

Brown County Folks

By Kin Hubbard

Frank McKenney Hubbard

Being a Full Year's Review of the Sayings and
Doings of Abe Martin and His Brown
County, Indiana, Neighbors, Includ-
ing a Stirring Tale by
Miss Fawn Lippincut

Entitled

The Lost Heiress of Red Stone Hall

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR

ABE MARTIN PUBLISHING COMPANY
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One Dollar



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Thanks are due
The Indianapolis News for permission
to republish Abe Martin's sayings
in this volume

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To Richard Smith,
my friend and commander-in-chief,
this book is
affectionately and respectfully dedicated

ABE MARTIN'S

ABE MARTIN



*From a Photograph Taken During the
Reconstruction Period*

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

A feller kind o' feels like givin' up when he sees his grocer pour a quart o' oysters in a pint bucket.



Professor Tansey asked Pinky Kerr what he knowed o' "Th' Road t' Mandelay," an' Pinky said, "Why, have you bought a auto?"



I'm allus glad when "Uncle Tom's Cabin" comes along, fer then a feller knows jist exactly what he's goin' t' see fer his money.



Th' feller that's afraid t' kick on his wife's coffee is up agin it.



Pinky Kerr says he don't think much o' aviation. He used t' travel with a fly by night circus.

ABE MARTIN'S

Who remembers th' ole slang sayin's,
"Whoa, Emma," an' "Git ther', Eli?"



Whatever become o' th' ole fashioned bash-
ful girl?



Ever'buddy stood up at Melodeon Hall last
night when th' orchestra played "My Country
What is it t' You."



While cuttin' a magazine in a hammock yis-
terday Miss Opal Moots severed a artery in
her nose. Her mother, who wuz ironin' in th'
cellar, escaped uninjured.



Th' feller that puts a rubber band around
his pocketbook never pays over a quarter fer a
meal.

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

Don't hate t' part with a dollar. It won't go very far.



It seems like th' more jewelry a feller wears th' bigger graft he's workin'.



A sadder but wiser man is a thousan' times more agreeable t' meet than th' feller that never makes a mistake.



Prof. Alex Tansey addressed th' high school yisterday on th' Higher Drama an' said that ten er twenty cents wuz enough t' pay t' see any show.



Miss Elcine Bud says she allus hates t' git thrown out o' an auto 'cause th' papers spell her name wrong.

A B E M A R T I N ' S

A homely girl allus writes a purty hand.



Folks that go 'way fer th' summer er generally th' ones we kin spare th' easiest.



Th' trouble with aviatin' is that th' more successful you are th' farther you fall.



Tell Binkley says th' saddest words o' tongue er pen er "I have t' buy new tires agin."



One o' th' worst things 'bout our prosperity is that you can't git anybuddy t' work that's loafin'.



It don't seem t' be any trouble fer a vaudeville performer t' come back.

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

A farmer allus holds his se-gar like it wuz a firearm.



Our movin' picture manager has advertised fer a girl that talks thro' her nose t' sing ballads.



A feller is so glad t' save a dollar these days that he don't care whether a bank is safe er not.



O' all th' snips th' feller that tells th' things his wife hears is th' worst.



O' all th' malcontents th' non-producer is th' worst.



It takes an intelligent man t' talk silly around women.

A B E M A R T I N ' S

Fer ever' well-t'-do bachelor ther's forty women tryin' t' associate his early life with some sickly romance.



Ther hain't much difference between bein' in th' hands o' your friends er th' hands of a receiver.



Speakin' o' unselfish devotion, Lafe Bud is teachin' his sister t' swim.



Ez Pash asked Dr. Mopps what wuz th' matter with Tipton Bud, an' he said, "Oh, you wouldn't know if I could pronounce it."



Miss Tawney Apple will return from Tulip, Indiany, t'day, havin' been away from her gold fish over night fer th' first time.

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

Nobuddy ever asks fer a shirt like his mother used t' make.



Th' girl that talks about somethin' besides boys an' clothes is called intellectual.



Somebuddy allus gits th' hot end of a compromise.



Next t' a Shanghai rooster ther hain't nothin' as proud as a little girl with her first parasol.



Th' trouble with a garden is tryin' t' keep your wife from pullin' ever'thing too soon.



Most fellers' idea o' a good dinner allus includes hot biscuits.

ABE MARTIN'S

Speakin' o' mergers, El Jones, th' prosperous hog raiser, has married his butter woman.



Miss Tawney Apple's niece wuz prematurely drowned yisterday while walkin' in a canoe.



If you don't know anything good t' say 'bout a feller make up somethin'.



Th' feller that marries a home never gits thro' payin' fer it.



Hon. Ex-Editor Cale Fluhart says insurgency means "incipient revolt agin' authority" an' not revision downward.



Miss Fawn Lippincut is havin' her ears bulldogged fer a new pair o' garnet earrings.

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS



Ther haint nothin' as hard as a easy payment.

A B E . M A R T I N ' S

Publishin' campaign contributions after th' election is like lockin' th' blacksmith shop after a country bank has been robbed.



Tilford Moots is tryin' t' git a house built accordin' t' specifications an' has called on th' Gov'nor fer troops.



It seems almost impossible fer a literary woman t' do anything with her hair.



Tipton Bud has a new corn shredder. Hands off.



It's goin' to be mighty expensive t' live t' a ripe old age.



A boy's best friend is his mother, but his father buys his clothes.

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

'Pendycitis never killed nobuddy till th' doctors found out what caused it.



If at first you don't succeed don't succumb.



Ther's allus somebuddy at ever' little function that kin say jist what they please an' nothin's thought o' it.



Half th' world don't know how th' other half lives—an' what's worse, it don't care a —.



I'd like t' see a Christmus when everbuddy got what wuz comin' t' 'em.



Th' greatest hustler in th' world is th' feller that's raisin' a dime fer a drink.

A B E M A R T I N ' S

Some folks er allus out at th' right time.



What's become o' th' ole fashioned wife that used t' foller her husband out t' th' sidewalk an' kiss 'm goodby?



Several English sparrows lit on th' blacksmith shop t'day an' give th' locality quite a metropolitan appearance.



Lots o' fellers ask a question jist t' answer it.



Uncle Ez Pash says he's made all he's got an' spent all he's made in th' chicken business.



It seems t' be easy t' teach an ole farmer new tricks.

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

Brooms er so high it hardly pays t' sweep.



Th' limit wuz reached at th' Little Gem Resturint yisterday when a stranger ordered rare liver.



Th' best Saturday bargain is a bath.



It's possible t' look pleasant an' still look sane—but it's very difficult.



Th' papers have talked so blamed much 'bout th' high cost o' livin' that even folks in good circumstances er wonderin' where ther next meal is comin' from.



It will be cheerin' news t' those who er worryin' along on chuck steak t' know that this is t' be th' banner automobile year.

ABE MARTIN'S

Miss Fawn Lippincut appeared b'fore th' Art Embroidery Club t'day an' read a paper on "How t' Hold a Husband's Love Thro' th' Rhubarb Season."



Th' party that hasn't got any chance t' win allus nominates a good ticket.



Th' Ben Davis apple, like other frauds, is a good looker.



Tootin' your own horn won't git you in th' procession.



What would a four flusher do without a frock coat?



Tell Binkley covered his auto number with mud an' went t' Seymour t'day.

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

I wonder where th' ole time fertographer
went when he died?



Political floppers gather no moss.



Some fellers run a tourin' car like they wuz
tryin' t' git away from th' mortgage.



Tipton Bud has sold his shotgun an' 'll quit
tryin' t' raise chickens.



An auto never returns without a driver.



Niles Turner says that while livin' is th'
highest he's ever knowed, he'd hate t' go back
t' th' ole days when we used paper string an'
had t' wait till th' middle o' August fer a to-
mater.

A B E M A R T I N ' S

If ther's anything in a feller a small assessment will bring it out.



Too many folks go thro' life jist readin' th' head lines.



One good thing 'bout bein' a man is that you kin git by with any kind of a hat on.



Ther haint no advantage in country butter unless you know who churns it.



Mrs. Tilford Moots bought a beautiful twelve-payment rug this mornin'.



Who remembers th' ole time nosegay—a geranium leaf, a fuchsia an' some tin foil?

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS



One o' th' things a college boy never fails
t' learn is how little his father knows.

ABE MARTIN'S

It's no trouble t' win in th' end.



Even folks that know it all often consult a lawyer.



I'd like t' see another good ole-time county fair with high wheel sulkies an' a fat woman smokin' a clay pipe in th' north end o' th' art hall.



It used t' be two could live cheaper'n one, but now it don't make any difference.



I'd hate t' live in a city when they commence t' parole them storage eggs at Omaha.



Th' only time any heart interest ever gits mixed up with a potato masher is at a kitchen shower.

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

In openin' th' campaign here this afternoon Hon. ex-Editur Cale Fluhart vigorously defended th' Aldrich bill an' said th' American people did not begin t' eat enough carrots.



It don't look like we'd ever have t' double track th' straight an' narrow path.



It's nice t' go t' th' the-ater once in a while jist t' see th' folks that owe you.



Buttermilk is a good drink, an' what's best o' all, ther haint a pang o' regret in a barrel.



Lafe Bud has lost his job at th' meat shop 'cause his thumb was too light.



Nobuddy but a lawyer ever waits fer both sides o' a story.

