

# MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

DECEMBER, 1920

Vol. LXXI

NUMBER 3

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## Billy Kane—White and Unmarried\*

A ROMANCE OF THE PARISIAN UNDERWORLD

By John D. Swain

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE E. WOLFE

**B**ILLY KANE—known in the underworld and at police headquarters as the Hermit, because he worked alone and had no pals—was completely reformed by reading a sentence of less than twenty words, on a pleasant June morning in the old Brevoort breakfast-room.

You will at once guess that it was some ringing message from Holy Writ, or perhaps a faded line in his dead mother's handwriting, which wrought the miracle. Kane had never turned a page in the Book of Books, and his mother could neither read nor write. The magic words came to him in a telegram announcing that by the death of his uncle, Ten-Carat Murphy, he had inherited certain funds.

Ten-Carat Murphy—so called from the ugly yellow stone which he wore in an old-fashioned corkscrew setting day and night, in flannel shirt, starched bosom, or pajama coat—had lived at life's extremes. If you sought him in vain at the newest and most expensive hotel in town, you would have done well to look for him in the quarter where free lunches and twenty-five-cent rooming-houses abound.

He had regularly won and lost several modest fortunes a year. Having made a clean-up of nearly a hundred thousand at New Orleans, he was seized with his first—and last—illness before he had time to drop it at Lexington; whereupon, and after the customary probation, Billy Kane found

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himself sole possessor of this considerable sum of ready cash, one yellow diamond, an equally yellow elk's tooth, and a pair of battered but serviceable binoculars.

By this act of Providence the Hermit found himself lifted from the freebooting into the conservative class. He became, in a modest sense, a capitalist, and thus arrayed against the hereditary foes of private ownership.

The sensation was not wholly agreeable. He had no training for it. All his gifts belonged on the other side of the social wall. There were few men outside the movies who could draw quicker and shoot straighter without sighting than he could, and fewer still who could make complicated locks turn obediently to the right. He could walk as noiselessly as an alley cat, and possessed the same wiry strength and quickness. He knew where to sell jewels with "no questions asked." None of these talents were of any special use to a taxpayer.

Kane had never posed as a Robin Hood, and held no illusions as to any sentimentality in his profession.

"Sure, I never took anything off a poor widow woman," he once said; "but if she had a rope of pearls it 'd be different."

That is to say, like every crook, the Hermit went where the stuff was to be found. It happened to be true that not one of the men whom he relieved had refrained from acquiring far greater sums in ways that were morally as culpable, even though no statute could touch them. The Hermit knew this, but did not resort to it as an excuse or need it as a consolation.

Working always alone, suspected by the police and by his underworld rivals alike, nobody had anything on him, because he never talked shop, even in his sleep, nor to a pretty woman. He might be caught with the goods some day, but it would not be through a "squeal"—that Damoclean sword ever dangling above the head of the ordinary crook, who is gregarious and boastful, and curiously confiding at times. He had no old associations to break off, no pals to desert, in laying aside his flash-light, gum shoes, and jimmy; but neither had he any friends to go to, or any one to kill a fatted calf over his reformation.

His life had been exciting, full of climaxes, punctuated by opulent periods, when his shadow was cast oftener by the red and white lights than by honest sunshine. He had had duels of wit, and some-

times of cruder weapons, with the police. All this he would miss; and for what? A net income of about four thousand; not so much, these days! Far less than he had stolen, even if a little more certain.

What to do with it? As an old dog, learn new tricks? Lay aside the jimmy for the mid-iron? Buy—and read—standard sets? There were no new blossoms to be plucked along the primrose path which he had not already garnered. His income would not give him any more than his regular pickings had.

One fact alone stood out incontrovertibly—as a capitalist, it was illogical to take further risks. The very apex of absurdity would be reached when the press announced the arrest of a wealthy burglar. Willy-nilly, he was forced to become a respectable citizen.

A day or two after the receipt of the telegram which wrought such a change in his life, Kane paid a visit to Deputy Assistant Police Commissioner Ryan, whose heavy-lidded eyes expressed guarded surprise at the honor.

"'Lo, Hermit!" he greeted Kane. "Come to have a heart to heart?"

"Nothing like that! Had an idea of making a little ante for the relief fund."

"Thasso? What you planning to pull now?"

"You may not know it, but I'm a plutocrat now."

"Cleaned up, huh? Thinking of retiring from business?"

"You said it! Nix on that clean-up stuff, though. Suppose you heard about Ten-Carat Murphy cashing in?"

"Yep. Damned sorry, too! Straight as they make 'em. Him and me has sat in many a little game together. He never dealt one off the bottom of the pack in his life."

"Well, he was my uncle and only relative," explained the Hermit. "And as he died right after he'd picked the winners at New Orleans, I happen to be pretty well heeled."

"You don't say so! Thought we had your record pretty complete, but never knew you was any connection of old T. C. Now, I s'pose, you're a law-and-order guy, and look on us from a new angle, hey?"

"Uhuh. You get the idea. I haven't had any cards from the Vanderbilts or Goulds yet, and maybe the glad tidings that a new millionaire has arrived hasn't

reached 'em; but I thought I'd tip you off I'm *through*. I don't want to be bothered by the dicks, because it's wasting your time and mine. As I got only the friendliest feelings for you all, I thought I'd chip in two fifty to the fund; but since you and my uncle was pals of a sort, I'll add as much for him, and call it five hundred. Sort of a pledge of good faith."

"Well, Hermit, we are sure obliged, and we got nothing on you. You're not even mugged in our gallery, and I'm ready to say so at any time."

The Hermit nodded, drew a little red book and a fountain pen, and rather awkwardly made out his first check on the trust company he had selected, and in which he had already deposited his own roll, pending the formalities of probating his uncle's will.

"So-long, chief!" he said in parting.

"Good luck, Mr. Kane!" grinned Ryan. "Just how do you aim to kill time?"

