GREEN ANNA KATHARINE, MUNROE KIRK, MAURICE THOMPSON И ДР.

ELEVEN POSSIBLE CASES

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Eleven Possible Cases

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Содержание

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THE ONLY GIRL AT OVERLOOK

BY FRANKLIN FYLES

CHAPTER I

Two names were used for the only girl at Overlook. In addressing her, the men of the place always said "Miss Warriner." In mentioning her, they often said "Mary Mite." The reason for this distinctive difference was revealed by the sight of Miss Mary Warriner herself, as she sat on a high stool behind a rude desk, under a roughly-boarded shelter, and with rapid fingers clicked the key of a telegraphic instrument. There was a perfect poise of quiet self-possession which would have been very impressive dignity in an older and bigger person, and which, although here limited by eighteen years and one hundred pounds, still made a demand for respectful treatment. Therefore the men, when in her presence, never felt like calling her anything else than "Miss Warriner." If she had been less like a stately damsel in miniature, and more like such a child as she was in size only; if her employment had been something not so near to science as that of telegraphy, and not so far off from juvenile simplicity; if her brown hair had been loosely curled, instead of closely coiled, and if her skirts had stopped at her ankles instead of reaching to her feet, then she might have been nicknamed "Mary Mite" within her own hearing, as she was beyond it, by those who described her smallness in a sobriquet. There may have been a variance of opinion among those dwellers at Overlook who had made any estimate of her composure, but if there was one who

believed that she merely assumed a reserve of manner because she was among two hundred men, he had not yet tried his chances of exceptional acquaintance.

Overlook was crude and temporary. The inhabitants were making a roadbed for a new railway at a spot where the job was extraordinary, requiring an uncommonly large proportion of brain to brawn in the work. Those who were mental laborers in the remarkable feat of engineering, or were at least bosses of the physical toil, were the ones who had errands at the telegraphic shed, and for whom Mary sent and received messages over the wires. The isolated colony of workers was one hundred miles deep in a wilderness of mountain and forest, but not as many seconds distant, measured by the time necessary for electrical communication from the construction company's headquarters in a great city.

"Must you wait for an answer?" Mary said, as she clicked the last word of a message. "It's an hour since your first telegram went, and they seem in no hurry to reply."

Polite indifference, and nothing else, was in her clear, gentle voice. There was neither boldness nor shyness in the eyes that opened wide and blue, as she lifted them from the paper to the man whom she questioned. There was no more of a smile than of a pout on the mouth that worded the inquiry. She did not indicate the faintest interest as to whether he went or stayed, although she did suggest that he might as well go.

"I'd rather lounge here, if you don't mind," was Gerald Heath's

answer.

Here the alertness of the placid girl was faintly shown by a quick glance, but it was so furtive that the subject of her wariness did not know his face was being scrutinized; and she was quickly convinced that she was not the cause of his remaining, for he said: "I'll tell you why I'm anxious about the telegram, and in a hurry to get it."

Gerald Heath had been lazily leaning against the makeshift desk of the telegrapher, as he waited, and for pastime had whittled the smooth birch sapling that formed its outer edge. He had chipped and shaved, after the manner of those to whom a sharp pocket knife and a piece of wood provide a solace. There had been no conversation, except a few words concerning the messages. But now he heightened himself to six feet by standing erect, and took on the outlines of a magnificent physique. His proportions had not been realized before by the girl at the other side of the counter. She comprehended, too, that if his somewhat unkempt condition were changed to one which included a face cleaned of stubbed beard, a suit of modish clothes to replace the half-worn corduroys, and the shine of a silk hat and polished boots at his now dusty extremities, he would become a young gentleman whose disregard might be an appreciable slight. That was the conclusion which she reached without any visible sign that her careless eyes were conveying any sort of impression to her mind. As it was, he looked an unusually burly specimen of the men to whom isolation from city life had imparted an aspect

of barbarians. Before he had uttered another word she realized that he was wholly engrossed in the matter of his telegrams, and had no thought of the individuality of the listener. Not only was she not the thing that made him wait, but she might as well have been old, ugly, or a man, if only she had ears to hear.

It was a summer afternoon, and the clear, balmy weather was seasonable. The removal of protective canvas had left the structure an open shed, over the front of which hung the boughs of the two trees against whose massive trunks it leaned. Gerald Heath reached up with both hands and held the foliage aside.

"Do you get an unobstructed view?" he said. "Now, I've helped lay out railroads through many a place, where it was a shame to let trains go faster than a mile a day. I've surveyed routes that ought to provide special trains for passengers with eyes in their heads – trains with speed graduated between sixty miles an hour and sixty hours a mile. It is an outrage on nature and art that travelers should ever be whisked past Overlook without a good chance to see what we're looking at. That's why I wrote to the president of the company a month ago, telling him how a slight deviation from the surveyed line would enable passengers to get what's in our view now. He asked how much the line would be lengthened by my plan. 'A hundred yards,' I answered. And I submitted a map, showing how the tracks, after coming out from the tunnel, might make a small detour to this very spot, instead of going behind a mass of rocks that will completely hide this – " and a comprehensive gesture of one arm followed his sweep

of vision.

Places that get their names on impulse are apt to have appropriate ones. Camps of railway makers in a hitherto unbroken country are not often miscalled. An ensuing town on the same site may be unmeaningly named as a permanency, but the inspirations that afford transient nomenclature are usually descriptive. It was so in the case of Overlook. The railway tunneled through the mountain, and emerged at a height of 1000 feet above a wide valley. Mary had daily, and all day long, sat overlooking the prospect. It had astonished and enchanted her at first, but familiarity had blunted the keenness of her appreciation. As shown to her anew, it was like a fresh disclosure. Gerald Heath stood holding aside the boughs, which otherwise obscured a part of the landscape, and seemed like an exhibitor of some wondrously big and beautiful picture. Miles away were hills rising behind one another, until they left only a little of sky to be framed by the eave of the shed, as seen by the telegrapher. The diversities of a wilderness, distantly strong in rugged forms, but indistinct in details, became gradually definite and particular as they came nearer, and were suggestive of conscious design, where they edged a broken, tumultuous river. Overlook was shelved so high on a precipitous mountain that, from Mary's point of vision, the foreground almost directly underneath passed out of her sight, and it was as though the spectator stood on a platform before a painted canvas, too spacious for exhibition in an ordinary manner. But in this work the shapes and the colors,

the grandeur and the beauty were inconceivably beyond human copying.

Gerald Heath appeared to feel, however, that if he was not the painter of this enormous landscape, he at least had the proprietary interest of a discoverer, and it was with something of the air of an art collector, proudly extolling his choicest possession, that he turned his eyes from it to Mary Warriner. The expression of admiration on her face, although quiet and delicate, was quite satisfactory – for a moment only; and then the denotement of delight passed out of her visage, as though expelled by some physical pang. It was the suddenness of the change, for it was of itself very slight, that made it perceptible. Gerald instinctively turned to look for the cause.

Into the picture had come a human figure. A few yards in front of the hut stood a man. In relation to the landscape far beyond he was gigantic, and the shade of the trees made him devilishly black by contrast with the sunlight of heaven that illumined the rest. He was thus for an instant in silhouette, and it chanced that his sharp outlines included a facial profile, with the points of a mustache and beard giving satanic suggestion to an accidental attitude of malicious intrusion. The illusion was almost startling, but it was momentary, and then the form became the commonplace one of Tonio Ravelli, who walked under the shelter.

"Do-a I eentrude?" he asked, with an Italian accent and an Italian bearing. "I suppose no, eh? Thece ees a placa beesness."

Mary's small departure from a business-like perfunctory

manner ended at once. She took the scrap of paper which Ravelli laid on her desk, and without a word translated its writing into telegraphic clicks. Ravelli was a sub-contractor, and this was one of his frequent communications with officials at the company's city office. The response was likely to be immediate, and he waited for it.

