

WHITE GLOVES

BY EDGAR SALTUS

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ILLUSTRATED BY WILL FOSTER

"YOU are the most beautiful thing in the world!"

Elaine, who had been looking down, looked up. She was a pretty girl, but not beautiful, or at least not extravagantly so. She had fair hair, candid eyes, cameo features, a complexion of cream, which occasionally had claret in it, and an air of having no nonsense—or, at any rate, very little nonsense—about her.

"Indeed you are!"

Ruis Ixar smiled as he spoke, displaying the gleam of white teeth, a gleam that contrasted curiously with his eyes, which were dark and melancholy, and with his skin, which was strikingly, almost unnaturally, brown. Otherwise, save for that detail, save, too, for a slight affectation in his attire, he was a good-looking young man dressed completely in white—in white serge, white shoes, white gloves.

Though the time was high noon of a midsummer day and the place a New England village, those gloves he retained. They perhaps indicated the foreigner that his name proclaimed.

A little before he had drifted—from no one knew whence—into this, somnolent Massachusetts hamlet, and had settled himself at the inn, a low, two-storied building that faced the village church. Barring the inn and the post-office, the church was the only public building in this place, which, though not far from a great city, is one of the quietest I have ever known. Its name, an Indian one which it is unnecessary to give, means, in English, "place of peace." Peaceful it was and doubtless still is, with that peace which comes of the absence of trade, the rarity of passers-by.

Peaceful, also, was the church, which was generally empty, somnolent like the

village, yet, unlike it, refreshingly cool. For that reason, unless it were for another, hour after hour Ruis Ixar loitered in the dim aisles where, on week-days, the silence was stirred only by chimes that, in minor keys, sobbed, rather than announced, the flight of time. But it may be that their melancholy appealed to this young man, fusing, as it must have, with the melancholy which was his.

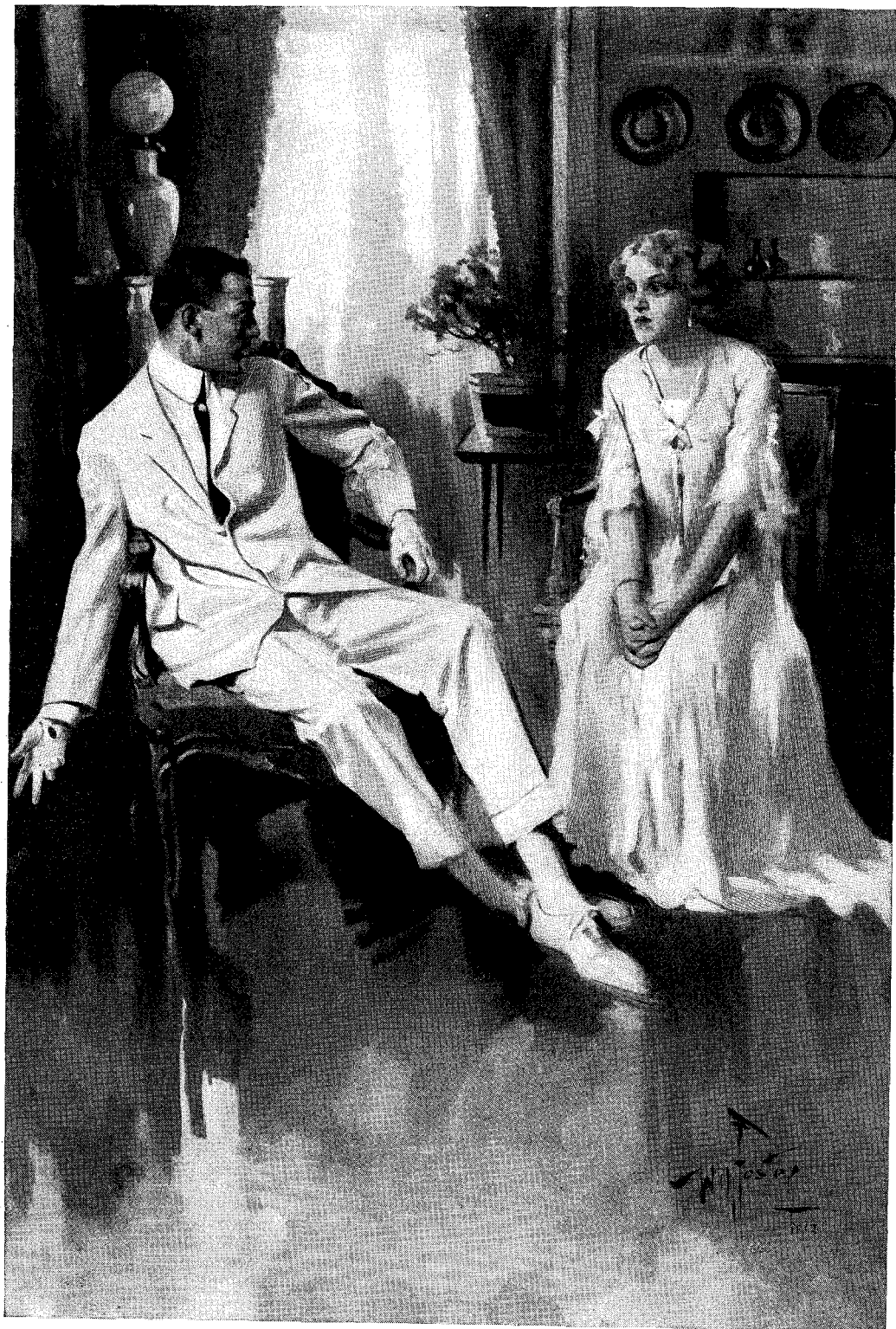
The pastor, a gentle soul, wondered at the unusual and persistent worshiper, and imagined that he had perhaps a crime on his conscience—a reflection for which presently he rebuked himself—for clearly, the donations that the young man put in the plate at each service betokened a grateful heart.