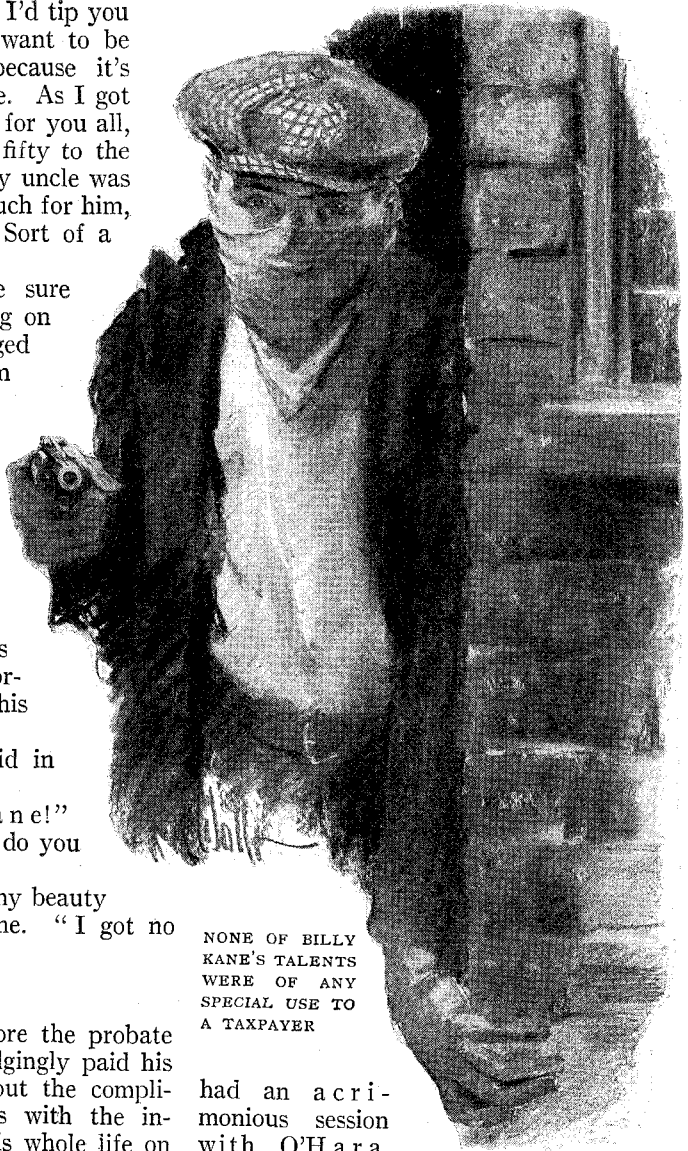
"That's what's spoiling my beauty sleep," confessed Billy Kane. "I got no idea at all."

## II

WHILE the will was before the probate court, and later, as he grudgingly paid his inheritance tax and filled out the complicated questionnaire, always with the inherited dislike of putting his whole life on record, it seemed to Mr. William Kane, retired, that never had so many promising prospects dazzled his eyes.

He sat one night in the little back room of Chug O'Hara's place, listening to the bibulous confidences of a lonesome Iowan who wore a stone as big as the Hermit's late uncle and much whiter, and who displayed a stupefying roll every time he bought a round. Once he dropped the bundle on the floor, whence his bored audience retrieved it and returned it, noting that it included many yellow notes. The Iowan did not even thank him.

Breaking away at last, and putting the Westerner into a taxi for his hotel, Kane



NONE OF BILLY  
KANE'S TALENTS  
WERE OF ANY  
SPECIAL USE TO  
A TAXPAYER

had an acrimonious session with O'Hara, who demanded his rake-off. If he is living to-day, Chug still firmly believes that the Hermit reneged on him.

Running down to Atlantic City for a few days, Kane discovered a palatial country villa closed for a few weeks, and entirely masked by its high stone wall and luxuriant shrubbery. Instinctively he scaled the wall, undisturbed by the broken glass cemented upon it, and gave the place the once over. He estimated that it would take him possibly seven minutes to force a certain window, after disconnecting its expensive futile burglar alarm; although, if pressed for time, he might do it in four or five. A

week after his return to the city he read of a sixty-thousand-dollar haul made there, and of the prompt arrest of the burglars, who had clumsily neglected to wear cotton gloves.

He even picked up, right on Fifth Avenue, a sapphire bar pin worth at least five thousand—the first time in his life he had ever stumbled on anything better than a leaky fountain pen. He promptly turned it in to Commissioner Ryan, thus stilling certain ignoble doubts in that hardened official's mind.

### III

WILLIAM KANE, American citizen, white, unmarried, aged twenty-eight, no occupation—so stated the ex-Hermit's passport, and truly stated; but nothing is less illuminative than bald fact. As a character study, all this was worth far less than the excellent hand-woven paper upon which it was written.

Paris! The city to which, it has been said, the souls of good men who have resisted earthly temptation repair after death; the great, industrious, rather frugal capital which stages a show for tourists who have always believed that the city stands for unabashed vice, and who would be bored to extinction by the life actually lived by the vast majority of its inhabitants. We know, of course, that the real Parisian sips colored sirups every afternoon while playing dominoes, takes his family to the cinema, or picnicking along the Seine, on Sundays, and dons his nightcap before eleven o'clock, save once a year when he goes to the opera, and on Christmas Eve.

There is another current, flowing in sinister silence beneath the great life-stream of bourgeois Paris, to be sure. It is not visible, must be sought in its own crooked channel, and is not always to be found even there. It does not court publicity, and its so-called cabarets are like the Bohemian resorts of other cities, where every one may be found—save Bohemians!

Of this phase of Paris the Hermit knew nothing. He did know, of course, that Paris had its gunmen. He had even heard them referred to as Apaches. Of their real life he knew about as much as he knew of the equally cruel but nobler red man whose tribal name had been borrowed. Which is to say, he had read many dime novels as a youth, and had seen William Hart in his ripper years.

In going to Paris, Kane went simply to have a good time. There, it was creditably reported, wine was cheap, women kind, and song was free of even a war-tax. Thither had gone convivial souls known to him, to return after a more or less brief season with marvelous tales and flat wallets.

In due time he arrived, and registered at a rather expensive hotel on the Boulevard des Capucines, where the cooking was precisely like that of other big hostelrys in the world capitals, and the patrons were chiefly Americans. In the tourist free-masonry, he found himself rubbing elbows with wealthy compatriots to whose homes his only entrée had been through a pantry window or a coal-chute. He was to them a personable young fellow countryman who seemed to have money to spend. His crudeness amused them. His clothes were irreproachable; a Fifth Avenue tailor built them that way.

He won a little from the papas at poker, and spent it on their daughters in flowers and theater-tickets. He was regarded as a good fellow; and he was. As he paid no more attention to one than to another, anxious mamas did not pry into his past or future.