A B E M A R T I N ' S

When it leaked out to'day that Lafe Bud an' his wife were not altogether happy an extra session o' th' Art Embroidery Club wuz called.



Miss Fawn Lippincut put on her hobble skirt this afternoon an' started fer th' the-ater at 6 o'clock.



We're allus disappointed when we see th' grown-up son of an ole friend.



Nobuddy ever got rich that mixed a checker board up in his business.



A feller haint ole as long as he kin balance peas on a knife.



President Taft's motto seems t' be a "square meal."

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

Th' feller that hugs his wife in company often kicks her at home.



Speakin' o' opportunity, Hon. ex-Editor Cale Fluhart says that years ago he wuz offered a job o' runnin' a threshin' machine, but somehow he drifted in t' journalism, where he frittered away th' best years o' his life.



With all th' newspapers filled with beauty hints it's funny we don't see more beauties.



Th' author o' "Home, Sweet Home" never had a home an' th' feller that makes all th' money on eggs never owned a hen.



Our humane society has asked Constable Plum t' prohibit th' movin' pictures o' Roosevelt in South Africa.

A B E M A R T I N ' S

St. Helena

In his address before the Colonial Whist Club last evening at the home of Miss Fawn Lippincut, Professor Alex Tansey talked most entertainingly of the little Napoleon. In referring to the Island of St. Helena he said:

"Instead of this historic speck being the desolate rock that it is popularly supposed to be, the Island of St. Helena is the most

beautiful spot imaginable, rank with tropical greenery and superbly wooded. Besides the climate, which is the most healthy in the world, the island supports a nine-hole golf



Prof. Tansey

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS



The Popular Idea of St. Helena

A B E M A R T I N ' S

course. The river Sane winds its way to the sea through a beautiful peaceful valley. In this valley Napoleon spent much of his time, and those who picture him standing on a barren, volcanic rock looking for a sail would be surprised if they could see how charming that favorite spot is. There once stood the old house of Count Bertrand, through whose shutters Napoleon loved to watch the British troops drill on Deadwood plain. Napoleon did not like the idea of being seen, so in the shutters he had two holes made—one on a level with his eye when standing and the other when seated.”

Continuing, the Professor said:

“Bertrand’s house with its little front room has long since disappeared, but the holes are still there.”

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

Things you order by telephone seem t' weigh less.



No matter how mad a office holder gits he never quits.



Speakin' o' sand papered spareribs, you might jist as well buy a xylophone fer dinner.



Ever notice what pretty women th' girls have grown t' be that you used t' snub at school?



Folks that unwrap caramels durin' a play should be made t' spend one whole Sunday in Urbana, Ohio.



Who remembers th' ole fashioned butcher that used t' give away th' liver?

A B E M A R T I N ' S

Dr. Mop says he allus hates t' see th' cool fall days come 'cause his wife builds a fire in th' settin' room stove an' burns all th' money he's saved durin' th' summer.



Lafe Bud never gits through tellin' 'bout gittin' kicked out o' a hut-tel at New Paris, Ohio, fer usin' a orange spoon on St. Patrick's day.



After causin' a lot o' inconvenience an' extra work Mrs. Tipton Bud's niece has returned t' her home at Lilac, Indianny, after a most delightful visit.



Tell Binkley has a new auto suit—fer th' spring term.



Ther wuz a ole fashioned one-ring weddin' at th' Tilford Moots home t'day.

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

Some folks git credit fer havin' hoss sense that haint ever had money enough t' make fools o' 'emselves.



It's better t' hand it t' others than it is t' receive.



Th' school o' experience has no holidays.



One o' our prominent society women has been doin' her own work fer three days without anybuddy knowin' th' difference.



Miss Fawn Lippincut has written a new polar song called "Beautiful Moonlight Days."



Hon. ex-Editur Cale Fluhart, who is well educated in th' higher branches, is trimmin' th' trees around th' court house.

A B E M A R T I N ' S

What's become o' th' couple that used t' live happily ever afterwards?



A feller should never marry a girl till they've tried t' pick out a rug t'gether.



Th' trusts know we all want t' live, no matter how much it costs.



Ther's lots o' honest people who never had a good chance t' be anything else.



Th' worst sensation I know of is gittin' up in th' night an' steppin' on a toy train o' cars.



I guess "Th' Music Master" is a purty pathetic play, as Lafe Bud cried when he paid fer his ticket.

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

Uncle Ez Pash has a son that's holdin' out
at th' People's Bank.



Pinky Kerr ordered a head an' tail parsnip
at th' Little Gem resturint yisterday.



Tilford Moots has returned Tipton Bud's
plow an' borrowed his bobsleds.



Th' more cultured th' audience th' less you
see o' the first act.



It's almost impossible fer a total stranger t'
git a drink in a dry town.



Aunty Pash, though very frail, still retains
her faculties t' a remarkable degree an' talks
most interestin'ly o' th' old yellor clarinet.

A B E M A R T I N ' S

Folks that er married fer ther money never seem t' tumble.



Ever'buddy's figurin' on th' time when they won't have t' work.



Lafe Bud says he'd love t' live in a city an' be able t' keep a Prince Albert coat.



George Washin'ton never told a lie an' he wuz also a poor business man.



Some feller stole a load o' peaches here Saturday night an' Constable Newt Plum has jist returned after a fruitless search.



Nothin' upsets a woman as much as th' marriage o' somebuddy she didn' even know wuz engaged.

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

All signs fail when you pick out a cante-loupe.



What comes easy goes easy—unless it's relatives.



A big tombstone don't mean nothin' but money.



Speakin' o' th' wave o' extravagance, lots o' workin' men now eat hominy at every meal that used t' be satisfied with th' cheaper cuts o' beef.



Next t' a Californy railroad folder th' most allurin' thing is a poultry catalog.



I guess th' hardest thing in th' world t' do is think o' a name when you git caught in a raid.

A B E M A R T I N ' S

While crossin' th' street this mornin' in a hobble skirt Miss Fawn Lippincut wuz run down by a dray.



Our commercial club has advertised fer a brick lăyer that kin play a clarinet an' make a municipal gas plant pay.



Tipton Bud's nephew has finished his graduation essay, "Life's Feverish Battle Now Begun," but he won't go t' work at th' sawmill till after th' comet.



Th' fifteen hoboes that have been entertained here by our commercial club durin' th' census takin' were driven out o' town t'day.



Who remembers th' ole fashioned mother that used t' make her children gargle soap suds ever' time they said a bad word?

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

Tilford Moots is havin' his kitchen made smaller so his wife won't lose any time.



After all th' care an' worry a mother goes thro' th' first thing a baby says is "papa."



Lafe Bud, who wuz married in October, has accepted a job that'll keep him away from home as much as possible.



Misery attracts a dog an' little children warm up t' a bachelor.



Mrs. Tipton Bud has a nephew that's a aviator an' she says it's all he kin do t' keep up.



Th' only time some fellers ever mention ther wives is when they tell how they cook somethin'.

ABE MARTIN'S

A broken umbrella allus has a purty handle.



You can't live in town an' raise chickens with impunity.



Th' meetin' called t' consider th' resignation o' Rev. Wiley Tanger broke up in a fight over th' length o' Jack Johnson's arm.



Rev. Wiley Tanger talks some o' droppin' out o' th' ministry, as his wife don't care fer croquet.



Ignorance gives a feller away quicker'n a celluloid collar.



Miss Germ Williams says she made a vinegar pie th' first time she tried without th' struggles an' hardships that er so often th' share o' th' world's celebrities.

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

It seems like jist as soon as a feller gits prominent and well-t'-do some relative allus dies in th' poor house.



Rev. Wiley Tanger says that while he wuz bitterly opposed t' th' Reno fight he's glad a R'publican won.



Aurelius Bud, whose graduation essay, "Th' Young Man's Opportunity in America," caused so much favorable comment, is takin' tickets at th' nickel the-ater.



Tell Binkley run over a little child with his auto this mornin', but as he hates notoriety he didn' stop.



Tipton Bud's brother, who went West t' investigate a minin' proposition, has returned thoroughly recovered.

A B E M A R T I N ' S

What's become o' th' little boy that used t' roll a hoop instead o' a cigaret?



High as things are you kin still git too many beets fer a nickel.



Mrs. Celia Jones, who wuz one o' our most promisin' June brides, is at home on parole.



A piano tuner is puttin' a new wire fence around th' court house.



Th' Colonial Whist Club meets at Miss Tawney Apple's t'day t' decide on a waist line fer th' comin' season.



Rural delivery has put a crimp in th' farmer that used t' drive t' town twice a day t' git a weekly newspaper.

BROWN COUNTY FOLKS

Miss Germ Williams had her skull terrapined this mornin'.



Why is it you allus have t' drag people t' an intellectual treat?



It's been many a day since anybuddy named a child Matilda.



Grantin' that beans er both cheap and nutritious, we are still up agin th' piece o' thirty-five-cent bacon that goes with 'em.



Ther's lots o' new auto models, but th' ole mortgage form remains unchanged.



Young Lafe Bud has been offered a job o' bookkeepin' up t' Indynoplus, but he don't like coffee an' doughnuts.

ABE MARTIN'S

Politics is jist one rotten se-gar after another.



Ever notice how long a girl with a gold tooth laughs at nothin'?



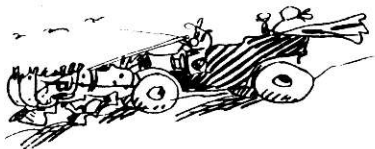
Of all th' end seat hogs th' one with a corn is th' worst.



