporting to be from Rose justified the conviction that the same hand was responsible for both.

Alan shrugged. So he was to be lured away from New York and then by this transparent trick, was he? No doubt!

He glanced at his watch, finding the hour far too early to attempt what he had in mind.

With plenty of time on his hands, he gave the matter serious consideration and concluded to take no chances. It was just possible that Trine had taken time with him on his western trip, after all. In such case the only possible way of overtaking the special would be by air line.

Promptly Alan called up the aviation fields at Hempstead Plains and got into communication with a gentleman answering to the surname of Coast, the same birdman who had come to Alan's rescue with his hydro-aeroplane.

Their arrangements were quickly consummated. Coast agreeing to wait for Alan with his biplane in Van Cortlandt park from midnight till daybreak, prepared if need be to undertake a transcontinental flight.

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ing in a chair outside a closed door had not fallen asleep and begun to snore until the moment when Alan set foot upon the lower step of that final ascent.

Turning the head of the stairs, Alan paused for a little, speculatively intent on this man who must somehow be disposed of before he might solve the secret of that shut and guarded door.

Aside from actual violence no solution offered to the puzzle—and violence was abruptly forced upon him.

No sound warned him of the door that opened at his back as he stood watching the sleeping guard. A piercing shriek was the first intimation he received that his presence had been discovered. It served as well to move him instantly into action; a single glance over his shoulder showed him the figure of a maid-servant in cap and gown, her mouth still wide and full of sound—and Alan fell upon the guard like a thunderbolt. The man had barely time to jump up and recognize the alarm; then a flat caught him on the point of his jaw, and he returned promptly to deep unconsciousness.

No time now for qualms of compunction on account of the savage ruthlessness of that blow; no time even to search the fellow for a key to the closed door, already the maid was taking the stairs in full flight and cry, four steps and a howl like a warlock's to every jump.

Backing off, Alan took a short run, cleared the prostrate body of the guard with a leap, and flung himself full force against the door, his shoulder striking a point nearest the lock. With a splintering crash it broke inward. Without dignity or decorum he sprawled on all fours into the presence of Judith Trine.

"Poor Mr. Law!" she cried, with a mocking nod, "always disappointed! I'm so sorry—truly I am!"

"Oh, spare me your sarcasm," he begged resentfully. "It's ridiculous enough, this whole mad business—"

"But I am not sarcastic," she insisted with such sincerity that he opened his eyes in wonder. "Believe me, I am sorry for one it is I and not Rose whom you had locked up here! For you see, I am locked up, by way of punishment—thanks to my having had pity on you once too often—while my father decamps mysteriously for parts unknown."

"You don't know where he's gone, then?"

"In a general way. By special train to the West—"

"Taking Rose?"

"So I'm told."

The woman choked upon her anger, but quickly mastered it.

"He shall pay for this!" she asseverated.

"Your father? I wish him nothing more nor less than your enemy," Alan countered her civilly. "But since it seems that he has gone, and Rose with him, if you'll forgive me, I think I'll be going—"

"Alone?"

"That one word, uttered with all the significance that this woman knew so well how to infuse into her tone, checked him suspiciously on the threshold."

"Why—yes?"

"You wouldn't care for a companion du voyage?" she suggested.

"Oh—really?" he protested.

She held up an arresting hand. "Listen!" she begged.

From the street below came the unmistakable rattle of a policeman's locust on the sidewalk.

"That damned maid," Alan divined thoughtfully.

"The same," Judith agreed with ominous calm. "Has it struck you that you may have some trouble getting away without my permission?"

"I'm not so stupid as not to have thought of that," he countered.

"Then be advised—and take me with you."

"In what capacity, please? As enemy or ally?"

"As ally—you're right; we can't be friends—until we overturn that special train. After that, by your leave, I'll shift for myself."

"It's not such a bad notion," he reflected. "With you under my eye, you can't do much to interfere—"

"If I promise—"

"I'll take your word," she suggested simply. "But you're in for a lot of hardship, I'm afraid. The one way to catch up with your father is by aeroplane—and I've got one waiting."

landscape. Only at the third cast did they succeed in picking up the line of the Santa Fe. And it was some hours later, though still daylight, when they picked up the special train, flying like a hunting across the levels.