There was one family in whose company he found himself rather oftener than with the others. In a sense, he felt that they were old acquaintances; for he had visited their Long Island home, one very dark night, and often wore—in a stickpin—a lovely ice-blue diamond which had formerly adorned one of Mrs. Welter's fat fingers. In its new environment she had several times admired it openly. Kane had smilingly urged her to accept it as a souvenir of their pleasant camaraderie. Of course she had refused; but, as he said in one of the soliloquies he held before his great gilt shaving mirror:

"Anyhow, what more can a guy do to make good?"

Thereafter he never felt that he had stolen this particular gem. Not that he cared, one way or the other!

Dorothea, only daughter of old Welter, whose sole business was evading as many taxes as possible, was a pretty, somewhat anemic child of an age anywhere from eighteen to twenty-four, with the intellect of a Pekingese and a set of bare nerves. She perpetually craved excitement; and as she had always had her own way, she achieved only ennui.



She smoked many little gold-tipped cigarettes scented with musk, and had seen and read everything racy in the way of literature and drama of the past decade, without deriving a solitary consoling thrill. Between her and Kane no sentiment whatever existed; but they were drawn together by a sort of animal magnetism. For he, too, was ridden by a devil of unrest.

Men like himself must either have constant excitement or blow up. Such inherent energy, properly directed, builds colonies or creates masterpieces. Suppressed or diverted, its victims become drug fiends, paranoids, or criminals.

Kane had native ability enough to have been a power for good. Environment had turned him toward crime. He had satisfied his craving for action by pitting himself against the ordered forces of society. Suddenly he became a member of that society, but without any of its traditions; and a month in Paris drove him onward toward insanity.

He was neither a debauchee nor a drunkard. He was piloted by sleek guides through the usual stage-set naughtiness which is not Paris at all, but which unhappily stands for it in the minds of otherwise intelligent men. He unerringly detected the false note, the forced laughter, the pallor under the rouge, the utterly mercenary cast of everything.

He did the Latin Quarter, and enjoyed it more; but sagely reflected that after all it was merely college pranks with a Gallic flavor. He had no background for the appreciation of university life.

On some of his tours—even on some in which she never could have indulged at home—Dorothea accompanied him and agreed with him. She looked on inscrutably from her queer young-old eyes, smoked many cigarettes, and was mildly bored.

Kane himself interested her more. She instinctively felt something hidden, something baffling, about him. Nothing in the way of autobiography that he could have related would have shocked her. She would have laughed heartily—which she rarely did—over the episode of the diamond.

He was young and receptive enough to pick up with facility many of the polite little conventions of her sort of people, and his chatter was losing much of its sidewalk piquancy. Still, he never tired her, as every one else did after the briefest com-

panionship; her parents, for instance, tired her unutterably.

Her strange eyes sought to penetrate through his serenely veiled ones to the rebellious soul she sensed behind them; but, when apart, neither ever thought of the other save in the most casual way. Both were a menace to social order; always potentially dangerous, because people of their type, after waiting in vain for something to happen, take life in their own hands and "start something."

The American tourists came and went. The Hermit met the men at the American Bar, or made one of a slumming-party. He met some of their women. Perhaps no other nation in the world is so extraordinarily given to presenting chance males to its wives and daughters.

The Welters ran over to London for a week, on the chance of a presentation at court. Billy Kane—hermit no longer—had tired of paying blackmail to avid guides for all sorts of tame peep-shows, and was prowling about on his own. He moved by chance, almost entirely ignorant of Parisian topography, often losing his way. In such cases, he could now say quite nicely in French:

"*Pardon, monsieur*, but could you perhaps have the goodness to indicate to me the Boulevard des Capucines?"

He had memorized this convenient paragraph, without being able to analyze it. Sometimes his polite hearer erupted in a flood of explanations; whereupon Billy thanked him effusively, lifted his hat, and tried the next passer-by. When he found one who pointed with cane or finger, he followed the direction; and by frequent corrections of his dead-reckoning, always arrived soon or late at the one street he knew. That he did not mention the hotel itself was with him a curious and quite unconscious survival of the *fear of being followed*. There had been weeks in the Hermit's life when his address was solicitously sought!

Instinctively, too, he always carried his gun. Several improved types of automatics had appeared since he spent an entire afternoon selecting his. The blueing was mostly worn off; but he had taken it apart and set it up again and again, kept it lightly oiled and perfectly clean, and knew it as he knew his own right hand. With it he had many times bored out the pips on a playing card from as far off as ordinary

eyes could identify it. More, he could draw and fire with one flickering motion.

## IV

So thus lie the characters in our little drama. Old Ten-Carat peacefully asleep in his grave, dreaming perhaps of winning an endless succession of long shots.

drama, because he could understand nothing that was spoken.

If his ears were sealed in this city of strange tongues, his eyes were not. Everywhere he beheld votaries of his old underworld at work, hunting or hunted. In glittering cabarets, whose thin-stemmed glasses tinkled in protest when the barefoot sirens sang a third off the key, he saw prospects framed at little marble-topped tables; and the routine was so familiar that he did not need to hear their furtive conversation.

He watched a gang of swell mobsmen cleverly

"NOW, I S'POSE, YOU'RE  
A LAW-AND-ORDER GUY,  
AND LOOK ON US FROM A  
NEW ANGLE, HEY?"



Dorothea Welter in London, being presented to their bored but gracious majesties, and no less bored than they were, could they have guessed

it. William Kane, gentleman of leisure, wandering aimlessly from café to cabaret in a city whose history was sealed to him, and whose tongue he did not understand.

Sometimes Billy found himself in most prosaic quarters, where plump bourgeois played dominoes while their wives gossiped over their gooseberry sirup. Or it might be one of the *rôtisseries* of Les Halles, filled with white-aproned marketmen and butchers; or one of the endless chain of restaurants famous for nothing whatever save the excellence of their cuisine and the amazing similarity of their waiters, their long divans, and their little round tables. Vaudeville he took in, of course; but he avoided the

assemble a crowd on a fashionable little shopping street, and then go through and clean up. For an hour one afternoon he followed a French detective, or *flic*, trailing a man, who evidently sensed that he was being shadowed and doubled cleverly in and out of shops, hotels, and cross streets. Kane keenly relished the game, and only desisted when he saw that the detective had noted him, so conspicuously American in his tailoring.

He began to see that matters were far less haphazard here than back home. There were fewer technicalities behind which a prisoner could hide; fewer immunities. On the other hand, more latitude was given the

underworld so long as it kept to itself. There were places, and quarters, where they lived unmolested and ruled their own roost, so long as they did not menace society. They had their own customs, their own gang rulers, whose word was law, and who now and then passed and executed sentence of death on traitors. There were certain evil resorts where they might be found in force any night, and observed by the curiously indiscreet visitor—were he able to find them.