Miss Tawney Apple's aunt dropped dead this mornin' while her husband wuz drinkin' coffee out o' a saucer.



Fawn Lippincut says a 8-mile pie is one you make without a kitchen cabinet.



THE LOST HEIRESS of RED STONE HALL

A Story of Woman's Love and Man's Perfidy



BY MISS FAWN LIPPINCUT

NOTE.—The cigarettes used in almost every chapter of this story are the celebrated Pride of the Harem brand, while the chestnut mare mentioned at various times early in the narrative was kindly loaned by the O. K. livery barn.

To the Reader

Gentle Reader—In relating the life story of Marion Ellsworth I have struggled hard to avoid those commonplace conventionalities that go to make the modern novel so tiresome.



*Miss Fawn
Lippincut*

It has been my purpose always to take the most direct route, regardless of tunnels, and bring the reader as quickly as possible, without change, to the climax of each event as they follow one another in rapid succession. Unavoidably, you will have a few hills to climb, but, I am pleased to say, no long, tiresome journeys to and fro across the continent, as I have dexterously kept the theater of my simple narra-

THE LOST HEIRESS

tive entirely within a mile square. At the beginning of each chapter it has been rather necessary to add a little dash of scenery—just enough to serve as a background for the different settings as the story unwinds itself.

If, as I so fondly hope, this tale shall be the means of saving only one young girl from the snares and pitfalls that even lurk in the most out-of-the-way country nooks—of teaching her that all is not gold that glitters and that many a black and treacherous heart beats beneath a frock coat—I shall feel amply repaid for my efforts, even tho' I am left with the whole edition on my hands.—*Miss Fawn Lippincut.*

OF RED STONE HALL

CHAPTER I

Behind the Honeysuckle Vines

It was the month of primroses. A warm spring rain had fallen throughout the day and the evening air was heavy with the perfume of bursting buds.

Situated in a natural amphitheater, the little county-seat town of X was completely hedged in by almost insurmountable wooded hills whose jagged crests were sharply silhouetted against the leaden sky. The stores and bazars of curious architecture that flanked the old, tumble-down court house on every side were dark and silent. A horse hitched to a narrow buggy* pawed restlessly under the flickering light of a soft drink pool room and nickered loudly as a few belated rounders emerged with boisterous laughter.

Far to the east, nestled among the foliage

*Buggy. A vehicle.

THE LOST HEIRESS

on the hillside, stood a sanatorium, and the rattle of crutches on the hard floor of the low, spacious veranda that fronted it could be distinctly heard across the wide expanse of pasture land. All was life and bustle about the green roofed structure, and cries of both torture and merriment filled the night air, while the wheezy notes of a leaky accordeon added to the weirdness of the scene. It was a motley crowd that filled the brilliantly lighted porch. The fame of the crystal springs that bubbled near at hand had spread to many lands, and the great hotel had become a shrine for the lame and halt of every tongue, and the babel was deafening.

In a secluded nook completely hidden by a particularly early variety of sweet climbing honeysuckle sat two men who conversed in tones scarcely audible. One was a stocky, well dressed man who had probably lived beyond the scriptural allotment of years and

OF RED STONE HALL

whose white beard was neatly cropped. He had the manner and bearing of a well-to-do cattle raiser or an expert judge of hogs. His companion was a handsome, willowy chap of splendid proportions and bore all the evidences of a man of the world; a drooping, raven black mustache of no great length served its purpose by concealing a hard and cruel mouth, while his nervous glances and highly polished manner at once proclaimed him to be a bigamist or a promoter. After listening for quite a while to the low murmurings of his aged companion he hurriedly arose and grasping his cane tightly he pushed the vines aside and scampered down the steep rustic stairway that led to the beautifully parked grounds below. Once reaching the bottom he turned to look back, and as he did so he hissed between his even pearly teeth, "Fool, we shall see!" and was soon lost among the olives. His rotund companion sat for some moments and

THE LOST HEIRESS

then slowly arose and tearing an advertising page from a popular magazine he carefully wrapped it about the butt of a soggy, thick five-cent cigar which he placed snugly away in a pocket of his corduroy waistcoat. Winding his way among the tables and chairs and now and then stumbling over a crutch he finally reached the office, where he left a call for five o'clock, as he filled a small granite pitcher with sulphur water and ascended the stairs to his room.

CHAPTER II

The Mystery of Tharp's Corner

It was still the month of primroses. After a warm rain that had fallen throughout the preceding day the morning dawned on a refreshed landscape. The varying shades of sun-kissed greenery were most entrancing; across the billowy grassland the sweet notes of the

OF RED STONE HALL

red-winged blackbird charmed the ear, while far beyond the valley the dark woodland was relieved here and there by bright patches of red bud. Occasionally the bob white's soft call was wafted along on the dewy breath of morn and all nature seemed to rejoice.

Slowly down the winding yellow road came a light-hearted farmer perched high on his rumbling wagon. His lines hung carelessly while his faithful team picked its way in a lazy fashion. The deep wrinkles in his long copper-colored neck were filled with clay and his brawny hands were gnarled and knotty after a hard season of toil. His left cheek was bulging with an overgenerous quid of "old Lincoln green," and a smile of perfect contentment scattered itself over his well weathered face as he amused himself by spitting with unerring aim at the nodding dandelions that peeped from the grass that fringed the roadway.

THE LOST HEIRESS

As he approached a sharp turn known as Tharp's Corner and half concealed by the low hanging boughs of a great willow his team stopped with a suddenness that almost threw him from his seat. Recovering his equilibrium and looking ahead the prostrate form of a man lying face downward in the highway met his astonished gaze. Hurriedly jumping to the ground he made a hasty examination. A crimson stream had trickled from a wound on the stranger's head and wended its way in a wagon track for some distance down the hill, and the man was apparently dead. Returning to his wagon he unhitched the traces of his fleetest horse and galloped at high speed to the village of Z, where he told of his grewsome find.

Soon the road leading to the scene of the awful discovery was black with humanity, while plows stood idle in the fields and homes and shops were deserted.

OF RED STONE HALL

Constable Plum was the first to reach the lifeless form, and with his heavy cane held the fast assembling peasants at bay till Dr. Mopps, the aged coroner, should arrive.

After some hours the frail and bent doctor drew up in his gig. Alighting with much effort, the nonagenarian handed his high, primitive plug hat into the keeping of a morbid onlooker. Quietly rolling back his sleeves and displaying his thin, pale wrists he carefully tucked his long, white whiskers into the bosom of his tightly buttoned and glossy Prince Albert; then, adjusting his spectacles, he slowly kneeled over the dead body with all the nervous effort of a trained horse and fumbled about for the heart.

Life was extinct, and the most careful search failed to reveal the slightest evidence whereby the dead stranger might be identified. Even the trademark on his rich and well made clothing had disappeared, as had also the laun-

THE LOST HEIRESS

dry mark on his polka dot shirt; only a toothbrush was found, and as the prehistoric coroner held it triumphantly in his trembling hand high above his pink bald head he exclaimed in a weak, piping voice,

“Evidently a man of culture.”

That one so well dressed and groomed should be found dead and penniless left no doubt in the minds of the now infuriated villagers that a murder for gain had been committed, and loud cries for vengeance echoed and re-echoed through the wild hills.

The fragile coroner arose and pleaded for cooler heads. After the hisses died away he mounted a stump and addressed the frenzied mob, saying:

“Neighbors and friends, the fact that this poor dead stranger is found well dressed and without money must not be interpreted to mean that he has been slain and robbed, as such a condition is not an unusual one. There

OF RED STONE HALL

can be no doubt that the gaping wound at the base of his skull readily argues that he walked away from death instead of into it. Yet there is no legal proof that he did either or both, or any reason to suppose that he might if he had."

The venerable homeopath then gave it as his opinion that the stranger had suicided, and, taking up the large pearl-handled revolver of the latest pattern that had been found near the scene, he attempted to demonstrate* to the now quieted multitude how easily one might shoot himself with his left hand from the rear. In doing so he blew off his right ear and killed a fat steer in a field hard by.

This fresh sensation caused great tumult, and it was some time before the excitement died down and the crowd dispersed, much chagrined at the verdict.

*Demonstrate. (French) demonstrer. To point out, to show.

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Constable Plum was the last one to leave the scene, and as he walked reluctantly from the blood-stained spot his eagle eye was attracted to a bright, shining object lying just beneath a clump of sassafras. Picking it up it proved to be a small silver fleur de lis of peculiar design that had undoubtedly ornamented a purse or pocket case. He carefully placed it in his wallet and proceeded on his way to the village.

In due time the dead stranger was given a decent burial in the little churchyard, and the mystery of Tharp's Corner passed out of mind while the chipmunks burrowed in his silent mound.

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CHAPTER III

Red Stone Hall

Since early in the eighteenth century Red Stone Hall had been the home of the Ellsworths. The original estate had embraced many thousands of acres, but as it passed from one shiftless generation to another its fertile fields and grand old forest lands had been seized for debt until now the last remaining heir could only boast of the great, steep, barren knoll upon which reposed the ancient and venerable mass of stone and mortar that sheltered her and her feeble uncle.

In the past the old turreted mansion had been the scene of riotous revelry, for the early Ellsworths were lavish entertainers, and their famous hospitality had attracted distinguished men and women from far and near to the romantic spot. The later heirs, too, were built much along the same lines, but their intentions were seriously crippled by a dwindling

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exchequer, and their efforts at sociability were sometimes pitiful to behold.