There was scant room for doubt that it was the train they sought. Specials are not common. Moreover Alan contrived with considerable difficulty to focus his gaze upon the rear platform of the car, and caught a fugitive glimpse of a white-coated figure with a black face that was watching the biplane in the same manner, that is, with glasses.

The man in the white coat, Alan assured himself, was positively Barcus.

And hardly had he been comforted himself with this assurance when his sardonic destiny struck the motor dumb.

In response to his lock of dashed inquiry the aviator merely shook a weary head and muttered the words: "Engine trouble."

Swiftly the earth rose to receive the volplaning mechanism. Under Coast's admirable handling it settled down in



Escape of Alan and Judith.

most without a jar, on the outskirts of a city whose name Alan never learned.

For the biplane was barely at a standstill before he was cut and, reeling from the godliness that affects men after long flights, making his way as best he might toward the manager's office connected with a train yard immediately adjacent to the spot where they had come to earth.

Lavish disbursements of money won him his way against official protests that what he demanded was an impossibility. Within twenty minutes, leaving Coast to follow on when and as best he might, Alan and Judith were spinning through open country in the cab of an engine running light, with only clear track between it and the special.

The several hours that ensued before the rear lights of the special were brought to view were none too many for the task imposed upon Alan of overcoming the scruples of the engineer and fireman.

Another minute, and less than fifty feet separated the two—the special train and the light engine, both hurtling through the light at top speed.

With a word to the engineer Alan crept out along the side of the boiler, with only a greasy handrail and a narrow foothold between himself and what meant death, or something closely resembling it, should he be shaken off by the tearing wind and the swaying of the locomotive.

It seemed an hour before he worked himself up to the cowcatcher—now within four feet of the rear platform of the special.

On this last he could see a woman's figure indistinctly silhouetted against the light through the door, and beside her a man in a white coat, clinging for dear life to the knob of the door—holding it against the frantic efforts of some persons inside to tear it open.

Another hour of suspense dragged out—or such was the effect—while the light engine with intolerable slowness bridged those four scant feet.

At length it was feasible to attempt the thing. Rose (he could see her strained white face quite plainly now) was half over the rail of the car ahead, ready to jump.

His heart failed him. It was too hazardous a risk. He dared not let her take it.

Something very like a shot sounded from the train and something very like a bullet whistled past his cheek, and proved the signal for several more.

Strangely, that knowledge steadied his nerves. Straining forward and holding on to a bar so hot that it scorched his palm, he offered a hand to the girl on the rail.

Her hand fell confidently into it. She jumped. His arm wound round her as she landed on the platform of the cowcatcher. He heard her breathe his name, then hurriedly passed her between himself and the boiler to the footway at the side. The fireman was waiting there to help her. Alan turned his attention to Barcus.

To his dismay he found that the engine was losing ground. The space was widening rapidly as Barcus released the knob and threw himself over the rail.

By a miraculous, flying leap, the man accomplished that incredible feat and gained the platform.

An instant later ten feet separated the engine from the special, as the engineer applied the brakes.

And this he did none too soon; for at the same time Marrophaat and another appeared on the rear platform and opened a hot, but, thanks to the widening distance, ineffectual fire.

The engine ground slowly to a halt as the rear lights of the special train swept from sight round a bend.



The Hydro-aeroplane Is Forced to Land.

bath, a shave and a haircut, an outfit of clothing originally tailored for a gentleman of discriminating taste, but now whitened in the sense of effluence that goes with the possession of one thousand dollars in cash.

Not until a sound slight sleep had topped off the beginning of his rest in jail did Barcus come down to earth.

He demonstrated his return to common sense by making a round breakfast in Grand Central station before looking up the residence of Digby in the telephone directory.

The information he gathered from the voice that answered the name of Mr. Digby over the telephone shook off momentarily Barcus' innate conviction that intimate acquaintance with battle, murder and sudden death was the inevitable reward of association with this friend of his heart.

"Alan being married to Rose Trine in Jersey City at this very minute!" he breathed skeptically as he emerged