That idea aiding, acquaintanceship ensued, in the course of which the pastor found occasion to introduce the young man to certain people—among others, to Colonel Doremus and his daughter, Elaine.

Colonel Doremus was a large, stout man, slightly lame, who drank now and then, though not to excess. His daughter you have already met. The colonel's home stood near the church, which latter, after the introduction, saw Ixar no more.

It was otherwise with the colonel's home. There, hour after hour, the young man sat with the girl as he had sat in the aisles; sat, too, though less protractedly, with her father. To both of them, as was but natural, he told of himself—told that, born of Spanish parentage in Santiago de Cuba, he had been educated in England, from which country he had recently returned.

"And why not?" thought the colonel, who, rising from a seat on the porch, limped indoors and helped himself from a decanter.



"YES. I WAS ILL THERE. I HAVE NOT QUITE RECOVERED"

But the young man was obviously a gentleman. The colonel limped back, and asked him to stop and dine.

There are men who can refuse a favor with greater grace than others can grant one. At the invitation, Ruis Ixar contemplated his gloved hands. Then, with that grace, he declined.

This occurred the day after the introduc-

tion. On subsequent occasions the invitation was renewed. Always the result was the same.

The colonel, who had been in Spain, though not in Cuba, was not surprised. Castilians, he was aware, never extend invitations, and, he reflected, perhaps did not accept them either. But the point was obscure. With a libation, he dismissed it.

Yet, though Ruis Ixar would not break bread with the colonel, he came to his house, as he had gone to the church, and gradually



HER FATHER WAS JUST IN TIME TO CATCH HER

entered the thoughts of Elaine. Imperceptibly she began to await his coming; and on one occasion when he came, imperceptibly the claret deepened in the cream of her skin. There was no claret to deepen in his. Beneath its dark veil, it was ashen.

"He never got that coat of tan in England," the colonel told himself. "His face looks as though it had been frozen at the north pole and then baked at the equator."

"How long is it since you were at Santiago?" he asked.

"Six weeks," the young man answered. "After the gray London sky to which I had been so long accustomed, the ferocity of the Caribbean sun burned me to the bone—to the marrow. I fell ill, and came north to recover."

"And why not?" thought the colonel, who, as usual, limped away.

It was on this occasion that the girl's color deepened, for it was then that the young man's remark about beautiful things cropped out.

"Will you give me a picture of yourself?" he added.

The girl parried.

"Will you give me yours?"

But Ixar had none. There are people who have a physical dread of the camera. He said he was one of them.