Simon Ellsworth, the last male heir, inherited not only the combined shiftlessness of those who had passed before him, but also their passion for the cup and love for the chase. When not sitting by a sticky table in the tap room of the tavern or chasing a fox he was polishing ramrods or carving a powder horn. When flushed with ale he loved to gather his cronies about him and tell them over and over again the story of the French soldiers who had visited Red Stone Hall years before and begged to be permitted to bury a chest of rich treasure far beneath the cellar floor, how his grandfather had consented and how it had remained untouched ever afterward.

Many wondered why he did not dig it up and get a hair cut and a suit of clothes, but Simon Ellsworth was a hotheaded man and no

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one had ventured to take the matter up with him. His wife, to whom he was tenderly attached, faded and died when their only child,



The Tale of the Hidden Treasure

a daughter, was but a babe, and Simon Ellsworth, whose great grief had destroyed his mind, wandered away to parts unknown.

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Marion Ellsworth was now a beautiful gazelle-eyed girl of eighteen who lived solely upon a small annuity settled upon her by the good aunt who had tenderly cared for her up to the time of her death some months before.

Marion had inherited, along with the vine-covered bat's nest and the proud spirit of the Ellsworths, the sweet, confiding nature of her mother, and went about her daily tasks with a light heart and an arched expression. Her only suitor was Steve Warren, a husky young farmer. While his collar never seemed to come together right and his hair was cut with clippers, Marion looked upon him fondly, and the knowing ones pointed him out as the coming master of Red Stone Hall.

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CHAPTER IV

The Unflagging Constable

It is now yellow October, no longer divided from summer by the plummy sheaf and lingering flowers.

There is a rich hectic flush on the woodland and every wind that blows pales the crimson hue or scatters its beauty on the empty air, for everywhere around us leaves are falling. In the orchard a few apples hang and the elders still nod under the weight of purple berries. As evening approaches the landscape seems to assume a sober hue and the call of the cow falls on the ear with a sad sound and produces a low feeling which we are seldom sensible of at the change of any other season of the year. Everything is decaying to produce the life and beauty of a coming spring.

It is now almost six months since the mysterious murder near Tharp's Corner startled the little community, and still not the faintest semblance of a clew presented itself.

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Poor old Constable Plum is now but a wavering shadow of his former self. Ever since the bright spring morning when he walked slowly away from the blood-stained highway he has known no rest, and during the long, dreary interval he has made many fruitless pilgrimages to where nobody knows, returning each time with a few new lines of despair and several pounds lighter. His whole heart and soul are wrapped up in the solving of the crime. Visiting strangers are watched closely and often detained and carefully questioned. Indeed not a few embarrassments are the result of the unflagging zealousness of the tireless constable. As time goes on and the mystery deepens the aged sleuth rattles like a dried pod as he glides softly in and out of the alleys, and many and ludicrous are the disguises he assumes as he sits in the tavern office and eyes the guests as they arrive and depart, often changing his whiskers in their very presence with a deftness that defies detection.

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CHAPTER V

Gerald Leigh Appears

It was a fine morning in October and the brilliant foliage of the hills was fast thinning



*A Consummate
Scamp*

out. The meadows were still green in spots and the shocked corn on the faraway slopes looked for all the world like some vast tented army. The year's crops had for the most part been garnered, and the joyous farmers stood in clumps about the tiny trading places and talked of the bountiful yield.

As the old yellow bus, piled high with trunks and bags, rolled up and halted in front

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of the Valley House a solitary* passenger alighted, and pushing his way through the crowd of curious villagers he entered the hostelry and approached the desk, where he hurriedly grasped a pen and dashed across the register with a firm but graceful hand the name, "Gerald Leigh, New York." After giving some instructions as to the disposal of his luggage he asked to be shown the best room the modest inn afforded, as he wished to retire after his long, tiresome journey.

Gerald Leigh was the only son of erstwhile wealthy and aristocratic parents. He had been given all the advantages that money could command—educated in the schools and colleges of European capitals, and pampered and petted at home. His splendid educational attainments together with his handsome appearance and natural grace of manner well equipped him for a first-class lady killer. His

*Solitary. Just one.

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father's sudden reverses, which were brought about by his own mad speculations, were a great shock to him and brought him face to face with a situation that at once called for some tall humping. Cursing his father roundly he left his mortgaged roof vowing that the world should pay for his predicament—and pay well—and he launched forth on a career of loot and crime.

Never before had anyone appeared in the village that seemed so distinctly and thoroughly out of drawing with its environments as dashing Gerald Leigh. At first there was a flutter and then a general shrinking from his very presence. However, it was short lived, for this affable scoundrel by his masterly style of pitching soon won favor and fairly slipped into the confidence and good graces of all—high and low. Even Constable Newt Plum fell an easy victim under the charm of this

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genial, captivating villain, beneath whose glossy veneer there lurked a murderous heart.

Gerald Leigh soon became a familiar figure as he rode about the village or along the country lanes on his spirited chestnut mare with all the ease and manner of a prince. He knew every crook and crevice of Red Stone Hall, of the rich treasure that lay hidden beneath the old ruin and of the valuable ore deposits that honeycombed the somber clay knoll from which it reared its crumbling chimney pots. He, too, had seen Marion Ellsworth, the proud rustic beauty and only heir to the tumble-down, debt-burdened estate, which he intended to have as his own, come what might.

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CHAPTER VI

The First Meeting

Autumn still has one out-of-door scene both interesting and beautiful and pleasant to walk through, and that is the pumpkin harvest, the last ingathering of the year that finds employment for the cheery farmer folk; nor is there many prettier American pictures to be seen than a well-managed pumpkin plantation. The drowsy odor of the pumpkin,* so different from that of new mown hay and the hawthorn bud, is very soothing. What a splendid motion there is to the golden-colored fruit as it rolls away from some careless farmer lad and plunges down the steep brown hill, scattering the cornstalks pell-mell that stand like sentinels in its path until it reaches its goal in some sylvan retreat near the rail fence.

Pumpkin. A deciduous, trailing plant and its fruit.

*Deciduous. Falling off; applied to leaves that fall.

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Merry people, too, are the pumpkin pickers, whether at their work or going or coming from the fields.

It was on a bright morning in October, just cool enough to be bracing and to bring the rose bloom to the cheek, that lovely Marion Ellsworth skipped with a light heart on her way to the stile to meet Steve Warren. Her lithe, girlish form, clad in pink chambray, swayed to and fro as she fairly danced through the tall, wet grass, stopping now and then to pluck some dainty flower that had escaped the blighting hand of the early frost. Her wealth of golden hair hung in a fluffy mass from her well-poised head and her red lips smiled as she approached the trysting place near the wild, long-neglected orchard.

As she freed herself from a great tangle of wild grape vines that impeded her progress she stood face to face with Gerald Leigh. She drew back with a startled, half pleased

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look, and in another instant made bold to dash by him, when his strong arm held her a willing captive. "Ah, fairest flower, don't be startled," said he as he raised his English riding hat and displayed his perfect brow and raven hair. "I have quite lost my way to the village," he continued as he stooped to look into her downcast face.

After releasing her well-rounded arm he followed Marion to a small eminence from which they could see the moss-covered roof of the town hall.

"There, sir, is the village," she said falteringly as she tried to hide the crimson flush that had rushed to her face. Thanking her as he twirled his crop carelessly, Gerald Leigh replaced his hat and retraced his steps to his restless chestnut mount and was soon dashing down the hill to the road.

Trembling with emotion as her pretty bosom rose and fell, poor Marion stood be-

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Marion Stood Bewildered

wildered. Never before had she met anyone so grand. All nature seemed to change about

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her. The meadow larks, now clustered in great bevvies preparatory to their annual flight to the Southland, seemed to dispense with all business and fairly burst their little throats in joyous song. Reeling with ecstasy Marion Ellsworth somehow managed to reach the well-worn seat where her strong, florid lover awaited her—but it was a changed Marion that Steve Warren opened his bronzed arms to welcome.

CHAPTER VII

Gerald Leigh Writes a Note

Partly on account of the beauty of the day and partly because he wished to meditate, Gerald Leigh had sought the quiet solitude of the country lanes after his meeting with Marion Ellsworth. While he loved the freedom of country life, the profession of agri-

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culture had always been a huge joke with him. On either side of the miserable road along which he now rode were many perpendicular farms, and he fairly shook with laughter as he watched the interesting spectacle of the honest husbandmen working in their fields from swinging scaffolds. Of course, too, an occasional threshing machine or cultivator standing and rotting in the open added to the merriment that now completely held him.

Stroking the glossy mane of his lively mare he laughed aloud as he said, "How could the great factories thrive if farmers allowed such trivial matters to interfere with their happy existence?"

Then, scowling, his thoughts reverted to the simple beauty he had met in the weeds earlier in the day.

Gerald Leigh had known many handsome women in his day and had survived many affairs of the heart. The one thing in connec-

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tion with Marion Ellsworth, and the only thing that interested the oily rogue, was her inheritance. Aside from that he reasoned that she had nothing new to offer. He meant to win her confidence and wrest from her the riches that lay buried beneath the bleak, un-gainly fortress that sheltered her—the fabulous fortune of which she knew nothing.