Trouble was, they changed so quickly. As soon as strangers began to invade an Apache *brasserie*, its wild habitués migrated in a body, leaving only its camp-followers to reap a harvest of francs or drinks or cigars from gaping Yankees and cockneys, to whom they related blood-curdling lies. Kane never had been able to identify one of their strongholds. His own criminal instincts enabled him to detect unhesitatingly the spurious character of such Apache dens as had been pointed out to him.

Then, one night, paying his two francs entrance-fee to one of the innumerable dance-halls—"The Mill of the Half-Gods" it announced itself in incandescent purple letters—he sensed a different atmosphere the instant he stepped on its big square of waxed parquet.

It would have been impossible for him to explain wherein this place differed from any one of the dozens in which he had whiled away an hour on any other night. There were the same vast mirrors multiplying the considerable throng of idlers; the same waiters with white, impassive faces; the same oily, effusive *directeur* with black spade beard, shining hair, and a jovial pretense of being there solely and simply because he loved to see everybody happy.

The patrons, too, were seemingly of the usual types. Many foreign tourists, mostly English and American, with a sprinkling of Italians and Russians. There were a few students with their pert companions; some swagger officers, in blue uniforms; a Bulgar prince, *incognito*; professional dancing men ineffectually disguised as guests. From time to time one of these last sauntered to the center of the hall and chose a partner from the dozen or more girls attached to the house. Thereupon ensued a confusing riot of lingerie, shimmering silk, pink flesh, sparkling eyes, and disordered hair, culminating in the deft kick of a slender satin toe, and a long-suffering silk hat

sailed through the air toward the firmament of chandeliers.

All this was old stuff. So were the chattering *bouquetières* who at once surrounded Kane upon his entrance, until he had paid an exorbitant ransom for the wilted gardenia one of them pinned to his lapel, adding a kiss for good measure; whereupon they vanished like leaves in an October gale. Still, his instinct told him that the Mill of the Half-Gods, though it might grind as fine as any other mill in Paris, had something they lacked.

Two stately girls whose combined wardrobes, save for enormous hats, would have packed easily enough into a trout-creel, undulated to where he had paused to light a cigarette.

"Sorry! I don't speak French," he responded to their musical cascade.

"Engleesh?"

"Uhuh," he agreed amiably. "Sure!"

The blond girl smiled.

"Non—*Americain*!" she decided.

"Nice yo'ng man, you come weeth us, we show you a ver', ver' much better place, yes?"

"No," corrected Kane.

"*Tu n'est pas gentil, m'sieu!* We are hongry—fameesh. You weel not deny to us a leetle refreshment?"

"I will," Kane callously insisted. He touched lightly with a forefinger the brunette's bodice. "You are careless with your winnings, miss!"

The girl glanced down, startled and angry. A thick roll of notes which she had stuffed there showed a bare eighth of an inch above the black satin against which her firm, rice-powdered flesh stood out.

The girls vanished, as had their humbler sisters the flower maidens. Kane laughed and forgot them.

The sightseers began to mill around the dancing space, where a young girl was executing a *pas seul*. She was almost boyish in her lack of curves, yet with a kind of pliant angularity. Her impudently pretty face was crowned by an almost absurd wealth of black hair, whose sole adornment was a little twinkling green incandescent bulb. Green was her chiffon costume, too, and her stockingless feet were incased in green suède and strapped slippers. Altogether, she looked more like a katydid than anything else.

There are dancers who creditably execute certain intricate steps they have



learned. Others originate new and more difficult ones. A few only are able to articulate with their limbs. Of this limited circle was Andrée Duphot.

Extemporizing, so to speak, according to the moods of her audience, Andrée talked at them with her toes, mocked them, told them intimate and highly frivolous secrets, and intimated that she could relate their own as well. Heels or head in air mattered not; her legs were quicksilver, her entire body defied equilibrium, and seemed to scorn the very laws of gravitation.

sional career, removed a twenty-four-jeweled watch from a waistcoat. Less than two minutes later he had the girl in his arms before a ring of



SUDDENLY KANE FOUND HIMSELF HOLDING ANDRÉE'S LEFT HAND AND BOWING TO THE "BRAVAS" AND "ENCORES" OF THE CROWD

She beheld Billy Kane, open-mouthed, a lighted match burning unheeded in one hand; and with a flirt of one green-shod foot and a saucy wrinkling of her nose, she picked his heart out of his breast as deftly as he had ever, during his profes-

cheering compatriots.

V

BILLY was a good dancer of the Coney Island school, and was naturally lithe and cat-like; but performing with his little partner was like em-



bracing a soap-bubble. Her mouth opened, showing much unspoiled ivory; her eyelids closed to slits, through which jet-black rays of flame played upon his flushed face. Now shy and demure, Andrée danced like a little school-

Suddenly he found himself holding her left hand, and bowing to the "*bravas*" and "*encores*" of the crowd, and the delighted smirks of the hovering *directeur*. Upon the floor at their feet rained francs, boxes of monogrammed cigarettes, and flowers. Billy hastened to gather them up for her, dropping them into his hat, and gently urging her to a little table in one of the alcoves ranged along the wall.

A small regiment of waiters, flower-girls, candy-girls, and venders of souvenirs, hemmed them in at once. Kane was prepared to do his full duty; but Andrée scattered them with a volley of French idioms. To his offer of a bottle of wine she smilingly shook her head.



IT WOULD  
HAVE BEEN  
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FOR KANE TO  
EXPLAIN WHEREIN THIS  
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ANY ONE OF THE OTHERS

girl after half a dozen lessons from a second-rate master. In a flash she wriggled free, and, retreating, swaying, kept always a scant three inches from his questing hands. With a leap like a trout, her arms clasped tight about his neck, she forced him to become a human pivot, about which she revolved in a cloud of green and white.

"I shall be fat, no?" she explained.

She accepted a tiny glass of grenadine and water, sipping it daintily and eying Kane above the rim of her glass. She knew him instantly for an American, but was puzzled to settle his social status. He was clean-cut, good-looking, and amiable; he wore excellent clothes, he was as polite as

the average Yankee, yet he was not quite a gentleman.