"Nonsense!" retorted Elaine, who had a way and a will of her own. "The operation is quite painless, and in Boston there is such a good man. We might motor in. It is barely twenty miles, only—"

"Only what?"

"Our chauffeur has injured himself."

But at this Ixar, with a zeal which he afterward regretted, announced that he could run a machine. Elaine suggested that they should go at once; and shortly, with the open car for chaperon, the two young people flew off.

Presently the photographer's studio was reached, photographs in assorted sizes were taken, and, through the summer afternoon, the two flew back.

II

At the inn, a few days later, the pictures appeared. From them Ixar selected two—one small, one large—which, after dinner, he took to Elaine.

But, as it so happened, the girl, or her father, had guests that evening. Ixar left the pictures at the door and returned to his room.

There, on the mantel, beside a box of pigments and paints, he put one of the remaining photographs. It was a head, nearly life-sized, that showed back, almost as from a mirror, the contour of his features and the melancholy of his eyes.

For a while, a trifle sadly, he studied it. Then he took a book and read. An hour passed, and another. It was getting late.

Ixar stood up, moved to the window and began singing a measure, sweet and slow, a song of far-away lands. As he sang, he could see the road over which he had motored with Elaine, and which stretched on and on until lost in the engulfing city.

At thought of the girl, and oppressed by the utter loneliness that was his, he got out of the window, hung by the sill, and, dropping a few feet to the ground, went up the road to her house.

Save for a light in one curtained window, it was dark. But behind the curtains he divined Elaine. He kissed his hand at them. Abruptly they parted. A fiery face appeared. It was the colonel's. Ixar sank into the shadows and away.

After luncheon, the next day, he returned there, and was promptly thanked by Elaine for the photographs which he had left for her.

"The big one is excellent," the girl resumed. "So, too, is the little one. Before they came, I had been writing a letter. I had been telling about you in it, and how nice it is to have some one to talk to here; and afterward I enclosed your picture—the little one. Of course I said to return it. The letter was to my brother." She paused, then idly added: "I posted it last evening. It must have reached him by this time."

Idly, also, Ixar remarked:

"I did not know you had a brother."

"Well, he is my half-brother. My mother was a widow when she married my father, and he and Herbert never quite hit it off."

As the girl spoke, she thought of a family legend, the story of her father attempting to punish his stepson and of the boy tearing the whip from him, lashing him with it, and throwing it in his face.

A silence ensued. During it, Ixar, lifting his voice, sang, as he had sung the night before, a song of far-away lands.

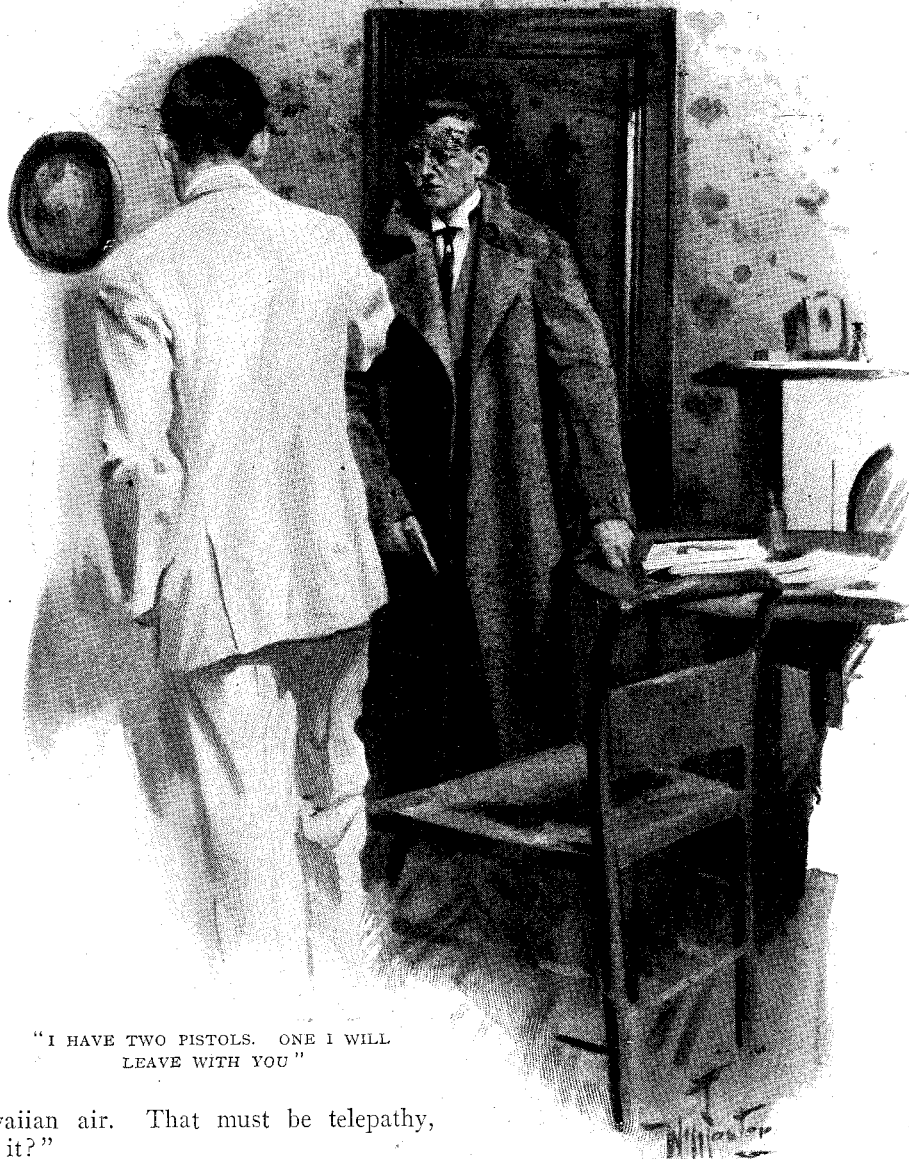
"Aloha nui, palalaha—"