Returning to his hotel Gerald Leigh quietly repaired to his chamber, where he stood for some moments by the window admiring the beauties of the quiet autumn evening. Beneath him were the well kept dooryards of the little cottages wherein thrifty housewives were singing as they prepared the simple evening meal, while their sturdy children romped on the village green.

Wheeling suddenly about Gerald lit an Egyptian cigarette and then seated himself by the table* and dashed off a cunning note to

*Table. Relating to or resembling a table.

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Marion Ellsworth, which he read over slowly to satisfy himself that it was up to his usual high standard, as he prided himself on his mastery of English and spirit of expression. "She'll be there," he hissed to himself as he arose to dress for his customary stroll about town. Selecting a brand new walking suit and a fresh pair of green gloves he soon emerged from the hotel and walked toward the postoffice dressed in the height of good taste and leaving a trail of vile-smelling cigarette smoke in his wake.

Gifted with the unusual ability to adjust himself to any strata of society, Gerald Leigh had grown to be a wonderful favorite throughout the hamlet. With Constable Plum he was the thickest of chums, and they were often seen together discussing this and that phase of modern crime—its alarming growth and how it would eventually destroy our whole social fabric. Often, too, in following

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some new lead that gave promise to the unraveling of the mystery of Tharp's Corner, Gerald had tendered the constable the use of his high-spirited chestnut hunter—an offer, by the way, the foxy old sleuth always politely declined.

CHAPTER VIII

Easy Prey

It was one of the few remaining mornings of golden October and Marion Ellsworth sat upon an upturned milk pail* beneath a red haw tree, from one of the lower branches of which a rusty scythe swung in the breezes and made her position at once perilous. She was drying her hair in the sun, and her purple kimona hung loosely from her shoulders, exposing her perfect neck. She had quarreled with

*Pail. An open vessel of wood or tin.

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Steve Warren on the day previous and she was peevish and fretful. It had been her first break with the rugged young field hand and she half regretted her harsh words.

Marion was quite another being since her meeting with the handsome, dark-eyed stranger, and her head was fairly filled with thoughts she hardly dared to own. Visions of a gay social life, fine clothes—a life of love and happiness—passed quickly before her as the rays of the autumnal sun danced on her great mass of soggy hair. She wondered who the gallant horseman was and if he might still be in the village.

Rushing by her childish old uncle, who sat in the kitchen doorway plaiting a chain of fall asters, she was soon in her room. Arranging her fluffy hair in a becoming fashion she quickly jumped into her most fetching frock and was soon skipping across the fields to the village. Stopping at the postoffice she was

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handed Gerald's note. Her great eyes opened wide as she studied the beautiful handwriting on the envelope, and stuffing it securely in her corsage she exchanged a few simple pleasantries with the freckle-faced clerk and departed for home.

Singing merrily along the unfrequented path she mused all the while over her mysterious letter, looking up now and then to see if anybody was approaching on horseback. Suddenly she stopped and drew back as if to avoid a vicious blow.

"What if it could be from Steve!" she said to herself as a cloud fell across her countenance. "Maybe he got the hotel clerk to back it," she cried aloud as her eyes grew moist with tears. As she continued on her way she finally concluded that Steve Warren was not apt enough for such a trick, and she broke into a low, musical laugh as she stooped to pick up a fall mushroom.

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Once in her old-fashioned chamber with its high ceiling and massive carved woodwork she drew her favorite rocker to the latticed window and slowly withdrew the lavender scented note from her bodice and timidly broke the seal. In an instant a low, muffled shriek followed and poor Marion fell back limp and lifeless among the cushions of her antique chair. Presently her eyes opened and a faint smile played about her pale lips as she arose and half reeled to a little mirror framed with varnished pine cones, where she surveyed herself long and critically.

"Am I indeed so beautiful?" she said aloud as she noted every line of her oval face, which had now quite recovered its usual radiant glow. Slowly turning about she threw herself on her high quilted couch and said, half sobbing and half laughing, "Yes, I will meet him."

As this resolution died on her lips Marion

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Ellsworth sank into a peaceful slumber and dreamed of the dashing deceiver that had now entered her life.

CHAPTER IX

Under the Sycamore

It was dusk and the blue October haze was fast deepening into an inky darkness. The distant tinkle of a cow bell far across the wild marsh or the rustle of some feathered songster among the dry leaves on the boughs high above was all that marred the quiet stillness, while the great golden moon was just peeping from behind the left wing of Red Stone Hall.

Gerald Leigh was taking his leisure as he rode through the shadows of the lonely road on his proud, high-headed steed. Holding his

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cigarette between his tapering gloved fingers he half smiled as the blue smoke rings arose from his hard mouth and scattered themselves on the evening air like long imprisoned birds set free. He had slackened his pace to give the moon a chance, for he well knew that his finely chiseled features appeared to best advantage in the soft white light of pale Luna. Indeed there were few effects that Gerald Leigh had not studied, for he was a born artist as well as a finished scoundrel.

Marion Ellsworth at this moment was fretting and fuming before her mirror. With the last dash of violet talcum she sank into her chair for a breathing spell.

How glowingly beautiful she looked in her simple gown as the color played about her perfect temples. As she arose her full lips wore a smile of disdain as she placed a cheap gold ring with a purple set, that Steve Warren had given her, upon her tall cherry bureau. Stand-

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ing for a few moments as if seized by indecision she silently left her chamber and quietly closed the door and noiselessly stole out of the cold, gray mansion and through the orchard and across the field to the giant sycamore that stood by the entrance to the estate near the main road. Here in the gloomy shadows she patiently stood and listened until the iron-shod hoofs of a horse were heard on the hard, dry road leading over the brow of the hill but a short distance in the offing.*

"It must be he," she falteringly said half aloud as she sidestepped an owl that swished by her.

Presently Gerald Leigh dashed up and, with a deep breath of satisfaction, drew rein and dismounted. Rushing to Marion's side he threw his arms about her trembling form and said:

*Offing. Some distance away.

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"My angel, how I have longed for this hour."

Marion managed to squeeze out of the fervent embrace of the gallant home-wrecker, but not until she felt his hot cigarette breath on her neck.

They strolled up and down a lonely shaded path until far into the night, Gerald talking tenderly all the while of the beauty of the autumn night, of love and the kind Providence that had thrown them together. Poor Marion, she was quite captivated by his rich, deep, mellow voice and gentleness, and eagerly drank in every word that Gerald uttered, occasionally venturing some trifling remark in her prettiest manner.

It was a highly successful first meeting taken from any angle, and when Marion reached her room she was all in a pretty flutter. She sat down by her window and it was

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fast turning day when she was awakened by the clarion notes of the old family rooster.

Gerald Leigh rode slowly back to the village. As he passed through the tangle of underbrush into the open the moon's rays lit up his romantic face and showed a smile of fiendish satisfaction.

It was a great night's work for Gerald Leigh, great as had been others in his wild life. He had learned many new things about Red Stone Hall and, best of all, he had won the love and confidence of the girl that stood between him and the coveted prize.

"The little fool," he hissed as he lit a fresh cigarette and gave rein to his charger.

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CHAPTER X

Laying the Lines

It was a dismal, rainy November day—and a day, too, well suited to the dark, ugly thoughts that filled the mind of Gerald Leigh as he sat in his room clothed in a rich crimson bath robe smoking innumerable cigarettes. As the rain beat furiously against his window he arose and watched the drenched and downcast fowls as they skulked about the barn yard below and sought shelter beneath the narrow eaves of a low shed that stood therein. Gerald Leigh had been much in the society of Marion Ellsworth since their memorable meeting in the moonlight beneath the giant sycamore that guarded the entrance leading to Red Stone Hall, and so sure was he of the love of the simple, willowy heiress that his plans had long been made for a cruise of the Mediterranean, a trip he had always wished to take.

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His ingenuity was now taxed to its utmost with the details that had to do with his coming marriage to Marion, which they both had agreed should occur on Christmas eve.

It was Gerald Leigh's one desire that this newest splotch* on his long list of criminal offenses should be the boldest and blackest of all, and he was proceeding with great care.

Many schemes to gain possession of Red Stone Hall without taking over its fair occupant in the bargain had evolved themselves, and, clever as they might appear to the eyes of a novice, the shrewd criminal alertness of Gerald Leigh had at once detected the bungling features whereby the finger of suspicion might easily point to himself and thereby lose to him the prize that was now so easily within his grasp.

"It is an ideal day to plan a crime, old chap," said he, addressing himself to his ciga-

*Splotch. Not given.

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rette, and he walked to a cut glass decanter and refreshed himself with a dash of rare old brandy. Pacing the room like a fellow waiting for a long distance call, his brain was soon aflame with the powerful liquor and he was becoming saturated with inspiration.

"Ah, I have it," he said, bursting into a laugh that lasted some moments.

"We will have her snatched at the altar," he continued, his face still purple from laughter. Then he cursed himself roundly for not thinking of so brilliant a scheme before and threw himself heavily into a chair. The various details of this new proposition now came one upon another in rapid succession. It would be easy enough to have Marion spirited away at the close of the marriage ceremony, and Steve Warren would be an excellent fellow to do it. Why not? Was he not the jilted lover of Marion and did he not harbor a feeling of resentment? Would it be difficult

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to have him appear in the village on the day of the wedding and later have him waylaid and done away with? Certainly not.