A *nouveau riche*? Quite possible. A gambler? His clothes were too quiet, his hands too hard and muscular. He danced well, but she sensed in his technic the open-air school from which she too had graduated, rather than the polite academy. Not a university man; certainly not of the embassy. Nor by any means man of art or letters; nor—she felt sure—had he any of the earmarks of the American business man, tired or otherwise. She was intrigued, and a little piqued, because she rather excelled in snap-shot estimates of the male animals whom she met.

Kane, meanwhile, conscious of her scrutiny, but undisturbed by it, smoked quietly and feasted his eyes on her radiant little self, wondering how far down her back her midnight hair would fall were it loosened. He admired the size and brilliance of her eyes and the length of her lashes, the healthy whiteness of her skin and her graceful gestures. He guessed her weight and the span of her waist, estimated the sizes of her shoes and gloves, wished he could speak a little French.

Manlike, he did not go beneath the skin in his surmises; whereas she, after a brief approval of his physical make-up, busied herself in speculation upon his vocation and character. Upon the whole, he was the better repaid when the jazz quartet struck up again and she had to do another turn. "Come on, kid!" he urged. "Let's show 'em some real class!"

They danced again, and, after another brief rest, for the third time. One or two envious tourists who sought Andrée as a partner were dismissed with scant ceremony. For the first time since arriving in Paris, Kane was really enjoying himself.

Then, abruptly, something happened.

They were standing idly at the rim of the dancing circle, watching a plump and agile Spanish *gitana* bounce about like a live rubber ball, opposite a chalk-faced clown in evening clothes. Andrée's hand rested on Kane's black sleeve, a flake of white; her lips were parted in a half smile as she listened to his droll efforts to tell her what he thought about her. Most of the words were new to her, but their intention was as old as her memories—say sixteen years, assuming that she remembered little of her first two or three years toddling about the gutters of Montmartre.

About them rose a babel of small talk in half a dozen languages. A melancholy young Hindu was listening to an alert Japanese student, who spoke very precise and bookish French. A party of fair-haired Swedes, all with glacier-blue eyes and high cheek-bones showing in lean, intelligent faces, intently watched the dark Spanish beauty. Top-hatted Frenchmen, with splendid whiskers, and wearing red ribbons diagonally across their gleaming bosoms, gestured and rallied one another in staccato idiom. Bored-looking Britons lounged about, repelling the efforts of lone American tourists to strike up a friendly acquaintanceship. Marvelously arrayed—or disarrayed—unattached women patrolled the hall, with eyes bright and searching as crows following a cultivator.

The air was heavy with mingled odors of musk, tobacco, cordials, patchouli, wilted roses, and perspiration. It was heady—subtly disturbing—a fit medium for any sort of neurotic explosion. Out from the ruck of it all stepped a figure familiar enough to the habitués, but in Kane's eyes as weird as a character from vaudeville.

The man who advanced toward them was short and wiry, with a sallow face and jet-black hair carefully oiled, and with a lock coquettishly coiled on either temple. A *caporal* drooped languidly from the corner of his thin lips, and a wide-vizored cap was pulled well down over his eyes. His shoes were of tan, sharp-pointed as stilettos, with fawn-colored, buttoned tops. About his neck he wore a red kerchief, and another larger one served as a belt for his baggy velveteen trousers. He was instantly recognized by the Frenchmen present as an Apache, and by some few of them as a leader of note among this sinister fraternity of cutthroats.

His outstanding feature was an almost total lack of nose, that organ being so flat and bridgeless as to give him the singular appearance of a death's head—which similitude was enhanced by the ivory tone of his flesh and the peculiarly dead look of his eyes. In the Middle Ages "the noseless one" was a familiar nickname for death. It was easy enough to see why, as Chico—so known—advanced with an oddly noiseless and stealthy glide to where Andrée, not aware of his presence, was saying outrageously frank things to Kane, secure in her knowledge that he could not possibly understand her. Even had he been a fin-

ished French scholar, he would have been equally puzzled.

Kane saw the Apache, but did not appreciate the situation until Chicoq had shot out a skinny claw and sunk his fingers into the white flesh of Andrée's arm, whirling her about, while a little whimper of pain and surprise cut short her monologue.

As soon as she saw who had seized her, fear blazed in her eyes, to be instantly succeeded by rage.

"*Scélérat!*" she screamed, stamping her foot and trying to wrench herself free.

She proceeded with a fluent and terrifying account of Chicoq's immediate and remote ancestry, which indicated that scarcely a drop of human blood flowed in his dishonored veins.

Kane sized up the situation instantly. His right hand caught the Apache's left, nearly twisting the wrist in its socket.

"Where do you get that stuff?" he growled, thrusting Chicoq back as the latter released Andrée with a wince of pain.

Up to this point the Apache had felt no special resentment toward Kane. From his place behind a post supporting the gallery which encircled the room, he had sullenly watched Andrée weave her spell upon the young American, as he had seen her do many times before with other men. His jealous rage was wholly directed against her.

Now, roughly handled by the stranger, he turned his gaze upon Kane, less in anger than with a sort of wonder that any man should have the temerity to affront him, Chicoq, a bad man and a reputed killer. His eyes were flat and unwinking, like a serpent's; and their dense, dead black, seeming all pupil, gave them a peculiarly malignant stare.

For perhaps five seconds he stood thus, motionless; and then, with a gesture so lightning-quick that many of those looking on did not see it at all, his right hand sought the scarf which formed his belt, wherein was hidden the needle-pointed Apache knife.

Kane, however, saw the movement and understood it. His own automatic rested loose in the pocket of his dinner coat. He could have drawn it and placed every one of its small, steel-nosed bullets in the places where they would do the most harm, before his victim's body touched the floor. In his own backyard he would unhesitatingly have done so; but a canny instinct warned him

not to do this save as a last resort, in a strange city governed by unfamiliar laws.

What he did was perfectly natural from his national standpoint. With such promptness that there was no measurable time between the Apache's gesture and his own response, his left fist shot out and caught the Frenchman on the point of the chin. It landed a trifle quartering, as a seaman would say—just right to exert the most powerful leverage upon the base of the brain. It was not a heavy, pushing blow, but sharp and stabbing. Chicoq fell as an old coat drops from its hook; and not a quiver could be detected thereafter.

The affair was over so abruptly that a little sigh exhaled from all those who had been holding their breaths from the instant Kane had wrenched the fellow from Andrée's side. She at once began to cry and talk at the same time, pushing the American away with her little hands, telling him that he must leave at once, as his life was not worth an old shoe otherwise; all of which he fortunately did not understand. Involuntarily he moved backward toward the door, aided by the anxious *directeur*, who wrung his hands and called Heaven to witness that never before had such grist come to his respectable mill!