As the song began, the girl made a little

gesture. As it concluded, she sat looking surprised at him.

"Why," she exclaimed, "I was thinking of Honolulu, and at once you begin on a

Well she might ask. Had a dog run suddenly out and as suddenly and viciously bit Ixar on the leg, he could not have started more. For a moment his mouth twitched.



"I HAVE TWO PISTOLS. ONE I WILL
LEAVE WITH YOU"

Hawaiian air. That must be telepathy, isn't it?"

Ixar turned his dark eyes upon her.

"How do you know what the song is?"

"Because it is an air one can't forget. I heard my brother sing it. He has been in Honolulu. He has been there twice. The government sent him. You may have heard of him—Herbert Duncan. He is in Boston now. Why, what's the matter?"

It was impossible for him to turn pale, and yet he appeared to.

"What is it?" Elaine repeated.

"The—the—" he at last began, but he did not seem to be able to get any further.

Sympathetically the girl nodded.

"You told us that at Santiago—"

"Yes. I was ill there. I have not quite recovered. I think I had best go back to the inn and lie down."

"You won't have anything?" Elaine asked, thinking as she spoke of her father's decanter. "Can't I get you—"

Ixar had risen. He thanked the girl. In thanking he looked at her—and what a look! Afterward it was to haunt her. A moment, and he had gone.

Elaine watched him go. She knew he cared for her, but concerning herself she was uncertain. Sometimes she thought she did care, sometimes she thought she did not. It was all very curious and delightful, and it had been more to clarify her own ideas than with any other object that she had written concerning him and sent his picture to her brother.

Now, as she sat musing on the porch, a motor flew up. It had but one occupant, a man, at sight of whom she exclaimed delightedly:

"Herbert! I was just thinking of you."

Without alighting, he called to her. He had a shrewd, ugly, attractive face and a look of bulldog tenacity. As she hurried to him, he called again.

"Where is this man—what's his name—Ixar?"

With candid eyes the girl surveyed her brother.

"Where is he? At the inn, I suppose. Why? Why do you ask? Won't you get out?"

From a pocket he had taken a paper, which he gave her.

"I haven't time. Here is a letter."

"But, Herbert—" she expostulated, for already the machine was starting.

From over his shoulder he added:

"Later! I may return."

The machine shot on, and she looked at the letter, which she had fancied was for her. It was for her father; and she thought it odd, for the two barely spoke.

Perplexed, she entered the house, where she found the colonel seated, conveniently near a sideboard.

"Here is a letter for you," she announced. "Herbert brought it."