Gerald Leigh now set about to arrange for the return of Steve Warren. A dragnet covering the universe should be thrown out, and accordingly he at once commenced to get into communication with the trusty confederates of former days who were now scattered among the many great cities of the world. Indeed it was an undertaking that would easily appall Scotland Yard, but Gerald Leigh was a fellow who stopped at nothing to gain his ends. "It will be a fine story to flash over the wires and stagger humanity on Christmas day," said he as he refilled his cigarette case.

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CHAPTER XI

Nearing the Abyss

The morning broke bright and clear. The first snow had fallen during the night and the landscape wore a mantle of purest white. The black, crooked pathways of the streams were clearly marked through the hills and bottom lands, and around the snow capped stacks the shivering cattle huddled.

It was a typical country winter scene in the tranquil valley far removed from the din of the city streets—from the cares of money and the cark of fashion.

It was the first real taste of winter, and Gerald Leigh and Marion Ellsworth were speeding along the village streets behind a lively roadster, the envy of every onlooker. Their merry laughter harmonized perfectly with the musical jingle of the silver sleigh bells that completely encircle the lathered girth of their proud and high-headed mare.

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They drove far into the country and feasted their eyes on the beauties of nature and talked of their plans for the future. The chill air, supplemented* by the joy and thrill of being with her lover, made Marion appear more beautiful than ever to the demon who rode beside her.

Their wedding arrangements were all but completed. It was Gerald's desire that the affair be entirely private, for he considered it a serious step in both their lives and one not to be accompanied by any pomp or splendor, but rather to be conducted quietly and with a full mutual understanding of its sacredness. An extended journey through Jamaica was to follow the ceremony. After their return to America they would live in some great city where Gerald's interests would demand him and where Marion's life would be one of love

*Supplemented. (Italian) supplemento. Added to.

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and happiness surrounded by every conceivable luxury.

No wonder great frozen tears stood upon her round, red cheeks and glistened like pearls in the bright winter sun. She was crying for joy as they whizzed over the smooth, snowy surface.

Marion's feeble old uncle, who had watched tenderly over her through childhood when he had had health and strength, was to be kindly cared for during his few remaining years in some soldier's home where nothing would be too good for him. So they drove along and laughed and talked, occasionally stopping to admire some particularly pretty prank of nature.

Returning to the village as darkness gathered they dined together at the hotel, and as they pushed their way through the crowd of admiring loungers and into the little dining room the landlord shook his head and re-

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marked that it would be a devilish hard matter to find a handsomer pair in all the world.

Later Gerald and Marion parted at the sleigh under the shadow of Red Stone Hall, and the happy bride-to-be skipped into the majestic old ruin and started to wash the breakfast dishes long before the tinkling bells of her departed lover died on the winter air.

CHAPTER XII

A Promise

Dark December has now come and brought with him the shortest day and longest night. The little shops of the hamlet wear a gay holiday attire, and behind their frosted windows gorgeous displays of gaudily painted toys, celluloid toilet articles of impossible hues and other Christmas wares are piled high.

As evening approaches the cheery forge of the smithy is seen through the open door and

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merry children are sliding—as they break the wintry air with their happy shouts—on the mill pond with its screen of pollard willows. Now and then the report of the sportsman's gun sends up a puff of smoke which we see for a few moments floating on the air like a white cloud against the woodland's black curtain.

We pity the poor farmer's wife as she burrows through the snow, much after the fashion of the musk ox,* for turnips on the wind swept hill, while the flag-like sedges that stand upright by the dark mere appear like sword blades frosted with silver.

Gerald Leigh hated and despised winter above all things, and he counted and recounted the days when he should be able to spend the abominable season in the tropics far removed from his present hated surroundings.

*Musk ox. A small ruminant of the ox family. See Dr. Cook.

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As he approached the great battered door of Red Stone Hall and grasped the clumsy iron knocker, which was covered with hoary rime, it seemed to cut his fingers like a knife and he cursed profusely till the creaking door swung open and covered him with a flood of light, when his wicked face softened in the presence of the girl who loved him madly.

As he slunk down the long hall to the drawing room he fairly cowed beneath the stern faces of the early Ellsworths as they frowned upon him from their massive gold frames. "Curse them, they seem to read my innermost thoughts," he said, as he sunk heavily into a broad cushioned chair near the cozy hearth fire like some hunted criminal who had at last, after a long, exciting chase, found a haven of safety.

Finally regaining his old composure Gerald Leigh watched the lithe, yielding figure of Marion as she softly played an old love tune

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One of the Early Ellsworths

on the curiously carved and ancient melodeon, and he could but admit that she was most charming to look upon. As the dark, terrible

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thoughts of murder flashed through his brain



*"And will you
always love
me, Gerald?"*

great drops of perspiration fell from his fair forehead and sizzled and steamed on the hot hearth stones below. Cruel and heartless as Gerald Leigh was his heart now failed him in the presence of the beautiful creature before him. As he sat and watched her he decided that she should be abducted at the altar and spirited across the continent in some swift flying air craft and there carefully guarded until he should reap

his golden harvest and he far away in distant lands.

The perplexing situation now seemed solved and he laughingly arose and softly approached Marion unobserved, and throwing his arms about her he kissed her passionately.

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Freeing herself with a peculiar twisting squirm Marion said:

"And will you always love me, Gerald?"

"Always, my pretty one."

"There, now you have promised."

CHAPTER XIII

Love Blind

The season of winter gayety was now at its height. Croquet, picnicking and other lively sports of summer and autumn were now replaced by such entertaining pastimes as taffy pulling, who's got the button, and charades.

At all the merry social gatherings Gerald Leigh and Marion Ellsworth were the central figures—sweet-faced Marion enjoying them hugely, while her black-hearted fiance worried through gracefully, appearing at all times the handsome and gallant lover of the belle of the

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whole countryside and easily adjusting himself to the rude, simple folk that hung about and bored the life out of him.

The wedding was now just in the offing and the days were speeding swiftly. Marion's dressmakers were working 'way into the night that no last moment hitch might cause any vexatious delay. Gerald Leigh, too, was busy not only into the nights but all through the dark, tedious days. Steve Warren had at last been located in Honolulu and a swift mail steamer had been chartered and was plowing her way through the treacherous blue waters of the peaceful Pacific bearing him home at an incredible speed. Things were turning fine for Gerald Leigh, and the daily advices from his horde of unscrupulous confederates kept him in a constant state of good cheer, a fact that was generally remarked about his lodgings. Around this hostelry he was looked upon as a gentleman of rare ability—not only

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a skilled checker player but a wizard at pool as well.

Marion had deeded Red Stone Hall and the yellow knoll upon which it stood to Gerald, and she could scarcely wait till the time should come when she could deliver it, along with her life and happiness, into the hands of the man her love for whom was fast consuming her.

She often stopped while engaged in her simple duties about the household to laugh at her old silly fondness for Steve Warren—how she had trailed through the long grass, wet with dew, to talk and blush before the rough country bumpkin as he leaned upon his plow,* of the odor of pigs and gummy harness that at all times hung about him—in parlor or furrow alike.

From her chamber window Marion could see on the crest of upland where the orchards

*Plow. A field implement.

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thrive above the oaks, in shelving distance, the little cottage Steve Warren had built for her and him. But never once in all the many times she had looked at it had she known one single pang of regret.

Poor Marion, she was not only drunk with happiness—she was soused!

CHAPTER XIV

A Cloud Appears

It was a biting cold Sabbath morning and the snow covered housetops glistened in the deceitful December sun.

A straggling, motley pageant of God-fearing peasants filed slowly up the steep, icy pathway to the little church on the hill that huddled snugly among the low, white mounds and evergreens, now drooping under their burden of snow. The wild, hesitating peals from the

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belfry tower seemed to penetrate the remotest corners of the earth so sharp and distinct did they reverberate across the bleak lowlands in the cold, clear atmosphere.

On this particular Sunday morning Gerald Leigh had been asked to fill the pulpit. After the rosy-cheeked choir was seated and the last soft, soothing notes of the organ had died away he arose pale and handsome. He talked of the joy of living and the comfort and sweetness of religion—of the promised reunions in the great beyond with loved ones who had been called before. Indeed it was a masterful sermon, beautiful to listen to and wonderfully delivered—a sermon that caused much sniffing and sobbing among the folk that sat thrilled before this eloquent deceiver.

At the close of the services Gerald Leigh started the contributions with a crisp raised bill and then joined Marion in the vestibule. How proud she was when the congregation

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gathered about them and told Gerald how helpful and impressive his words had been and how he had missed his calling.

On their way home Gerald was solemn and uncommunicative. He was worrying and studying over that part of his desperate game that had to do with Steve Warren's return—how he was to be kept in ignorance of Marion's marriage—how he should be decoyed to the old mill and there murdered. How these details were to be managed might well cause him uneasiness since they were to be most important factors in the final chapter of his nefarious plot.

Poor, foolish Marion! she attributed his moodiness to the holiness of the day. Oh, love! how sightless.

After Gerald had left Marion at the threshold of Red Stone Hall she soon found herself with the whole short December afternoon on her hands and retired to her chamber to rum-

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mage among the sacred belongings of her dead mother which had for many years remained undisturbed in an old chest.

Gently Marion raised the cumbersome lid and there, carefully folded, lay her mother's grosgrain wedding dress just as she had fondly placed it away years before. Under it she found a little box covered with flowered paper and tied with a faded silk ribbon. As she reverently opened it the odor of dried roses filled the room. It contained her mother's hoop earrings and two daguerreotype portraits—one of her father taken in young manhood with his face reclining in his left hand, on the second finger of which was a massive ring which the artist had cunningly touched up with bright gold foil; her mother's portrait, too, had been taken in her young days and was encased in a heavy brooch, on the back of which was clumsily soldered a thick brass pin. Marion's eyes filled with tears as she studied

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the sweet, gentle countenance, which so closely resembled her own, and she thought of her mother's lonely, unhappy life.