At the door, a little uncertain, he paused to find a suave and handsome young Frenchman at his elbow. Andrée had fled.

"Pardon me, *m'sieu*," he said in perfect English. "It is really better to do as *mademoiselle* begs. Nothing can be gained by lingering. If the *gendarmes* arrive, unpleasant notoriety will follow to annoy *m'sieu*, whom I congratulate upon being a skillful boxer. To lay out the engaging Chicoq is what a thousand lads will envy you within the hour."

"But he'll think that I'm a quitter—that I beat it while he was down and out."

"*Permettez!* It will be some time before he thinks anything whatsoever. See! Even now the waiters bear him away."

It was so. They were lugging off the Apache like a sack of potatoes—removing the evidence.

"If *m'sieu* will so far honor me as to accept a little refreshment at a near-by place?" the young Frenchman requested, taking Kane's elbow in a friendly yet respectful manner.

There really seemed nothing better to do; and he was glad to find some one to talk to. They passed out together, pro-



foundly salaamed to by the *portier*. Kane's final backward glance rested on the brass-buttoned figure of a little *chasseur*, who was devouring him with the adoring eyes of hero-worship. Never would little Victor forget this night! He was more than half convinced that he had beheld M. Dempsey, the American champion.

## VI

THE *brasserie* to which the Frenchman, who introduced himself as Maréchal, piloted Kane seemed to him rather dingy and unattractive to win the regard of so smart a gentleman, even ac-



ANDRÉE'S ACCOUNT OF CHICO'S IMMEDIATE AND REMOTE ANCESTRY INDICATED THAT SCARCELY  
A DROP OF HUMAN BLOOD FLOWED IN HIS DISHONORED VEINS



cepting his explanation that it had an unusually well-stocked cellar. Its gilded mirrors were faded; its marble-topped tables rather greasy; and the habitués did not strike the American as connoisseurs. He gave it but a fleeting thought, however, as they were seated, at Maréchal's



THE APACHE TURNED HIS GAZE UPON KANE, LESS IN ANGER THAN WITH A SORT OF WONDER THAT ANY MAN SHOULD HAVE THE TEMERITY TO AFFRONT HIM, CHICOQ, A BAD MAN AND A REPUTED KILLER

command, "*pas si près de la porte*"—well away from the entrance, and at one side.

The bottle of wine that Maréchal ordered was of a famous year, and justified his choice. Kane was not a wine-drinker; but he was not wholly oblivious of the full body and rich bouquet of the deep-toned Burgundy, as the *garçon* poured a few drops into Maréchal's glass before filling his.

"In your hotel, *m'sieu'*, I care not which of our hostelrys you have honored with your patronage, you would have difficulty in matching this vintage at four times the price. *À votre santé!*"

He lifted his glass, squinting at the ruby flames that seemed to seethe in it as the *electrolier* rays struck down upon the surface of the wine.

Maréchal interested Kane. He answered his questions regarding the Apaches, their habits and haunts. Of Chicoq he professed to know nothing save that he was a reputed leader, and enamored of the little dancer.

"And she?"

Maréchal shrugged.

"Who can say? Beauty and the beast, *hein!* But it is said that Mlle. Andrée has many lovers, but no sweetheart."

All the time, Kane was conscious of a close but guarded scrutiny from the Frenchman's intelligent eyes. He had white, slender, carefully tended hands, which he used in quick, nervous gestures. He was dressed in good taste, without jewelry of any sort.

Presently, greatly to Kane's interest, Maréchal gave him a well-known "high sign"—a signal internationally familiar to high-grade crooks. It was the sort of thing that would attract no suspicion whatever—a perfectly natural yet unmistakable sign.

This was indeed interesting! So thought Kane, who did not betray by the flicker of an eye that it meant anything to him. The man might be a detective, of course, but probably was a criminal—a dip, perhaps, or a card-sharp. His hands were that sort.

Meanwhile they chatted amiably, as two congenial young men might. Kane bought the best cigars he could—by no means equal to the wine. Time passed agreeably, the Parisian suggesting places in his city which might amuse the American, who scribbled addresses all over his cuffs, to Maréchal's amusement.

Suddenly recalling that he had no sort of

an idea of the hour, Kane consulted his watch. Instantly there passed across the face of Maréchal a fleeting expression that completely changed him. For a second his soul peered out of the neat hedgerows and parterres he had cultivated in the way of manners.

Crooks have this much in common with the children of Israel—both have from time immemorial been obliged to flee at short notice; hence they like their assets to be in the most portable form. Kane was a rough and ready judge of jewels, and had in the old days always carried a number about with him, usually set in rings or scarf-pins, sometimes loose gems. At present he wore an exceedingly valuable platinum watch carried more or less carelessly—in the manner of most crooks—attached simply to a fob, its pendant a magnificent Hungarian opal.

Two minutes afterward he was vastly amused by a little legerdemain on the part of his engaging companion. Turning in his seat, Maréchal called Kane's attention to a man nodding over a *bock* at the far end of the room.

"He is a *flic mouchard*—one of our most renowned detectives."

"Looks more like a fuddled cabby to me," Kane commented.

"Ah! That is his art. You may be sure that is precisely what it suits his purpose to look like, at this moment."

While talking, with his shoulder half turned toward Kane, the hand of Maréchal crept out beneath the table-edge. His soft, flexible fingers, moving so suavely that Kane could not feel them at all, expertly removed the watch, together with its opal fob, and withdrew as quietly. Kane, admiring his skill, made no move to recover it. He chose to let his friend play out his hand.

Before Maréchal turned to face the table again, he signaled a waiter lounging at a little distance.