"To get the full value of this view," Gerald Heath resumed, and now he addressed himself to Mary directly, as though with almost a purpose of ignoring Ravelli, to whose greeting he had barely responded, "you need to come upon it suddenly – as I once did. We had been for months blasting and digging through the mountain. Every day's duty in that hole was like a spell of imprisonment in a dark, damp dungeon. And your men, Ravelli, looked like a chain-gang of convicts."

"You woulda no dare say so mooch to their-a fa-ces," Ravelli retorted, with an insolence that was unmistakably intentional.

"O, I didn't mean a reflection on them," said Gerald, disregarding the other's quarrelsome aggressiveness. "We all look rascally in the mud, drip, and grime of tunnel work. And your gang of swarthy Italians are bound to have a demoniac aspect underground."

It was more careless than intentional that Gerald thus provoked Ravelli. There had been dislike between them, growing out of friction between their respective duties as a civil engineer and a sub-contractor, for the former was necessarily a critic of the latter's work. But they had never quarreled, and Gerald saw

nothing in this occasion, as Ravelli seemed to, for any outbreak of temper.

"Bettare be civ-vil with-a your tongue," Ravelli sneered.

"Well, I think so, too, as we are with a lady."

"Zat ees why-a I inseest you treat-a me as one gentleman."

So it seemed that he was especially regardful of how he figured in the presence of Mary Warriner.

"Like one gentleman? Oh, I will treat you like two gentlemen – so politely;" and Gerald began to again nonchalantly whittle the birchen pole. "I was going to tell how, when at last we broke through the rock at this end of the tunnel, I happened to be right there. A blast tore out an aperture several feet wide. We saw daylight through the smoke. We rushed pell-mell over the broken stone, and struggled with one another to get through first. It was – why, it was you, Ravelli, wasn't it? – whom I tussled with. Yes, we got into the breach together. You tried to push me back. You couldn't – of course, you couldn't;" and the narrator's reference to his own superior strength was exasperatingly accompanied by a glance not free from contempt.

"Eet was-a all een fun," Ravelli smilingly explained to Mary, and then his eyes turned darkly upon Gerald: "Eef eet had-a been one ear-nest fight – ," the different result was vaguely indicated by a hard clinch of fists and a vicious crunch of teeth.

It was beyond a doubt that Ravelli could not bear to be belittled to Mary; but she and Gerald were alike inattentive to his exhibition of wrath.

"No prisoner was ever more exultant to escape," Heath went on, "than I was to get out of that dark, noisome hole into clean sunlight. I ran to this very spot, and – well, the landscape was on view, just as it is now. It was like getting from gloom out into glory."

The young man's exuberant words were not spoken with much enthusiasm, and yet they had sufficient earnestness to prove their sincerity. He had stopped whittling, and his knife lay on the desk, as he turned his back against the sapling and rested both elbows on it.

"So I've been writing to the president of the company, urging him to deflect the route a trifle, so that passengers might come out of the tunnel to see a landscape worth a thousand miles of special travel, and to be had by going less than as many feet. This is the very latest day for changing the survey. To-morrow will be too late. That is why I'm telegraphing so urgently."

Click, click, click. Mary went to the telegraphic instrument. She delivered the message by word of mouth, instead of taking it down in the usual manner with a pen.

"Gerald Heath, Overlook," she translated from the metallic language of the instrument. "Your idea is foolish. We cannot entertain it. Henry Deckerman, president."

Gerald looked like a man receiving a jury's verdict involving great pecuniary loss, if not one of personal condemnation, as he listened to the telegram.

"Zat ees what-a I theenk," remarked Ravelli, with insolent

elation; "you ar-r-e one-a fool, as ze president he say."

Gerald was already angered by the dispatch. The taunting epithet was timed to excite him to fury, which he impulsively spent upon the more immediate provoker. He seized Ravelli by the throat, but without choking him, and almost instantly let him go, as though ashamed of having assailed a man of not much more than half his own strength and nearly twice his age. With Italian quickness Ravelli grabbed Gerald's knife from the desk, against which he was flung. He would have used it too, if self-defense had been necessary, but he saw that he was not to be further molested, and so he concealed the weapon under his arm, while Gerald strode away, unaware of his escape from a stab.

"He is-a one beeg bully," said Ravelli, with forced composure. "Eef a lady had-a not been here – "

"You tormented him," the girl interrupted. "I once saw the best-natured mastiff in the world lose his temper and turn on a – " She stopped before saying "cur," and added instead: "If he was foolish, you were not very wise to tease him."

"He is-a what to you, zat you take-a hees part?"

She bit her lip in resentment, but made no reply.

"Pare-haps he is one-a lover oof you?"

Still she would not reply to his impertinence. That angered him more than the severest rejoinder would have done.

"Oh, I am sure-a zat he ees one suitor."

She gave way at length to his provocation, and yet without any violent words, for she simply said: "You are insulting, while he is

at least reasonably polite – when he heeds me at all, which isn't often."

"Not-a often? But some-what closely he heed-a you. See zat."

With an open palm he struck the place on the sapling where Gerald had whittled. The spot was on the outer edge, where Mary could not see it from her seat. She went around to the front of the primitively constructed desk, or high counter, to gratify her curiosity. There she saw that Gerald had carved a hand – her own hand, as she instantly perceived. The small and shapely member was reproduced in the fresh, pale wood with rare fidelity. She had unconsciously posed it, while working the key of the telegraphic instrument under the jack-knife sculptor's eyes, and there had been ample time for him to whittle a fac-simile into the birch.

"He is almost as impertinent as you are," she said, and turned to see how Ravelli took the comment.

But Ravelli had disappeared.

Then, being alone, she laid a hand of her own coquettishly alongside its wooden counterpart, and critically admired the likeness.

"It was an unwarranted liberty," she said to herself, "but he did it very well."

The delicate fiber of the wood had favored the carver's purpose. The imitation hand bore a shade of flattery in the barely tinted birchen white, and in the fine grained satin smoothness that the keen blade had wrought, but this was not too much for more than a reasonable compliment. As to the modeling, that

was sincerely accurate, and the fingers rested on the key precisely as Mary had seen them during many hours of many days. It is an excessively vain girl who admires herself as actually as she does a portrait, and the telegrapher really saw more beauty in the birchen hand than she had ever observed in the live one. As she contemplated it, Ravelli returned noiselessly behind her.

"I a-wish to say something, Mees Warriner."

The Italian accent of Ravelli grated with unnatural harshness on Mary's ears, and if he had been an intruder upon her privacy, instead of a man in a really public place, she would not have been surprised into a deep flush. She snatched her hand away from its wooden counterpart, and clasped it with its mate behind her, as she leaned her shoulder against the carving to hide it.

"If you have a message to send," she said, "I can't get it on the wire too soon. It's within five minutes of time to shut off."

She started to go behind the desk. He stopped her with a touch upon her shoulder, and she shrank away reprovingly, although it was solely the man's earnestness that had made him do it.

"No, no; it ees not words for-a ze wire zat I have-a for you," he said. "I wish-a to tell to yourself something. Will you lees-ten?"

"Yes, if it is something that I ought to hear."

"Thees eez it. I am a-more than I seem here – deef-e-rent – so deef-e-rent you would hardly know-a me. In zis place I am on-ly a contractor for ze laborer. I am-a as com-mon as my gang in-a clothes – in-a manner, too, eh? But een one hour – een one minute – I could-a con-veence you zat I am-a something finer."

Mary did not show in her perfectly regained composure that she was so much as puzzled by the man's enigmatic talk. She said: "I don't see how it could be worth while, Mr. Ravelli."

"O, yes – I beg-a par-don for ze contradiction – yes, it ees worth-a while. Away from-a here, Mary, I would-a be so deef-e-rent zat you a-love me."

"Stop, Mr. Ravelli – stop."

The command was positive, but it was not obeyed.

"I love-a you."

He caught her by one wrist as he began. She was utterly unresistant. If she had struggled or cried out, he would have gone on with his voluble, excited declaration; but her placidity was incomprehensible to him.

"Mr. Ravelli," she began after a moment, "you understand English?"

"Perfectly, Mees Warriner."