"Herbert?" the old man growled.

He did not seem to believe her, but he took the letter and opened it. Then he opened his mouth, stared at the letter, stared from it at the girl, let it fall, and, his mouth still agape, got from his chair and steadied himself against the sideboard,

where, with hands that shook, he helped himself to liquor.

Elaine ran to him.

"What is it?"

But now his head had begun to shake; it was as though he were palsied.

"Father, what is it?" Elaine repeated.

Her hand on his arm, anxiously she was looking at him. With a hand that still trembled, he pointed to the letter on the floor.

Elaine bent, reached for it, took it up, looked at it, and gave one low cry. Her father was just in time to catch her. She had fainted.

III

At first, on leaving the house, Ixar had walked slowly enough. Presently, when out of sight of it, he began to run. He ran, too, as he entered the inn, ran up the stair and into his room, where hurriedly he began to pack, and then abruptly desisted. The chimes across the way were sobbing out the time. It was just three thirty, and there was no train, he knew, for fully two hours.

He moved to the window, thinking, as he did so, that after all he could walk. But now, along the road, at full speed, a motor was approaching. It had one occupant, who, looking up, stopped the machine before the inn, jumped out, and called to him.

"Baxter!"

Ixar wheeled like a rat surprised. In search of a hiding-place he wheeled again. If he had only a weapon, he thought! He had no time to think more. There was a sound of steps that confused him. They were on the stair, in the hall, at the door, which then opened, and Elaine's brother appeared. Producing a pistol, Herbert Duncan said, and negligently enough:

"This is rather shabby of you—don't you think so?"

As he spoke, his eyes took in the room—the bed, the chair, the table; the trunk half packed; the picture and paints on the mantel.

A second only. With an uplift of the chin, again he turned to Ixar.

"In Honolulu, when the truth was known, you broke your word, and got away before you could be taken. At the time I hardly fancied that you would turn up here, and in a double masquerade—the masquerade of an assumed name, the masquerade

of a painted skin — presume to approach my sister!"

Ixar, his back against the wall, like an animal at bay, showed his teeth.

"Dr. Duncan, I did not know! I swear to you—"

"Gammon! You knew about yourself. And now she knows. Or at least I may assume so. On learning from her that you were here, I wrote her father a letter concerning you which I have just left at his house. But, if I can prevent it, no one else shall know. If I can prevent it, she shall not be bespattered!"

With a look which the damned may have, Ixar bowed his head.

"I was going. I will go."

Duncan nodded.

"Indeed you will. But you broke your word before. You'll not get another chance. Instead of coming here personally, I could have notified the authorities. Because of my sister, I did not. Now there is but one way out of it, and you have got to take it!"

Ixar raised his eyes. The anguish in them was infinite.

"You have got to!" Duncan continued. Significantly, with his bulldog air, he added: "Afterward the coroner shall have the facts, but I will see to it that they are buried with you." For a moment he paused, then threw out: "I have two pistols. One I will leave with you. With the other I will station myself outside. If you attempt to escape, I shoot. It is now a quarter to four. You have fifteen minutes. At four, if you are not—" Again he paused. "If you are not—"

A gesture completed the sentence.

Ixar sank on the chair. Turning his face from this man who arrogated to himself the triple functions of judge, jury, and executioner, he muttered dully:

"I will be."

With befitting gravity, Duncan bowed.

"Then commend yourself to God."

At once, placing the pistol on the table and fingering another in his pocket, he backed to the door and went along the hall, down the stair, and across the street,

where, his eyes on Ixar's window, he waited.

Obviously, he lacked the right to do as he had said he would. What is more notable, he had no intention of doing it. But it had been necessary to threaten, and the threat would, he felt, prove effective.

Meanwhile the minutes limped. At last, slowly, mournfully, the bells rang out.

Simultaneously, with the ridiculous noise of a punctured tire, there came, from the room opposite, the crack of a pistol.

With an intake of the breath, Duncan nodded. The man had kept his word—or at least had tried. For might he not have failed? Might it not be that he was but wounded?

In this uncertainty, he reentered the inn, went up the stair and down the hall to the door. It was locked.

"Baxter!" he called.

There was no answer—the sound merely of some one moving or turning or perhaps writhing there.