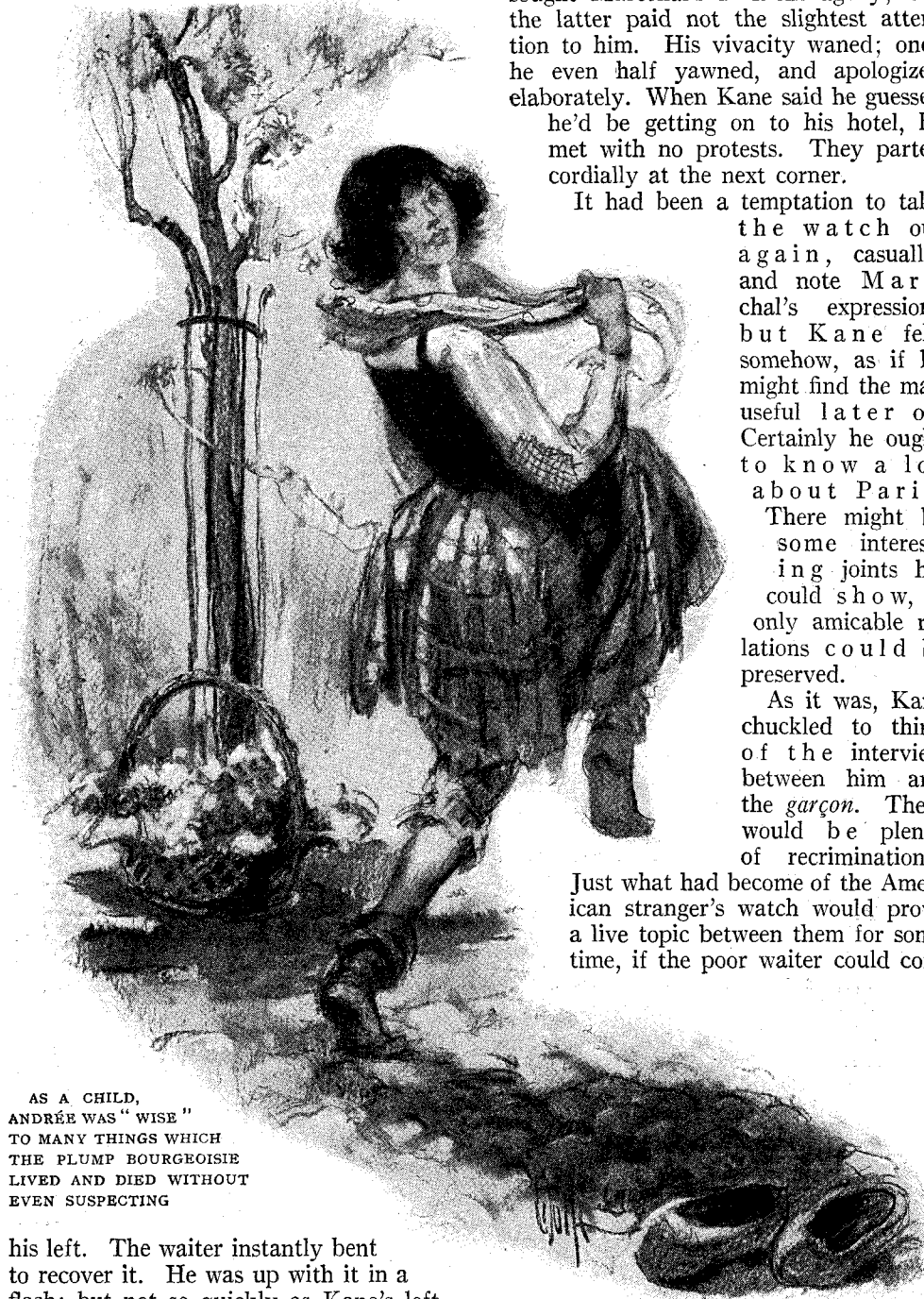
"Bring us a fresh carafe," he ordered. "This water is warm."

"*Bien, m'sieu'*," the man murmured.

At the words, Kane was barely able to detect the transfer of the watch to the waiter's hand, and instantly thereafter to the pocket of his jacket. So that was the idea! In a moment more, Billy's faithful repeater would indeed be gone forever.

Even as the waiter turned to go, Kane dropped his cigarette-case to the floor at





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his left. The waiter instantly bent to recover it. He was up with it in a flash; but not so quickly as Kane's left hand had flickered in and out of the pocket, which was for a second level with his elbow. The next moment the man had hurried away to the serving-room at the rear.

He was gone a long time; and when he returned with the carafe, his face was unable to conceal its agitation. His eyes

sought Maréchal's in silent agony; but the latter paid not the slightest attention to him. His vivacity waned; once he even half yawned, and apologized elaborately. When Kane said he guessed he'd be getting on to his hotel, he met with no protests. They parted cordially at the next corner.

It had been a temptation to take the watch out again, casually, and note Maréchal's expression; but Kane felt, somehow, as if he might find the man useful later on. Certainly he ought to know a lot about Paris! There might be some interesting joints he could show, if only amicable relations could be preserved.

As it was, Kane chuckled to think of the interview between him and the *garçon*. There would be plenty of recriminations!

Just what had become of the American stranger's watch would prove a live topic between them for some time, if the poor waiter could con-

vince the dip that he had not disposed of it while in the serving-room.

## VII

CHICOQ, meanwhile, had suffered unspeakable loss of face. Lay violent hands

upon a Frenchman, whether admiral or Apache, marquis or man servant, and his honor is temporarily ruined. You may shoot him full of lead, or insert a sharp knife into his anatomy, and while he will feel the sincerest regret, he will harbor no special animosity. Tweak his nose, or punch it, and he craves your warm heart's blood and the perdition of your soul.

Chicoq, when in a retiring-room he finally opened his eyes, reached for the knife in his sash. Thus neatly had Kane severed the cord of consciousness. He resumed his action at the point where he had been interrupted; and when he found that he was somewhere else, on his back, with a *directeur*—who feared and disliked him equally—bathing his temples with cooking-brand, he was stunned at the disgrace.

After five minutes of frantic cursing—which even the *directeur*, born in Paris, as were his father and grandfather before him, could not half understand—the Apache inquired who his assailant was, and where. When he learned that he was a stranger, never before seen at the Mill of the Half-Gods, and that he had gone none knew where, Chicoq called for Andrée Duphot.

That young person, now sedately clad in cheap black serge with a black straw hat, could tell no more. *M'sieu'* had seen her, had danced with her, had bought her one so little grenadine. For the rest, he had not even told her his name. Doubtless if Chicoq—*vaurien*—had not interfered so rudely as to rouse the anger of *m'sieu'*, he would have told her all, as other gentlemen usually did—his name, age, address, income, favorite perfume, marital woes, and his feelings toward her. For the rest, she was sorry he had been rough with her poor cabbage, her rashly impulsive Chicoq!

Another tirade of gutter invective from the Apache had not ceased when they passed out of the side entrance and turned toward the Hill of the Martyr.