"Well, here is plain English for you. I would use Italian if I could, so that you mightn't mistake me. You are to let go of my hand."

He did it.

"You are to go away instantly, and never come here again except on business. Go at once."

That he did not do.

"For what-a did you come here, into one camp oof men eef – "

"If I didn't expect to be unsafe? I'll tell you. It was a mistake. Operator No. 9 was ordered to this post. No. 9 had been a man,

who had within a week been discharged, and his number given to me. By an oversight, no alteration was made in the record to show the sex of the new No. 9. I couldn't afford to lose the work. Besides – "

"Well-a, besides – "

"Besides, I reasoned that every man at Overlook would protect me against all the other men – if – "

"Yes, eef – "

"Yes, if I cared absolutely nothing for any single one of them. Therefore, I am not afraid. But you must not annoy me."

Fury flashed into the man's eyes, into his reddened face, into the sudden tension of his gripped hands. The girl's contemptuous indifference maddened him. She saw this, and was at once alarmed, for she realized that here was a reckless lover – one who heated dangerously where another would have chilled under disdain; but she maintained an unshaken voice, as she said: "You may as well know, however, that I am amply protected. The night watchman is ordered to include this combined office and residence of mine in every round he makes. So I sleep quite unconcernedly. In the daytime, too, I shall have defense, if it becomes necessary."

"O, have-a no alarm, Mees Warriner," and the man's facial expression softened singularly as he gazed wistfully at the girl. "I haf said I love-a you." Then, with a startlingly quick transition, he glared menacingly off in the direction that Gerald Heath had gone. It seemed curious to Mary, too, that in his rage his English

was clearer than usual, as he growled: "It is your lover that should be afraid of me." He flung out one fist in a fierce menace, and added in Italian: "Nel vindicarvi bisogna ch'egli mi rende la sua vita."

CHAPTER II

The full moon looked for Mary Warriner's little house that night as soon as a clearance of the sky permitted, and then beamed down on her abode effulgently. But it was eleven o'clock before the gusty wind blew the thick clouds aside and let the orb illumine Overlook. Back of the shed in which the telegrapher worked by day was a structure in which she slept at night. It was built of slabs, with big growing trees to form its irregular corners, and their lowest limbs contributed the rafters, while stripped bark and evergreen boughs made the roof. The foliage swayed above in the fitful wind, and covered the cabin and the grass around it with commingling, separating, capering shadows of leaves, as though a multitude of little black demons were trying to get to the slumberer within. Their antics looked spiteful and angry at first: but as the wind lessened to a breeze, and as the moon seemed to mollify them, they became frolicsome without malice; and at length, when the merest zephyrs impelled their motions, they gambolled lazily, good-humoredly above and around the couch of Mary Mite.

It was midnight when a man shot into the open space around the cabin like a missile. He ran first to the front of the structure, where a tarpaulin curtained the shed for the night, and gazed for a moment blankly at this indication that the hour was not one of business. Tremendous haste was denoted in his every step

and gesture. He plucked twice at the canvas, as though to pull it down. Then he skurried around to the single window of Mary's apartment, whose only door opened into the shed, and pounded with his knuckles on the ill-fitted sash, making it clatter loudly. Silence within followed this noise without. "Hello! Wake up!" he cried. "Don't fool for a minute. Wake up!"

There was no response, and he skipped to and fro in his impatience. He was an ordinary shoveler and pounder, with nothing to distinguish him from the mass of manual laborers at Overlook, but, unlike the usual man with an errand at the telegraphic station, flourished a scrap of paper.

"I want to telegraph," he shouted, and struck the window again. "Get up quick! It's life and death!"

Mary Warriner was convinced that her services were urgently and properly required. She peeped warily out to inspect the man, estimated him to be merely a messenger, and then opened wide the sash, which swung laterally on hinges. Her delicate face bore the same sort of calm that characterized it in business hours, but the moon shone on it now, the hair had got loose from the bondage of knot and pin, and for an outer garment she was carelessly enwrapped in a white, fleecy blanket. The man did not give her time to inquire what was wanted.

"You're the telegraph girl, ain't you?" he exclaimed. "Well, here's something to telegraph. It's in a hurry, hurry, hurry. Don't lose a minute."

"I couldn't send it to-night," Mary said.

"You must."

"It isn't possible. There is nobody at the other end of the line to receive it. The wire is private – belongs to the railroad company – isn't operated except in the daytime. You'll have to wait until to-morrow."

"To-morrow I'll be a hundred years old, or else dead," the man almost wailed in despair.

"What?"

"I was only ten years old yesterday. To-night I'm sixty. To-morrow'll be too late. Here – here – send it to-night, Miss. Please send it to-night."

The mystified girl mechanically took the piece of paper which he thrust into her hands, but her eyes did not drop before they discovered the insanity in his face, and when they did rest on the paper they saw a scrawl of hieroglyphics. It was plain that this midnight visitor was a maniac. She screamed for help.

A watchman responded almost instantly to her call. Upon seeing the cause of the girl's fright, he treated the incident as a matter of course. The lunatic wobbled like a drunken man about to collapse, as he mumbled his request over and over again.

"Here, now, Eph," the watchman said, with as much of cajolery as command, "you mustn't bother the young lady. Ain't you ashamed to scare her this way? Get right out of this."

The watchman took the other by the arm, and, as they started off – one insisting and one objecting – the official looked back to say: "He won't hurt nobody, Miss Warriner – he's just a little

cranky, that's all."

Mary watched them out of sight, and while she was doing so, Gerald Heath approached from the contrary direction. He had heard the girl's scream. Why he was within earshot he might not have been able to explain satisfactorily, for it was not his habit to take midnight walks, even when the air was so brightly moonlit and so temporarily fine; but if cross-questioned, he would doubtless have maintained that he had sought only to escape from the darkness and closeness of his shanty quarters. Besides, where would he so likely wander, in quest of good sight and breath, as to the spot whence he could view the scenery which he in vain asked the railway company to exhibit to their passengers. As he turned the corner of the cabin he saw Eph and the watchman departing, and comprehended the disturbance.

"Eph has been frightening you, Miss Warriner," he said.

Mary screamed again, but this time it was a low, musical little outcry of modesty. She had not observed Gerald's approach. She clutched the blanket closely around her white throat, which had been almost as much exposed as by an ordinary cut of frock, and drew under cover the gleaming wrists which had all day been bared to a greater extent by sleeves of handy working length. Then she reached out one taper arm, and swung the sash around on its hinges, so its inner covering of muslin made a screen between her and the visitor. He did not apologize for his intrusion, and she pouted a little on her safe side of the sash, at his failure to do so.

"I see it was Eph that alarmed you," he said. "What did he do?"

She told him, and then asked: "Who is he, and what ails him?"

"He is a common laborer with an uncommon affliction," was the reply. "One day an excavation caved in, and for an hour he was buried. Some timbers made a little space around his head, but the rest of him was packed in earth. He had breathed the inclosed air two or three times over, and was almost suffocated when we got him out. He was insensible. He never came back to his senses. He believes he is living at the rate of more than a year every hour. This is why he was in such a hurry with his imaginary message."

"Poor fellow," came from the obverse side of the sash.

"Yes, poor fellow," the narrator assented. "I understood his hallucination at once. When a man is suddenly placed in mortal peril, his past life dashes before him. Half drowned men afterward tell of reviewing in a minute the events of years. It is a curious mental phenomenon. Well, this poor chap had that familiar experience, but with a singular sequence. The impression that all his lifetime before the accident happened in a brief time has remained in his disordered mind. He believes that his whole earthly existence is condensed – that future years, as well as his past ones, are compressed into days, and his days into minutes. Nothing can disabuse him of this idea. Everything is to him ephemeral. That's why I nicknamed him Eph – short for Ephemeral, you see. He doesn't remember his real name, and on

the roll he had only a number. He has done his work well enough until within a few days, but now his malady seems to have turned to the worst. He has talked wildly of getting some physicians to check the speed of time with him, and it may have been that he wished to telegraph to this fancied expert."