These treasures Marion wished to take with her, and as she arose a feeling of distrust crept over her. She endeavored to cheer herself by recalling Gerald's many thoughtful little attentions and expressions of tenderest love—things that had made her engagement days so happy, but try as she might she could not dispel the gloomy forebodings that had now quite taken possession of her, and she sobbed herself to sleep.

Slowly the shadows lengthened; the light waned; the glare of the snowy hills was softened and the outlines of Steve Warren's empty cottage in the far distance grew dim.

The clouds were gathering.

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CHAPTER XV

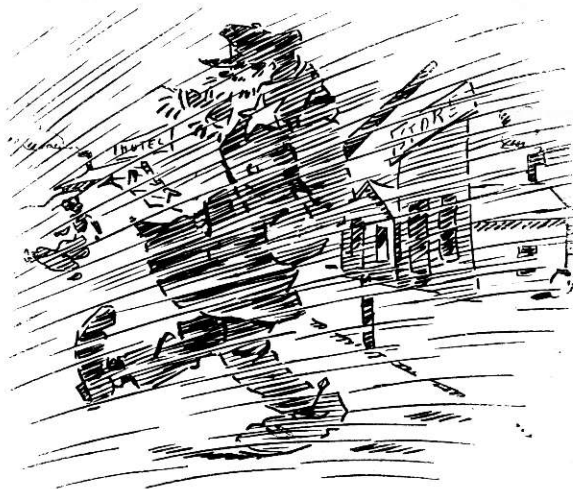
A Pathetic Spectacle

A terrific blizzard was blowing as Constable Newt Plum crept along the deserted village street holding to the barber poles and hitching racks and occasionally falling exhausted on the stoop of some shop. Indeed he presented a pathetic spectacle. His great blue uniform now hung from his shoulders in loose folds and cracked and flapped in the gale like a huge silken banner unfurled to the breezes.

He had long passed the three score and ten mark, and his tireless efforts to solve the mystery of Tharp's Corner had been more than his aged frame could stand. His emaciated condition caused much concern among his kindly neighbors, and the tradesmen, too, were excited lest his overzealousness should seriously cripple the business interests of the community, since now the indefatigable old constable

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arrested and clubbed every visitor that ventured within its precincts, and many fierce combats disturbed the peace and quiet.



Constable Plum

The constable's face was now sunken and wrinkled and looked not unlike a dried quince, but the steel-eyed sleuth kept his own counsel

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and guarded the silver clew that reposed at all times in his leather wallet like a miser, confident all the while that the metal trifle would one day solve the crime that had besmirched the county's fair name.

It was now the twenty-third day of December and Gerald Leigh's plans so far had worked out to the letter. Steve Warren was being held in a neighboring town under some pretense while a modern airship lay anchored behind the hills in readiness for the morrow.

Cheery and loving as Gerald had been when he called on Marion earlier in the day his manner had quite failed to drive forth the dark, ominous thoughts that had filled her mind since their last meeting. It was with a heavy heart that she now looked after the final preparations for her marriage, and she wept bitterly when she realized that she was to leave dear old Red Stone Hall with all its associations behind her forever.

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Gerald Leigh was pacing about his apartments smoking a final cigarette before retiring after a busy and most satisfactory day. As he stood by his window looking at the bright, full winter moon he smiled and said, addressing the great yellow orb: "Ah, old fellow, when you rise on Christmas eve I shall be the richest chap in all Christendom."

And then he laughed heartily.

CHAPTER XVI

The Abduction

The morning of December twenty-fourth broke calm and clear, and Gerald Leigh was quick to note the ideal conditions for air sailing. He had ridden far into the country for a last secret conference with his hirelings and now returned in splendid spirits and was on

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his way to assure Marion that every detail looking to her uncle's departure and comfort had been looked after. He found her sad and depressed, but his ardent and fervid avowals of tenderest love quite revived her. When he left to return to his lodgings her old happy spirit and courage had returned, and he chuckled as he thought of his magnetism.

The hours had fairly whizzed by and Gerald Leigh was once more ascending the roadway to gloomy Red Stone Hall for what he hoped would be his farewell meeting with Marion Ellsworth. Beside him in the rickety hotel omnibus sat Rev. Wiley Tanger, the grave, stiff minister who was to officiate at his wedding. His prominent, smoothly shaven chin was held aloft by a high celluloid collar and came dangerously near hitting him in the back at times as they jolted along. The sea bean buttons on his cuffs, which were of the same inflammable material as his collar, rattled like

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hail with every motion of the old-fashioned vehicle as it rolled over the rough, icy surface. The strong, foul odor of Gerald's imported cigarette quite stifled the ashen faced preacher, and as they alighted in the dooryard of the ancient and venerable mass of stone and mortar he sniffed the fresh, bracing air like a skitish colt.

They were ushered into the drawing room by a prim neighbor woman who had kindly assisted Marion through the worry and excitement of the last few hours and who was to be the only witness to the ceremony.

Marion looked bewitching in her beautiful gown of white tulle as she embraced Gerald and led him into the hall, where she placed into his hands a deed for all she possessed in the world. Returning to the drawing room they stood beside the frail colonial center table, which was wobbling beneath a mass of fragrant roses, while the good minister pro-

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nounced the words that were to unite them forever. As the last syllable died away on his thin lips a cloaked figure appeared in the dimly lighted room and, like a flash from the heavens, gathered the radiant bride in its arms and vanished before the astonished groom and those about him.

Long before any one could realize what had happened a pitiful shriek was heard which seemed to come from high above the Austrian pines that clustered near the shuttered window.

Gerald Leigh played his part perfectly. Reeling across the room as one terror stricken he frantically called for an alarm to be sounded and fell exhausted before the dying embers* of the hearth fire.

The news of the sensational abduction spread rapidly, and soon posses of determined men were scattering in every direction eager

*Embers. Coals of fire.

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to lay hands on the villain who had borne the fair bride away just at the happiest moment of her blameless life.

Gerald Leigh, crushed and broken, was carefully moved to his hotel, where his legion of friends called and proffered every assistance. During the early hours of morning a low whistle called him to his window. It was one of his confederates bearing the news that Steve Warren had escaped, a bit of information that nettled him greatly.

He remained in his room apparently grief stricken for several days and directed the officers who had charge of the searching parties.

The fact that Steve Warren was at liberty worried Gerald Leigh more and more as the hours flew by, and he determined to connect him with Marion's abduction in a new and more desperate way. Accordingly during his next conference with the officers he related to them that Warren had been seen in the vil-

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lage* on the day of the wedding, that he was a jilted lover of Marion and that it was not impossible that he knew more than he would be willing to tell. The whole story seemed so plausible that the sheriff at once started on this new clew with a light heart and a fresh box of cartridges.

CHAPTER XVII

Hurled from the Clouds

After darting through the portals of Red Stone Hall and clearing the decaying balustrade with a single bound the mysterious abductor of Marion Ellsworth quickly sped across the fields with his swooning burden to the airship which he had but a few moments before secreted behind a tall locust hedge.

*Village. (Spanish) *village*. A small collection of houses in the country.

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It required but a second to strap Marion's limp and apparently lifeless form to the frail seat and start the flapping wings of the aerial monster and guide it on its long journey through the clouds. Gracefully the huge craft soared heavenward like a winged specter, and the whirr of the shuttle was soon lost among the stars.

Poor Marion, unconscious from fright, was a willing captive as the great machine whizzed through the chilling currents at an amazing speed over lighted villages and cities, across abyss and wooded hill—moving majestically on while the moon's rays played on the rippling rivers and streams, or turned the bosoms of countless lakes into flaming sheets of hammered gold. Like some beautiful phantom the pale bride in her snowy gown reclined motionlessly among the rigging as they flew.

Many, many miles must they have traveled ere consciousness returned to Marion. As

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her eyes slowly opened she was looking into the rough, ugly features of the brute beside her. Sitting erect she looked about her and, at once realizing her predicament, she summoned all her strength and made a frantic effort to free herself, only to be repulsed by the powerful beast at the wheel.

Her utter helplessness now dawned upon her and, terror stricken, she wondered what awful fate awaited her and where Gerald could be. Presently she rallied and seemed to be possessed of superhuman strength as she made a final struggle to break the stout cords which held her. In this desperate contest for supremacy her fastenings snapped, and in her heroic fight for the control of the steering gear she lost her balance and was dashed to the earth miles below.

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CHAPTER XVIII

The Third Degree

It is the first day of January and soon the lengthening daylight will fall upon the dim patches of green and show where gentle spring lies sleeping.

It is too early for the hardy crocus to throw its banded gold across the pathway, but the bluebird, spring's first harbinger, calls to the "rathe primrose" from the naked hawthorn spray to open its yellow eyes as it sits huddled up in its cloak of green. The trees covered with hoarfrost are beautiful to look upon, and the wild grass bending beneath its weight seems laden with crystals.

It was an easy matter to locate Steve Warren, and his arrest and subsequent sweatings were carried out under the personal supervision of Gerald Leigh. He was thrown into the rude jail in utter ignorance of the sus-

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picion that rested upon him, and there he remained for several days without food or water.