Andrée Duphot, with every inducement to be otherwise, had somehow attained the age of eighteen and remained a good girl. She would have spurned the adjective, doubtless; but it was so. The quarter in which she grew up was quite free from hampering morals, and her childish ignorance remained with her until she was nearly seven. After that, she was "wise" to many things which the plump bourgeoisie dwelling less than a quarter of a mile from her slum never even suspected.

Morality is the artificial code which society establishes when it has lost its old primitive instincts. Civilization states that certain acts are right, or wrong. Savages know, intuitively, what is best for the race, and peacefully club to death individuals who break the tribal custom.

In most respects, this primal instinct is superior to codes and statutes. It is what preserved that healthy brat, little Andrée, the child of a drunken cabaret singer and an ex-model, in the crooked streets which climb Montmartre like ill-made stairs.

She learned to dance on the cobblestones, and could climb drain-pipes, work her way hand-over-hand along a clothes-line, or scale a ten-foot fence as easily as a young monkey. As she was a pretty and precocious child, her thrifty parents sent her out into the boulevards and restaurants as a vender of flowers, where she wheedled many coppers from kind old gentlemen.

Very soon she proved that her legs were more nimble than those of the regular dancers at the cheaper cabarets; and as she possessed an abundance of *blague* and sharp wit, she shone at both ends, which few of her rival artists did. She had no difficulty in securing engagements, and broke and remade them at her whim. She would leave the most recherché resort for no reason at all, and display her unique talents in some cellar, where little white money ever dropped into her apron. She had been at the Mill of the Half-Gods barely a week when Billy Kane had wandered in.

Andrée regarded breaking hearts as woman's chief end in life. She did not pity the men, because obviously their hearts were made to be broken by somebody—and she felt that she could do the job better and more thoroughly than anybody else. She did not bar the haughty *demimondaines* nor the jeweled and furred ladies of polite society. Where a heart needed breaking, little Andrée was ready day and night to attend to the matter, whether in a smelly *boutique*, the home of a prim little tradesman, or one of the arrogant mansions of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. But her own heart had never so much as suffered one little crack. It is doubtful if she had ever danced as much with the same man in one evening as she had with Billy Kane, or felt so kindly toward one. It wasn't love at first sight—nothing like that; but it was a quite unusual interest.

When Chicoq—whom she rather ad-

mired, but liked least of all among the body-guard who trailed her from one café to another as she migrated, frequently to the despair of the *patron* and the *maitre d'hotel*—lost his head with such dire consequences, Andrée promptly terminated her engagement, collected her wages to the minute, and departed in company with the Apache.

She did not desire or need his protection; but as both lived on the Butte, she could not very well avoid him. She was not afraid of him—the children of Montmartre seem to be born fearless—but she was afraid for the young American.

She knew that Chicoq would never forget the blow in the face he had suffered in public, the news of which would sweep through every foul crevice of Montmartre to the discredit of the Apache leader. She knew, also, that Kane would come back to the Mill of the Half-Gods looking for her, and that Chicoq would know this, too. Therefore she promptly resigned. Tomorrow she would sign up at some far-distant resort, trusting to luck that her ill-assorted rivals would never meet.

She did not allow it to distress her; it was to be expected that men would fight over her, just as they had done as far back as she could remember; but she would do the little she could to keep these two apart. Thus she dismissed the American indifferently when her companion cursed him heartily, and did not make the mistake of trying to divert him from his purpose. Rather, she yawned prettily and advised him to gather his chosen ones and prepare to garrote the young American on the first opportunity, as he would certainly be no match for him alone. Chicoq would seek to do so anyhow, but with less zeal than if she seemed to hinder him.

The Apache, leaving her at the foot of the long flights which led to her breezy aerie at the top of a many-storied house, was convinced that she felt no more interest in Kane than in any other personable and prosperous male she had met. He regretted that his impulsiveness had led him to act before she learned the foreigner's name and address. He might be a casual, here to-day and gone to-morrow; but if he remained in Paris, the noseless one was sure that he could find him sooner or later. It would not be at Notre Dame—nor at the Louvre!

Andrée, her muscular little legs dragging a little, plodded up flight after flight in the dark well of the old house in which she dwelt. Coming at last to the very top landing, she softly touched the wrought-iron latch of a paneled and battered door, and entered an immense attic-like room containing a jumble of mismated furniture, a few moth-eaten rugs, some cheap lithographs, whose figures wavered in the faint rays of a single candle stuck in a cordial-bottle, and two beds—a large canopied one and a white iron cot.

In the big bed, clasped in each other's arms, slept the two pale little *midinettes* with whom Andrée shared her room. She smiled at them, removed the boots from her tired feet, lighted a cigarette, and in her stockinged feet pattered over to one of the two low, wide windows.

Leaning upon the sill, she gazed out over Paris asleep—if Paris ever does sleep. So high was her perch that she might have been an observer in an airplane. Behind her loomed the dark mass of the *Sacré Cœur*. Far below, the wings of the *Moulin Rouge* still lazily revolved. In the distance, banded with golden globes, the *Seine* moved calmly through the night, on its journey to the cleansing brine of the sea.

Andrée tossed her cigarette away. It fell in a gleaming parabola, seeming to take a full minute before it died on the cold pave far below. Then she turned away—no need to draw shutters here, where only the moon could look in—and doffed her clothes.

From her silk stocking she took a number of paper bills and one napoleon. These she carefully hid with many others in a sardine-tin beneath a loose board in the floor. Andrée possessed the thrift of her race as completely as her peasant sisters. The coppers and francs in her purse she did not bank—only gold and paper.

For an instant, extraordinarily pretty in a pink silk *robe de nuit*, her black hair cascading over her slender shoulders, her face a little white and tired, her bare toes showing beneath the edge of the long robe, she stood beside her iron cot, murmuring a few words and crossing herself before a tiny blue and white Madonna holding on her knees a shallow basin of holy water. Then, blowing out the candle, she dived into bed as one dives from a spring-board, and was almost instantly engulfed in the tides of slumber.

(To be continued in the January number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)





## YULE SONG

NOW that far over height and hollow  
Sweep the winds and the driven snow,  
Song comes fleet as the wings of the swallow—  
Hey, for the holly and mistletoe!

Now that the dawns and the eves grow crisper,  
And there is warmth in the back-log's glow,  
Sweet lips carol and fond lips whisper—  
Hey, for the holly and mistletoe!

You and I in the blown wild weather,  
Oh, my love, what a joy to know  
All of the rites of Yule together!  
Hey, for the holly and mistletoe!

*Sennett Stephens*