"It is singular," Mary said, "and very sad."

The midnight incident seemed to have come to a conclusion. It was a proper time for Gerald to say good-night and go away. He still stood on the opposite side of the half-open sash, around the edge of which appeared a small set of finger tips, which pulled the screen a little closer, showing that the girl was minded to shut herself in. But a hand twice as big opposed hers, gently yet strongly, and in doing so it touched hers; upon which she let go, and the window flew open.

"Oh, you mustn't see me," Mary exclaimed, as Gerald got a vanishing glimpse of the white-draped figure. "Good-night."

"You will be afraid if left alone," Gerald protested; "you can't go to sleep, nervous as you must be."

"I surely can't go to sleep talking," was her rejoinder, with the first touch of coquetry she had indulged in at Overlook.

"I won't talk, then. I'll only keep guard out here until daylight. Eph may return."

"But there's the watchman. It is his duty."

"It would be my delight."

That silenced the invisible inmate of the cabin. The moon shone into the square opening, but Mary was ensconced

somewhere in the darkness that bordered the income of light.

"Should I apologize?" Gerald at length began again. "It is like this, Miss Warriner. I used to know how to behave politely to a lady. But for six years I've lived in wildernesses – in railroad camps – from Canada to Mexico. We've had no ladies in these rough places – no women, except once in a while some mannish washerwoman or cook. That's what makes you so rare – so unexpected – that is why it would be a delight to be a patrolman outside your quarters – that is why I don't wish to go away."

"Oh! – oh! I am interesting because I am the only specimen of my sex at Overlook. That isn't a doubtful compliment; it is no compliment at all. Good-night."

"You misconstrue me altogether. I mean – "

"I am sure you do not mean," and now the tone was pleadingly serious, "to remain here at my window after I request you to go away. I am, as you have said, the only girl at Overlook."

"If there were a thousand girls at Overlook – "

"Not one of them, I trust, would prolong a dialogue with a young gentleman at night through the open window of her bedroom."

Half in respectful deference to Mary's unassailable statement of the rule of propriety applicable to the situation, and half in inconsiderate petulance at being dismissed, Gerald let go of the sash with an impulse that almost closed it. This time two miniature hands came out under the swinging frame. Would more than one hand have been naturally used? Was it not an

awkward method of shutting a window? And Mary Warriner was not a clumsy creature. But there were the hands, and Gerald grasped them. They fluttered for freedom, like birds held captive in broad palms by completely caging fingers. Then he uncovered them, but for an instant kept them prisoners by encircling the wrists long enough to impetuously kiss them. Another second and they were gone, the window was closed, and they were alone.

He walked slowly away, accusing himself of folly and ungentlemanliness, and he felt better upon getting out of the clear, searching moonshine into the dim, obscuring shade of rocks and trees, among which the path wound crookedly. There rapid footsteps startled him, as though he was a skulking evildoer, and the swift approach of a man along an intersecting pathway, made him feel like taking to cowardly flight. But he recognized the monomaniac, Eph, who was in a breathless tremor.

"Mr. Heath, could a man walk to Dimmersville before the telegraph station there opens in the morning?" Eph asked, with several catches of breath and a reeling movement of physical weakness.

"You go to bed, Eph," was the reply, meant to be soothing, "and I'll see that your telegram goes from here the earliest thing in the morning. That won't be more than six or seven hours from now."

"Six or seven hours," the poor fellow deploringly moaned; "I'll be a good many years older by that time. Oh, it's awful to

have your life go whizzing away like mine does," and he clutched at Gerald with his fidgety hands, with a vague idea of slowing himself by holding to a normal human being.

Then he darted away, swaying from side to side with faintness, and disappeared in the foliage which lined the path he was following.

Gerald watched him out of sight, and was about to resume his own different way when the voice of Tonio Ravelli was heard, with its Italian extra a to the short words and a heavy emphasis on the final syllable of the long ones.

"Mistair Heath," he said, "I saw-a your affectionate par-ting weez Mees Warriner."

Gerald had just then the mind of a culprit, and he began to explain apologetically: "It was cowardly in me to insult a defenseless girl. She didn't invite it. I am ashamed of myself."

He hardly realized to whom he was speaking. The two men were now walking rapidly, Ravelli taking two strides to one of the bigger Gerald, in order to keep alongside.

"You-a should be ashamed – you-a scoundrel."

As much of jealous fury and venomous malice as could be vocalized in six words was in Ravelli's sudden outbreak. Gerald was astounded. He turned upon his companion, caught him by both lapels of the coat, and shook him so violently that his boot-soles pounded the ground. Ravelli staggered back upon being loosed, and threw one arm around a tree to steady himself.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," said Gerald, "but you shouldn't

be reckless with your language. Perhaps you don't know what scoundrel means in English."

"I saw you-a kiss her hands."

"Did you? Well, do you know what I'd do to you, Ravelli, if I saw you kiss her hands – as I did – without her consent? I'd wring your miserable neck. Now, what are you going to do to me?"

"I am-a going to keel you!"

The blade of a knife flashed in Ravelli's right hand, as he made a furious onslaught; but the stronger and quicker man gripped both of his assailant's wrists, threw him violently to the ground, and tortured him with wrenches and doublings until he had to drop the weapon. In the encounter the clothes of both men were torn, and when Ravelli regained his feet blood was dripping from his hand. The blade had cut it.

"You meant to kill me," Gerald exclaimed.

"I said-a so," was the sullen, menacing response.

"And with my own knife!" and Gerald, picking up the knife, recognized it.

"Your own knife – ze one zat you carve-a Mary's hand with so lovingly."

Ravelli had retained it since the previous afternoon, when he had picked it up from Mary Warriner's desk. Its blade was now red with blood, as Gerald shut and pocketed it.

"You cowardly murderer!"

"Murderer? Not-a yet. But I meant to be."

Ravelli turned off by the cross-path, and Gerald passed on.

CHAPTER III

The first man to go to work at Overlook in the morning was Jim Wilson, because he had to rouse the fire under a boiler early enough to provide steam for a score of rock drills. The night watchman awakened him at daybreak, according to custom, and then got into a bunk as the other got out of one.

"Everything all right?" Jim asked.

"I guess so," the other replied. "But I hain't seen your boiler sence before midnight. Eph was disturbin' Mary Mite, and so I hung 'round her cabin pretty much the last half of the night."

Jim went to his post at the boiler, and at an unaccustomed pace, from the point where he first saw and heard steam hissing upward from the safety valve. On quitting the night previous, he had banked the fire as usual, and this morning he should have found it burning so slowly that an hour of raking, replenishing, and open draughts would no more than start the machinery at seven o'clock. Going nearer he found that open dampers and a fresh supply of coal had set the furnace raging.

What was that which protruded from the open door, and so nearly filled the aperture that the draught was not impaired?

A glance gave the answer. It was the legs and half the body of a man, whose head and shoulders were thoroughly charred, as Jim was horrified to see when he pulled the remains out upon the ground.

Jim ran to tell the superintendent, and within a few minutes a knot of excited men surrounded the body. The gathering grew in numbers rapidly. By means of the clothing the dead and partially burned man was identified at once as Tonio Ravelli. That he had been murdered was an equally easy conclusion. The murderer had apparently sought to cremate the corpse. Whether he had found it physically impossible, or had been frightened away, could only be conjectured.

"Who can have done it?" was the question asked by Superintendent Brainerd, the autocrat of Overlook.

There was a minute of silence, with all staring intently at the body, as though half expecting it to somehow disclose the truth. The night watchman was first to speak.

"Eph might have done it," he said.

Then he told of the monomaniac's visit to the telegraph station, and of the acute stage which his malady had reached. Nobody else present had seen him since the previous evening. Superintendent Brainerd ordered a search of the lodgings. Ten minutes were sufficient for a round of the different quarters. Eph was in none of them. The searchers returned to the furnace, and with them came Gerald Heath.