"Baxter!" he called again.

But now the silence was complete.

Duncan shook at the knob. The lock rattled. He put himself against the door and shoved. With a squeak, it yielded, but within there was something that resisted.

He shoved again. With a crash this time it opened, disclosing a table, overturned, that had been placed against it. It was the table that had crashed. The room itself was empty, or, more exactly, deserted. Ixar had got from the window, into the motor, and away.

In an instant, when Duncan reached the window, he could see him speeding along, headed for the engulfing city.

Immediately he told himself that he could telephone, that he could commandeer the colonel's car.

With the double motive, he turned. On the mantel before him were the photograph and the paints and pigments. From among the latter he caught up a crayon, and, with hurried, impatient hand, scrawled across the picture:

Baxter, *alias* Ixar, leper.

TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD

If some great falsehood with its mighty brand
Stalk, like Goliath, ravaging the land,
Fit thou the pebble truth within thy sling,
And then, like David—fling!

Clinton Scollard

JOAN THURSDAY*

BY LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

AUTHOR OF "THE BRASS BOWL," "THE BLACK BAG," "THE BANDBOX," ETC.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

JOAN THURSBY, discharged from the New York store in which she has been a sales-girl, determines to try for a chance on the stage. She is inspired by the example of Lizzie Fogarty, once of the stocking-counter, now established on the vaudeville boards as Mazie Dean, one of the "Dancing Deans."

When Joan announces her plan, her father—a thriftless newsdealer, who wastes his scanty earnings in betting on horse-races—turns her out of her home, a shabby East Side flat. She resolves to seek help and counsel from Mazie Dean; but at the address that Mazie has given her—Mme. Duprat's, 289 West Forty-Fifth Street—no one answers her ring at the bell. She does not know which way to turn, but she is befriended by Matthias Gaunt, a lodger at Mme. Duprat's, who gives her his room for the night, while he himself goes to a hotel. In the morning, when Gaunt returns to the house, he finds that the girl has gone, leaving a note of thanks. Later, Joan comes back to Mme. Duprat's, and, finding Mazie Dean, engages a room there, hoping to find some opportunity of realizing her theatrical ambitions.

Gaunt, meanwhile, visits his aunt, Mrs. George Tankerville, at Tanglewood, her country place on Long Island, and becomes engaged to her husband's sister, Venetia Tankerville. But the engagement is abruptly terminated by Venetia's elopement with another admirer, Vincent Marbridge. Gaunt can find consolation only by immersing himself in work upon his play, "The Jade God," which is soon to be produced.

Joan—whose theatrical acquaintances call her "Thursday," instead of Thursby—is nearly at the end of her small resources when she falls in with Charlie Quard, a vaudeville actor who needs a girl partner in a "sketch." This leads to a brief experience in vaudeville, which ends disastrously, owing to Quard's insobriety. Joan, however, is again befriended by Matthias Gaunt, who gets her a small part in "The Jade God," and employs her as an amanuensis. She now feels that she is on the way to realize her ambition, but she is sorely distressed by her failure to give satisfaction to Wilbrow, the "producer" who is directing the rehearsals of Gaunt's play.

XIX

HER work proved a fortunate distraction, keeping Joan's thoughts away from herself during a large part of that long and lonely Sunday. When not busy at her typewriter, the girl was tormented by alternate fits of burning chagrin and of equally ardent gratitude toward Matthias.

Had he been in town, and had he chanced to meet her, she must either have definitely left him or have betrayed her passion unmistakably, even to the purblind eyes of a dreaming dramatist. As it was, the girl had time to calm down, to recognize at once his disinterestedness and her own folly. If her infatuation did but deepen in contemplation of his generosity, she none the less

recovered poise before bedtime, and, with it, her determination to succeed in spite of her stupidity—if only to justify Gaunt's kindness.

But the morning that took her back to rehearsals found her in a mood of dire misgiving. She would have forfeited much—anything other than their further association—to have been spared the impending encounter with Matthias. And although he was not present when she reached the theater, her embarrassment hampered her to a degree that rendered her attempts to act more than ever farcical.

Wilbrow, seated in a chair on the "apron" of the stage, his back to the lifeless footlights, did not once interrupt her; but despair was written in his attitude and in his eyes. Shortly after she had finished,

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