When sufficiently weak from thirst and hunger Gerald Leigh entered his cell, accompanied by the sheriff, and dealt him a thunderous blow with his gloved hand which felled the helpless victim to the stone floor where he lay in a heap.

"What have you done with your old sweetheart, you miserable cur?" asked Gerald Leigh, sneeringly.

Warren staggered to his feet and asked for mercy, only to be felled again, this time by the famous trip-hammer* jolt. As he lay on the floor he tremblingly disclaimed all knowledge of anything whatsoever. It was the sheriff's turn this time and he kicked him in the side.

"We will leave him alone for a few days

*Trip-hammer. A powerful tilt-hammer operated by steam.

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longer till he can refresh his hateful memory," hissed Gerald Leigh, and he scornfully spat at the seemingly lifeless form and passed out of the cell followed by the sheriff, who threw a musty soda cracker near the prostrate victim as the iron door clanked behind them.

Thoroughly satisfied that Steve Warren would wilt eventually, they set about to invent some new torture. It was decided that the jail should be turned about so the prisoner could have a full and unobstructed view of Red Stone Hall on the hill high above.

"That should soften him if he has a fiber of sentiment," said Gerald Leigh as he laughed in his sleeve at the uncouth, bewhiskered sheriff, whose small, close set eyes sparkled like raindrops at this newest scheme.

It was agreed, too, that the sheriff should prepare a tray full of tempting victuals and place it near the prisoner's grated window and allow the appetizing fumes to enter therein.

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It was fully five hours before another effort was made to wrest a confession from the now crazed and guiltless farm hand. This time the sheriff entered the stuffy cell with a lighted candle and Constable Plum, the tottering old scout, approached Warren and held a pair of dainty white slippers, which had been found near Red Stone Hall soon after the abduction, before his bruised face and said:

"See here, Steve Warren, blame your ornery hide, I've knowed ye ever since a lad, an' now you 'fess up," emphasizing the last word by striking the innocent prisoner across the face with his heavy hickory cane, which even in the hands of a toddling infant would have been a dangerous weapon.

Poor Steve sank to the floor for the fifth or sixth time within twenty-four hours, and the officers left the cell much discouraged over their poor success. Finally it was agreed that

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the prisoner should be fattened up and allowed to take his chances with the grand jury.

* * * * *

In due time Steve Warren was indicted, tried, convicted and sentenced to be hanged. As the brave, young, innocent farmer walked with head erect from the ill ventilated court room Gerald Leigh leaned back in his seat near the judge and smiled.

CHAPTER XIX

Unmasked

February has been likened to a sturdy country lass who, with the tinge of the hard, red winter apple on her healthy cheek, strives against the wind and draws her russet colored cloak about her while, with bent head, she keeps throwing back the long hair that blows about her face.

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In and about Gerald Leigh's tavern all was astir as the busy landlord and his good, plump wife added the finishing touches to the sumptuous feast that their scoundrelly guest had ordered for himself and friends in honor of Steve Warren's execution, which was set for the following day.

At one end of the long dining room a stage had been erected whereupon the gaily uniformed silver cornet band sat. Just back of this elevation there hung from the wall, imbedded in bright bunting, a portrait of the fat, bald judge who had presided at Warren's trial.

It was indeed a queer assemblage that filled every chair about the tables while the savory mist from the hot, toothsome viands floated gracefully to the ceiling and mingled in friendly rivalry with the discordant notes of the battered brass instruments.

After the last blatant note of "Marching Through Georgia" the round, purple circuit

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judge delivered a stinging address on the majesty of the law and then all eyes were turned toward Gerald Leigh as he arose with a smiling face. The smile, however, was short lived. As he faced the gaily festooned* entrance his whole countenance changed and his face wore an ashen hue as he gasped and fell backward to the floor. The loquacious throng now sat in open mouthed amazement as the lost heiress of Red Stone Hall, frail and haggard, but still retaining many traces of her former unusual beauty, passed through the dining room's flag bedecked entrance and pointed the finger of scorn at the inflamed face of Gerald Leigh, which now was altered past all belief by anger and tortured vanity. As he stood with clenched fists and eyed her wildly Marion related her awful adventure in a low, calm voice to the crowd that had gathered about her and accused Gerald Leigh as

*Festooned. Furnished with festoons.

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being the sole instigator of her frightful experience.

"The girl is mad," cried Gerald Leigh as



She Pointed the Finger of Scorn at Gerald Leigh

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he edged his way toward the door only to be more closely surrounded by his erstwhile friends.

With the strength of a maniac he frantically pushed them aside and rushed to the door, where he turned and hissed:

"My curses on you all!"

As he wheeled about he fell into the strong arms of the sheriff, and in the struggle that followed his cigarette case fell at the feet of Constable Plum.

There was just one little bit of silver ornamentation missing on this case, otherwise both sides of it would have been identical—and it reclined at this moment in the leather wallet of Constable Plum.

"What a supreme contempt on the part of Destiny for criminal smartness." This enormous trifle—a tiny silver fleur de lis torn from its fastenings and lying in the grass.

* * * * *

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The proud, dashing, affable Gerald Leigh was soon in the toils, and a peep into his trunks and bags brought to light many evidences of his double life and served to clear up a long chain of mysteries reaching almost across the continent, not the least among which was the murder of Langdon Ellsworth, the father of Marion, who had disappeared during her babyhood and who was returning from the West after years of prospecting with his golden harvest, and who, at a neighboring sanitarium where he had stopped, had related the fabled tale of the riches of Red Stone Hall to Gerald Leigh.

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CHAPTER XX

The Old, Old Story

Winter, who seems to have been asleep, shows his cloudy form once more above the bare hilltops, from whence he scatters his snowflakes, while the timid birds cease their song and again shelter in the still naked hedge rows.

Eager to be spared the cost of a long, tedious trial and anxious to save Marion Ellsworth from all the humiliation and distasteful notoriety possible the good county officials gladly allowed Gerald Leigh to be removed to an Eastern city where several grave charges awaited him and where his chances of escape would be meager.

The new turn of affairs of course brought freedom to Steve Warren, and he returned to the village of his birth bleached and thin after

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his long confinement. The slack in Constable Plum's uniform gradually disappeared and the sly old codger was the principal point of interest in the little community. During the excitement of the memorable Christmas eve Marion's aged uncle passed away and was tenderly added to the silent colony in the churchyard on the hill.

For many years to come the monotony of the long winter evenings in the quiet settlement will be broken by the weird and thrilling story of Marion Ellsworth's long flight through the clouds and her miraculous escape from death after falling thousands of feet—of her timely return to save innocent Steve Warren from the gallows and to tear the mask from the handsome face of Gerald Leigh, the arch villain.*

* * * * *

*Villain. A scamp.

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"Steve!"

"Marion!"

Marion was sitting again before a cozy fire of beechwood in old Red Stone Hall, and in her lap lay a well thumbed volume of Robinson Crusoe, her favorite novel, while in the kitchen, rattling among the pots and pans, was the kindly neighbor woman who was nursing her back to health and strength again. A footstep

in the hall awakened Marion from her reverie and she turned her weary eyes toward the door. Steve Warren was there.

"Steve!"

"Marion!"

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CHAPTER XXI

The Warrens

The hawthorne berries are beginning to show red in the hedges, and we see scarlet heps* where only a short while ago the clustering sweet briar bloomed. Here and there in sunny places the bramble berries have begun to blacken, yet many yet wear a crude red, while some are green. The bee seems to move wearily, while the happy gleaners dot the cornfields and contrast strangely with the rich morsels of color. It is September.

Red Stone Hall has been dismantled and carted away, and the commanding clay eminence upon which it stood and defied the storms of so many decades is gradually being devoured by the thriving brick mill at its base. No golden treasure was found beneath the cellar floor and no evidences of the rich ore that was supposed to thread the red earth have developed.

*Heps. Fruit of the dog rose.

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Far across the fading valley may be seen a white speck standing out boldly against the September haze. As you journey on through the lazy town and across the parched meadows and up the winding road through the cool arcades of ancient trees you stand face to face with Steve Warren's whitewashed cottage. Everywhere you look are evidences of thrift and contentment. The broad fields are dotted with shocks of grain or spotted herds of full-uddered cows. In the barnyard near the bursting granaries bright plumaged fowls and romping calves are seen, while brilliant clusters of old-fashioned flowers border the beds of ripened vegetables in the little kitchen garden. Even an old grindstone stands under a well laden apple tree near the kitchen door. The dinner bell cord swings in the gentle breezes, while the highly polished glass jars that adorn the garden fence shine in the evening sun.

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Slowly up the long, narrow lane comes Steve Warren and his tired and steaming team of broad shouldered Normans with their rattling chain traces dragging through the dust. He is riding one sidewise, while the other follows with hanging head. Across his knee is thrown a heavy doubletree, and on his honest bronzed countenance, half hidden by his drooping greasy hat, is an expression of perfect peace and happiness. As he passes a strawstack he is reminded of his sweetheart's narrow escape from death, and he thinks of the long, dreary days that she lay unconscious among strangers in a farm house far away, and he silently thanks a merciful Providence for sparing the life of the girl who is now his wife. Approaching the well worn bars he waves to the girlish figure that sits in the mossy doorway. It is Marion—and she is knitting a pair of tiny booties.

THE END.

Other Abe Martin Books

Abe Martin's Almanack for 1909 (\$1.00).

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