"I met Eph yonder where the paths cross, not a hundred yards from here, a little past midnight," Gerald said. "He was terribly excited. That was after he had tried in vain to telegraph a crazy message. Evidently his delusion, that his whole life was condensed into a brief space, had driven him to a frenzy. He

spoke of walking to Dimmersville, but I tried to quiet him, and he disappeared."

Dimmersville was a town about ten miles distant, in a direction opposite to that from which the railroad had worked its way through the mountains. No wire connected it with Overlook, and there was no public road for the nearest third of the way, although a faint trail showed the course that a few persons had taken on foot or horseback.

"Very likely Eph has gone toward Dimmersville," Brainerd argued, "and we must try to catch him."

Before the order could be specifically given a horse and a rider arose over the edge of the level ground and came into the midst of the assemblage. The man in the saddle had a professional aspect, imparted chiefly by his smoothly shaven face. In this era of mustaches a hairless visage is apt to be assigned to a clergyman, who shaves thus from a motive of propriety; an actor, who does it from necessity; or somebody who aims at facial distinction without the features suitable to that purpose. A countenance of which it can only be said that it has one nose, one mouth, and two eyes, all placed in expressive nonentity, and which is dominated utterly by hair on and around it, may be less lost to individuality if entirely shaven. Of such seemed the visage of the dark man, who calmly rode into the excitement at Overlook.

"Which way have you come?" Brainerd asked.

"From Dimmersville," was the reply.

"Did you see anybody on the way?"

"I started very early. Folks were not out of their beds in the houses – as long as there were any houses – and that is only for five or six miles, you know. After that – yes – I did see one man. A curiously excited chap. He looked tired out. He asked the distance to Dimmersville, and whether the telegraph office would be open by the time he got there. Then he skurried on before I'd half answered him."

All that was known of the murder was told to the stranger by half a dozen glib tongues, and it was explained to him that he had encountered the maniacal fugitive.

"I knew there was something wrong about him," said the stranger. "It is my business to be observant."

He dismounted and hitched his horse to a tree. The dead body was shown to him. He examined it very thoroughly. All the particulars were related to him over and over. Then he drew Superintendent Brainerd aside.

"My name is Terence O'Reagan," he said, and in his voice was faintly distinguishable the brogue of the land whence the O'Reagans came. "I am a government detective. I have been sent to work up evidence in the case of some Italian counterfeiters. We had a clew pointing to a sub-contractor here – the very man who lies there dead. Our information was that he used some of the bogus bills in paying off his gang. Now, it isn't going outside my mission to investigate his death – if you don't object."

"I would be glad to have you take hold of it," Brainerd replied. "We can't bring the authorities here before noon, at the earliest,

and in the mean time you can perhaps clear it all up."

The eagerly curious men had crowded close to this brief dialogue, and had heard the latter part of it. O'Reagan became instantly an important personage, upon whose smallest word or movement they hung expectantly, and nobody showed a keener interest than Gerald Heath. The detective first examined the body. The pockets of Ravelli's clothes contained a wallet, with its money untouched, beside a gold watch.

"So robbery was not the object," said O'Reagan to Brainerd. "The motive is the first thing to look for in a case of murder."

Next, he found blood on the waistcoat, a great deal of it, but dried by the fire that had burned the shoulders and head; and in the baked cloth were three cuts, under which he exposed three stab wounds. Strokes of a knife had, it seemed, killed the victim before he was thrust partially into the furnace.

A storm was coming to Overlook unperceived, for the men were too much engrossed in what lay there on the ground, ghastly and horrible, to pay any attention to the clouding sky. Gloom was so fit for the scene, too, that nobody gave a thought from whence it came. To Gerald Heath the going out of sunlight, and the settling down of dusky shadows seemed a mental experience of his own. He stood bewildered, transfixed, vaguely conscious of peril, and yet too numb to speak or stir. Detective O'Reagan, straightening up from over the body, looked piercingly at Gerald, and then glanced around at the rest.

"Is there anybody here who saw Tonio Ravelli last night?" he

asked.

"I did," Gerald replied.

"Where and when?"

"At the same place where I met Eph, and immediately afterward."

"Ah! now we are locating Eph and Ravelli together. That looks like the lunatic being undoubtedly the stabber."

"And we must catch him," Brainerd interposed. "I'll send riders toward Dimmersville immediately."

"No great hurry about that," the detective remarked; "he is too crazy to have had any clear motive or any idea of escape. It will be easy enough to capture him." Then he turned to Gerald, and questioned with the air of a cross-examiner: "Did the two men have any words together?"

"No," was the ready answer; "I don't know that they even saw each other at that time. Eph went away an instant before Ravelli came."

"Did you talk with Ravelli?"

"Yes."

"About what?"

"Not about Eph at all."

"About what, then?"

Now the reply came reluctantly: "A personal matter – something that had occurred between us – an incident at the telegraph station."

"The station where Eph had awakened the girl operator? Was

it a quarrel about her?"

"That is no concern of yours. You are impertinent."

"Well, sir, the question is pertinent – as the lawyers say – and the answer concerns you, whether it does me or not. You and Ravelli quarreled about the girl?"

"The young lady shall not be dragged into this. She wasn't responsible for what happened between Ravelli and me."

"What did happen between you and Ravelli?"

The two men stood close to and facing each other. The eyes of the detective glared gloatingly at an upward angle into the pale but still firm face of the taller Gerald, and then dropped slowly, until they became fixed on a red stain on the sleeve of the other's coat. Did he possess the animal scent of a bloodhound?

"What is that?" he sharply asked. He seized the arm and smelled of the spotted fabric. "It is blood! Let me see your knife."

Quite mechanically Gerald thrust one hand into his trousers pocket and brought out the knife which he had taken back from Ravelli, whose blood was on it yet.

The storm was overhead. A first peal of thunder broke loudly. It came at the instant of the assemblage's tensest interest – at the instant when Gerald Heath was aghast with the revelation of his awful jeopardy – at the instant of his exposure as a murderer. It impressed them and him with a shock of something supernatural. The reverberation rumbled into silence, which was broken by O'Reagan:

"There'll be no need to catch Eph," he said, in a tone of

professional glee. "This man is the murderer."

Again thunder rolled and rumbled angrily above Overlook, and the party stood aghast in the presence of the man dead and the man condemned.

"Bring him to the telegraph station," O'Reagan commanded.

Nobody disputed the detective's methods now – not even Gerald; and a prisoner as completely as though manacled, although not touched by any one, he went with the rest.

Mary Warriner had taken down the tarpaulin front of her shed when the men approached. In the ordinary course of her early morning doings she would wait an hour to dispatch and receive the first telegrams of the day, and then go to breakfast alone at the table where the engineers and overseers would by that time have had their meal. She was astonished to see nearly the whole population of Overlook crowd around her quarters, while a few entered. But she went quickly behind the desk, and took her place on the stool. The soberness of the faces impressed her, but nothing indicated that Gerald was in custody, and her quick thought was that some disaster made it necessary to use the wire importantly.

"I wish to send a message," said O'Reagan, stepping forward.

The eyes of the girl rested on him inquiringly, and he palpably flinched, but as obviously nerved himself to proceed, and when he spoke again the Irish accent became more pronounced to hear, although not sufficiently to be shown in the printed words: "I will dictate it slowly, so that you can transmit it as I speak. Are you

ready?"

Mary's fingers were on the key, and her bright, alert face was an answer to the query.

"To Henry Deckerman, president," the detective slowly said, waiting for the clicks of the instrument to put his language on the wire; "Tonio Ravelli, a sub-contractor here, was murdered last night."

Mary's hand slid away from the key after sending that, and the always faint tint in her cheeks faded out, and her eyes flickered up in a scared way to the stern faces in front of her. The shock of the news that a man had been slain, and that he was a man who, only the previous day, had proffered his love to her, was for a moment disabling. But the habit of her employment controlled her, and she awaited the further dictation.

"His body was found this morning in the furnace of the steam boiler." O'Reagan resumed deliberately, "where it had evidently been placed in a vain attempt to destroy it."

A shudder went through Mary, and she convulsively wrung her small hands together, as though to limber them from a cramp. But her fingers went back to the key.

"The murderer has been discovered," the detective slowly continued, and the operator kept along with his utterance word by word. "He killed Ravelli for revenge. It was a love affair." Here the girl grew whiter still, and the clicks became very slow, but they did not cease. O'Reagan's voice was cold and ruthless: "The motive of the murderer was revenge. His name is Gerald

Heath."

All but the name flashed off on the wire. Mary Warriner's power to stir the key stopped at that. She did not faint. She did not make any outcry. For a moment she looked as though the soul had gone out of her body, leaving a corpse sitting there. A grievous wail of wind came through the trees, and a streak of lightning zig-zagged down the blue-clouded sky.

"Go on," said O'Reagan.

"I will not," was the determined response.

"Why not?"

"Because it is not so. Gerald Heath never murdered Ravelli."

Gerald had stood motionless and silent. Now he gave way to an impulse as remarkable as his previous composure had been singular. If there had been stagnation in his mind, it was now displaced by turbulence. He grasped Mary's hands in a fervid grip; then dropped them and faced the others.

"I did not kill the Italian," he said. "He attacked me with my knife which he had stolen. In the struggle his hand was cut, but I took the weapon away from him. He quitted me alive and unhurt. I never saw him again. You don't believe it? Mary does, and that is more than all else."

"The circumstances don't favor you," the detective retorted, "they convict you. You killed Ravelli because you and he were both in love with this young lady."

"Isn't it the rejected suitor who kills the other one for spite?" This was in Mary Warriner's voice, weak, but still steady.

"Ravelli loved me, I knew, and I drove him away. Mr. Heath loved me, I believed, and I had not repulsed him. If I were the cause of a murder between them, it should be Ravelli who killed Gerald."

"You detested Ravelli?" O'Reagan asked, with a strange bitterness.

"Yes."

"And you love Heath?"

The answer was no more hesitant than before; "Yes."

"Send the rest of my message," and the detective was boisterous. "Send the name. Gerald Heath is the murderer."

He roughly seized her hand and clapped it on the key. She drew it away, leaving his there. A blinding flash of lightning illumined the place, and what looked like a missile of fire flew down the wire to the instrument, where it exploded. O'Reagan fell insensible from the powerful electrical shock. The rest did not altogether escape, and for a minute all were dazed. The first thing that they fully comprehended was that O'Reagan was getting unsteadily to his feet. He was bewildered. Staggering and reeling, he began to talk.

Mary was first to perceive the import of his utterance. He was merely going on with what he had been saying, but the manner, not the matter, was astounding.

He spoke with an Italian accent, and made Italian gestures.

"You-a send ze mes-sage," he said; "Heath ees ze murder-are. Send-a ze mes-sage, I say."

Tonio Ravelli had unwittingly resumed his Italian style of English.

His plenitude of hair and whiskers was gone; and in the face, thereby uncovered, nobody could have recognized him in Detective O'Reagan but for his lapse into the foreign accent; and he said so much before discovering his blunder that his identification, as indeed Ravelli, was complete.

Who, then, was the dead man? Why, he was Eph.

Nothing but the fear of being himself condemned as a murderer of the maniac, as a part of the scheme of revenge against Gerald, induced Ravelli to explain. He had found Eph lying dead in the path, after both had parted from Gerald. The plot to exchange clothes with the corpse, drag it to the furnace, burn away all possibility of recognition, and thus make it seem to be his murdered self, was carried out with all the hot haste of a jealous vengeance. Ravelli was not an Italian, although very familiar with the language of Italy, and able, by a natural gift of mimicry, to hide himself from pursuit for a previous crime. Overlook had been a refuge until his passion for Mary Warriner led him to abandon his disguise. Thereupon, he had turned himself into Terence O'Reagan, a detective, whose malicious work wrought happiness for Gerald Heath and Mary Warriner.

A THING THAT GLISTENED

BY FRANK R. STOCKTON

In the fall of 1888 the steamship *Sunda*, from Southampton, was running along the southern coast of Long Island, not many hours from port, when she was passed by one of the great British liners, outward bound. The tide was high, and the course of both vessels was nearer the coast than is usual – that of the *Sunda* being inside of the other.

As the two steamers passed each other there was a great waving of hats and handkerchiefs. Suddenly there was a scream from the *Sunda*. It came from Signora Rochita, the prima donna of an opera troupe, which was coming to America in that ship.

"I have lost my bracelet," she cried in Italian, and then, turning to the passengers, she repeated the cry in very good English.

The situation was instantly comprehended by every one. It was late in the afternoon; the captain had given a grand dinner to the passengers, at which the prima donna had appeared in all her glories of ornamentation, and the greatest of these glories, a magnificent diamond bracelet, was gone from the arm with which she had been enthusiastically waving her lace handkerchief.

The second officer, who was standing near, dashed into the captain's office and quickly reappeared with chart and instruments, and made rapid calculation of the position of the vessel at the time of the accident, making an allowance for the few minutes that had passed since the first cry of the signora. After consultation with the captain and recalculations of the distance from land and some other points, he announced to the weeping signora that her bracelet lay under a little black spot he had made on the chart, and that if she chose to send a diver for it she might get it, for the depth of water at that place was not great.

By profession I am a diver, and the next day I was engaged to search for the diamond bracelet of Signora Rochita. I had a copy of the chart, and, having hired a small schooner with several men who had been my assistants before, and taking with me all the necessary accouterments and appliances, I set out for the spot indicated, and by afternoon we were anchored, we believed, at or very near it. I lost no time in descending. I wore, of course, the usual diver's suit, but I took with me no tools nor any of the implements used by divers when examining wrecks, but carried in my right hand a brilliant electric lamp connected with a powerful battery on the schooner. I held this by an insulated handle, in which there were two little knobs, by which I could light or extinguish it.

The bottom was hard and smooth, and lighting my lamp I began to look about me. If I approached the bracelet I ought to be able to see it sparkle, but after wandering over considerable

space, I saw no sparkles nor anything like a bracelet. Suddenly, however, I saw something which greatly interested me. It was a hole in the bottom of the ocean, almost circular, and at least ten feet in diameter. I was surprised that I had not noticed it before, for it lay not far from the stern of our vessel.

Standing near the rocky edge of the aperture, I held out my lamp and looked down. Not far below I saw the glimmer of what seemed to be the bottom of this subterranean well. I was seized with a desire to explore this great hole running down under the ordinary bottom of the sea. I signaled to be lowered, and although my comrades were much surprised at such an order, they obeyed, and down I went to the well. The sides of this seemed rocky and almost perpendicular, but after descending about fifteen feet they receded on every side, and I found myself going down into a wide cavern, the floor of which I touched in a very short time.

Holding up my lamp, and looking about me, I found myself in a sea cave, some thirty feet in diameter, with a dome-like roof, in which, a little to one side of the center, was the lower opening of the well. I became very much excited; this was just the sort of place into which a bracelet or anything else of value might be expected to have the bad luck to drop. I walked about and gazed everywhere, but I found nothing but rocks and water.

I was about to signal to be drawn up, when above me I saw what appeared to be a flash of darkness coming down through the well. With a rush and a swirl it entered the cavern, and in a moment I recognized the fact that a great fish was swooping

around and about me. Its movements were so rapid and irregular, now circling along the outer edge of the floor of the cavern, then mounting above me, until its back seemed to scrape the roof, that I could not form a correct idea of the size of the creature. It seemed to me to be at least twenty feet along. I stood almost stupefied, keeping my eyes, as far as possible, fixed upon the swiftly moving monster.

Sometimes he came quite near me, when I shuddered in every fiber, and then he shot away, but ever gliding with powerful undulations of his body and tail, around, about, and above me. I did not dare to signal to be drawn up, for fear that the terrible creature would enter the well hole with me. Then he would probably touch me, perhaps crush me against the wall, but my mind was capable of forming no plans. I only hoped the fish would ascend and disappear by the way he came.

My mind was not in its strongest condition, being much upset by a great trouble, and I was so frightened that I really did not know what I ought to do, but I had sense enough left to feel sure that the fish had been attracted into the cavern by my lamp. Obviously, the right thing to do was to extinguish it, but the very thought of this nearly drove me into a frenzy. I could not endure to be left alone with the shark in darkness and water. It was an insane idea, but I felt that, whatever happened, I must keep my eyes upon him.

Now the great fish began to swoop nearer and nearer to me, and then, suddenly changing its tactics, it receded to the most

distant wall of the cavern, where, with its head toward me, it remained, for the first time, motionless. But this did not continue long. Gently turning over on its side, it opened its great mouth, and in an instant, with a rush, it came directly at me. My light shone full into its vast mouth, glistening with teeth, and there was a violent jerk which nearly threw me from my feet, and all was blackness. The shark had swallowed my lamp! By rare good fortune, he did not take my hand also.

Now I frantically tugged at my signal rope. Without my lamp I had no thought but a desire to be pulled out of the water, no matter what happened. In a few minutes I sat, divested of my diving suit, and almost insensible, upon the deck of the schooner. As soon as I was able to talk I told my astonished comrades what had happened, and while we were discussing this strange occurrence, one of them, looking over the side, saw slowly rising to the surface the body of a dead shark.

"By George," he cried, "here is the beast. He has been killed by the current from the battery."

We all crowded to the rail and looked down upon the monster. He was about ten feet long, and it was plain that he had died for making himself the connection between the poles of the battery.

"Well," said the captain pleasantly. "I suppose you are not going down again?"

"Not I," I replied. "I give up this job."

Then suddenly I cried:

"Come boys, all of you. Make fast to that shark, and get him

on board. I want him."

Some of the men laughed, but my manner was so earnest that in a moment they all set about to help me. A small boat was lowered, lines were made fast to the dead fish with block and tackle, and we hauled him on deck. I then got a butcher's knife from the cabin and began to cut him open.

"Look here, Tom!" exclaimed the captain, "that's nonsense. Your lamp's all smashed to pieces, and if you get it out, it will never be any good to you."

"I don't care for the lamp," I answered, working away energetically, "but an idea has struck me. It's plain that this creature had a fancy for shining things. If he swallowed a lamp, there is no reason why he should not have swallowed anything else that glittered."

"Oho!" cried the captain, "you think he swallowed the bracelet, do you?"

And instantly everybody crowded more closely about me.

I got out the lamp. Its wires were severed as smoothly as if they had been cut by shears. Then I worked on. Suddenly there was a cry from every man. Something glimmered in the dark interior of the fish. I grasped it and drew it out. It was not a bracelet, but a pint bottle which glimmered like a glow-worm. With the bottle in my hand, I sat upon the deck and gazed at it. I shook it. It shone brighter. A bit of oiled silk was tied tightly over the cork, and it was plain to see that it was partly filled with a light colored oil, into which a bit of phosphorous had been dropped,

which, on being agitated, filled the bottle with a dim light.

But there was something more in the bottle than phosphorus and oil. I could see a tin tube, corked at each end, and the exposed parts of the corks spreading enough to prevent the tin from striking the glass. We all knew that this was one of those bottles containing a communication of some sort, which are often thrown into the sea, and float about until they are picked up. The addition of the oil and phosphorus was intended to make it visible by night as well as by day, and this was plainly the reason why it had been swallowed by a light-loving shark.

I poured out the oil and extracted the tube. Wiping it carefully, I drew out the corks, and then, from the little tin cylinder, I pulled a half sheet of note paper, rolled up tightly. I unrolled it, and read these words:

> Before I jump overboard, I want to let people know that I killed John Polhemus. So I have fixed up this bottle. I hope it may be picked up in time to keep Jim Barker from being hung. I did think of leaving it on the steamer, but I might change my mind about jumping overboard, and I guess this is the best way. The clothes I wore and the hatchet I did it with are under the woodshed, back of Polhemus's house.
>
> Henry Ramsey.

I sprang to my feet with a yell. Jim Barker was my brother, now lying in prison under sentence of death for the murder of Polhemus; all the circumstantial evidence, and there was no other, had been against him. The note was dated eight months

back. Oh! cruel fool of a murderer.

The shark was thrown overboard, and we made best speed to port, and before the end of the afternoon I had put Ramsey's note into the hands of the lawyer who had charge of my brother's case.

Fortunately he was able to identify the handwriting and signature of Ramsey, a man who had been suspected of the crime, but against whom no evidence could be found. The lawyer was almost as excited as I was by the contents of this note, and early the next morning we started together for the house of the Polhemus family. There, under the woodshed, we found carefully buried a bloodstained shirt and vest, and the hatchet.

My impulse was to fly to my brother, but this my lawyer forbade. He would take charge of the affair, and no false hopes must be excited, but he confidently assured me that my brother was as good as free.

Returning to the city, I thought I might as well make my report to Signora Rochita. The lady was at home and saw me. She showed the most intense interest in what I told her, and insisted upon every detail of my experiences. As I spoke of the shark, and the subterranean cave, she nearly fainted from excitement, and her maid had to bring her smelling salts. When I had finished, she looked at me steadily for a moment, and then said:

"I have something to tell you, but I hardly know how to say it. I never lost my bracelet. I intended to wear it at the captain's dinner, but when I went to put it on I found the clasp was broken, and, as I was late, I hurried to the table without the bracelet,

and thought of it no more until, when we were all waving and cheering, I glanced at my wrist and found it was not there. Then, utterly forgetting that I had not put it on, I thought it had gone into the sea. It was only this morning that, opening what I supposed was the empty box, I saw it. Here it is."

I never saw such gorgeous jewels.

"Madame," said I, "I am glad you thought you lost it, for I have gained something better than all these."

"You are a good man," said she, and then she paid me liberally for my services. When this business had been finished, she asked:

"Are you married?" I answered that I was not.

"Is there any one you intend to marry?"

"Yes," said I.

"What is her name?" she asked.

"Sarah Jane McElroy."

"Wait a minute," said she, and she retired into another room. Presently she returned and handed me a little box.

"Give this to your ladylove," said she; "when she looks at it, she will never forget that you are a brave man."

When Sarah Jane opened the box, there was a little pin with a diamond head, and she gave a scream of delight. But I saw no reason for jumping or crying out, for after having seen the Signora's bracelet, this stone seemed like a pea in a bushel of potatoes.

"I don't need anything," she said, "to remind me that you are a brave man. I am going to buy furniture with it."

I laughed, and remarked that "every little helps."

When I sit, with my wife by my side, before the fire in our comfortable home, and consider that the parlor carpet, and the furniture and the pictures, and the hall and stair carpet, and all the dining-room furniture, with the china and the glass and the linen, and all the kitchen utensils, and two bedroom suits on the second story, both hardwood, and all the furniture and fittings of a very pleasant room for a single man, the third story front, were bought with the pin that the signora gave to Sarah Jane, I am filled with profound respect for things that glitter. And when I look on the other side of the fire and see Jim smoking his pipe just as happy as anybody, then I say to myself that, if there are people who think that this story is too much out of the common, I wish they would step in here and talk to Jim about it. There is a fire in his eyes when he tells you how glad he is that it was the shark instead of him, that is very convincing.

A LION AND A LIONESS

BY JOAQUIN MILLER

CHAPTER I

I doubt if you will find either profit or pleasure in reading this incident of my third voyage up the Nile. It is really not worth reading. I have written it down merely for a few friends who know something of the facts; and also to escape the annoyance of having to tell it over as one of the features of my four years' travel in the Orient. But to begin. Wearying of the Levant, I was resting a time in Rome, when I was formally invited, as well as specially urged, to witness the marriage ceremony between the Grand Duchess Alexandria and the Duke of Edinburgh. Let us pass over these wasteful follies, the waste of time, the waste of sense, of soul! I have only mentioned the reason for my presence in St. Petersburg; have only mentioned the fact of my being there, because I saw a face in that gathering of people that could not be forgotten. It was the face of a tall, dark, and serenely silent Dolores; a young woman who had surely met and made the acquaintance of sorrow early in the morning of life. I sometimes wonder if I could ever have known or cared to know any one who had not sorrowed deeply. And yet I now know very well that, in whatever guise that woman could have come, there could have been no two roads for us from the day of her coming to the day of her going.

Let me be a little confidential right here. I knew, I had always known, I should meet this woman. I had waited for her; worked

hard, built up the battlements and the fortress of my soul so that I might receive her into it; and defend her well against my baser self when she should come. And now tell me – have you never had a thought, a conviction like this? A certainty in your own heart that your other and better self would come to you complete and entire some day, soon or late, so soon as you might have the fortress ready? The doctors said she was dying. She had been trying to stand between the Czar and the Jews. She may not have been of that "peculiar people," but I think she had the money of Rothschilds and Sir Moses Montefiore behind her.

There had been attempts at assassination, followed by executions. Some of the condemned were women. It was as if this woman herself had been condemned to death. I think she suffered more than all the others put together; she was so very, very sensitive to the pain and sorrow of others.

There are souls like that. But there is a good God. The soul that suffers keenly can and shall enjoy keenly. You can, if you care to persist in it, make yourself, as the centuries wheel past, more than an entire nation in this.

We had common ground to work on in the cause of the condemned people. It was on this ground that we first met; as two swift streams that flow in the same direction and so finally unite forever. All that could be done was done speedily; for "the law's delay," whatever else must be laid to the door of Russia, is not one of her sins.

As summer took flight we went south with the birds. For she

surely felt that she was dying. Besides, she had been impressed with the idea of restoring Jerusalem and having this homeless race re-established in the holy city. Her religion? I think it was all religions. I saw her kneel in the Kremlin at Moscow, cross herself in St. Peter's at Rome, and bend low at prayer in the Synagogue at Alexandria. I think she would have done the same in a mosque. As stated before, I had, previous to meeting her, been all over Syria. And so, whenever she referred to her cherished idea, as she so often did, of forming Jewish settlements in and about Jerusalem and restoring Israel, I took occasion to explain how impossible and impractical it all was.

I remember telling her how that in a whole day's ride from Babylon toward Jerusalem I had seen no living thing save a single grasshopper! I explained to her that the path of civilization had been in the track of the setting sun ever since the dawn of history, and that it was not in the power of man to reverse this course. I attempted to show that the tide of population would pour upon the salubrious and fertile shores of the farthest west till the heart of civilization would beat right there. I explained to her that wherever the great strong heart of commerce beat strongest, there would be found the strongest and best of these people whom she hoped to help; while the weak and helpless of that race would remain stranded by the waters of the Levant, as in Russia now.

"Why not, then, let us anticipate this and build the city of refuge by your great sea in the path of this civilization which you

say will so surely come?"

Like the golden doors of dawn was the great earnest idea to me as she spoke. But of course I know, as I said before, that the "peculiar people" could not be induced to brave the desert. They do not seek rest, but action – employment in the marts. They would rest but a single night even by the sweet waters of Jacob's well.

CHAPTER II

As winter came on and Egypt began to be oppressively full of tourists, it was decided that we should make our escape up the Nile and haunt the ruin of Kamak and other places until the outgoing tide set in. Once fairly on our way, it did not take long to persuade me that she was not only gaining strength each day in body but in soul. We had been more than a month on the Nile; a tattered palm tree here tossing in the wind and sand; a gaunt, clay-colored camel yonder, all legs and hair; beggars, disease, despair all around us; a land to fly from, fit place for tombs, jackals, and famishing lions!

But she was stronger, there were roses in her face. Her glorious black hair had not the dampness of death in it now, but was luxuriously sensate with renewed life and health and possible happiness.

One warm sunset, as the boat lay with its prow in the yellow sand that seemed to stretch away into infinity, she proposed that she and I should ascend to the top of the tall ruins on a hill a little distance back from the river, and there wait and watch and listen for the coming day.

It was a dreadful place. I had already walked a little way out, but on seeing a shriveled black hand stretching up from the sand, I had turned back; only to stumble over the head of a mummy which I had afterward seen one of our servants gather up and

take to his Arab camp for firewood. Still, we had been pent up in the boat much; and then would not she be with me?

Two Arabs were taken with us to carry a bottle of water and the rugs and robes. The hill was steeper than it at first seemed; and the ascent through the sand heavy. I was having an opportunity to test her strength and endurance. I might also have an occasion to test her courage before the break of morning, for as we entered between two towering columns of red granite, one of the Arabs dropped on a knee and spread his hand as wide as he could in the sand. But wide as he spread it, he could not more than half cover the fresh foot-print of a huge lion.

The clamber to the top was steep and hard. Yet it was not nearly so steep and hard as I could have wished it, when I reflected that very likely before midnight a lion might pass that way.

We found that these wonderful columns of granite were coped with great slabs of granite. These granite slabs were of astonishing breadth and thickness. This temple, as it is called, had probably been a tomb. I took good care to see that there was no other means of ascent to the place where we had chosen to spend the night than the one by which we had ascended. And I remember how eagerly I wished for a crowbar in order that I might break down a little of the *débris*, so that the ascent might be less easy for prowling beasts.

But as there was nothing of the sort at hand, I dismissed the two Arabs and resolved to be as brave, if possible, as the

singularly brave and beautiful woman who had come here to hear the voices of desolation.

The sky was rimmed with yellow; yellow to the east, yellow to the west; a world of soft and restful yellow that melted away by gradations as the eye ascended from the desert. It was like melody in its serene harmonies and awful glory.

And she at my side partook of it all; she breathed it, absorbed it, literally became a part of it. I saw her grow and glow. Soul and body I saw her dilate and expand till she was in absolute harmony with the awe and splendor that encompassed us. I felt that she had been in the midst of, even a part of, this tawny desolation ages and ages before. Perhaps her soul had been born here, born before the pyramids.

CHAPTER III

With my own hands I spread her couch of skins and rugs in the remotest corner of a great stone slab that still lifted its unbroken front, in defiance of time, high above the tawny sands of the desert. The night was very sultry, even here on this high and roomy summit. The broad, deep slab of granite was still warm with sunshine gone away, and gave out heat like a dying furnace. The steep and arduous ascent had taxed her strength, and unloosing her robe as I turned to examine more minutely our strange quarters on the top of this lofty tomb, or temple, she sank to rest, half reclining on her arm, her chin in her upturned palm, her face lifted away toward the rising moon.

Half a dozen paces to the right I saw two tall and ponderous columns of granite standing in line with those that supported the great slab on which she rested. Evidently these grand and solitary columns had also once been topped by granite slabs. But these had fallen to the ground under the leveling feet of many centuries, and now lay almost swallowed up in the sea of yellow sands below. I put out my foot carefully, trying to reach the broad top of the nearest column of granite, but it was beyond me. Stepping back a couple of paces and quietly removing my boots, I gathered up my strength and made a leap, landing almost in the center of the column's top. A half step backward, another leap – who could resist the challenge of that lone and kingly column

that remained? I landed securely as before, then turned about. Her face had not lifted an instant from the awful majesty of the Orient.

Slowly, wearily, the immense moon came shouldering up through the seas of yellow sand. These billows of sand seemed to breathe and move. The expiring heat of the departed sun made them scintillate and shimmer in a soft and undulating light. And yet it was not light; only the lone and solemn ghost of a departed day. Yellow and huge and startling stood the moon at last, full grown and fearful in its nearness and immensity on the topmost lift of yellow sands in the yellow seas before us. Distance seemed to be annihilated. The moon seemed to have forgotten her place and all proportion. Looking down into the sullen Nile, it seemed a black and bottomless chasm. And it seemed so far away! And the moon so very near.

Black as blackest Egypt rolled the somber Nile down and on and on through this world of yellow light; this light that was not light. Silence, desolation, death lay on all things below, about, above. The west was molten yellow gold, faint and fading, it is true: but where the yellow sands left off and the yellow skies began no man could say or guess, save by the yellow stars that studded the west with an intense yellow.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.