

come in upon them. Without saying anything to Lorry, she went out of the room and picked up the receiver. It was Max; and she felt as if she had been caught . . . stealing. His voice, however, was calm and, as usual from the office, terse and businesslike.

"May? Max. I have just been informed that some plans have been changed. We don't have to take the vacation now unless you want to. We can go in four weeks. It is up to you. When do you want to go?"

May held the receiver away from her ear, looked out the open door onto the green lawn, shadows already forming across its coolness, and thought (which

later puzzled her) how she would love to roll and play in its softness—like a child. Then she turned and saw Lorry's face—tired, sad; and said into the hard mouth-piece:

"If it suits you just as well, I'd rather go in four weeks. The weather will not be so hot then."

"Good," came over the phone; and she pictured Max already jotting it down on his little desk-calendar. "I'll be home later. Good-by, dear." And the phone clicked.

As May walked back into the living-room she smiled at Lorry, a queer, self-conscious smile which irritated her.

"It was Max," she said.

His Widow

BY CALE YOUNG RICE

THE wreaths shrivelled and froze upon his grave.
She sat before the fire and warmed her knees
And yawned with relief and thought how black would please
The white of her skin; then softly trilled a stave
Of the new popular air, "Life Isn't So Bad!"

A horrid day for a funeral! . . . But grief
Had certainly been becoming to her; she
Had raised her veil at the prettiest time to see
Eyes bent upon her—men's eyes—ardent if brief.
She would be wealthy too . . . "Life isn't so bad."

She must reduce her hips though; and be brave
And sad: a second husband likes to take
A widow's weeds off—for a great new love's sake.
She knew just how she would let him—sweet and grave.
He should be very proud . . . "Life isn't so bad."

She brushed her hair and tended to her nails,
And ate a chocolate cream—the wreaths were freezing . . .
She cried a little; two or three tears came squeezing;
But told herself that true strength never fails
The deepest hearts, and ceased . . . "Life isn't so bad."

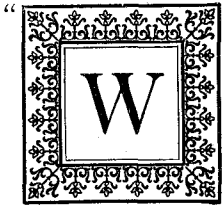
She went to bed. Her head upon the pillow
Would have looked very lovely, she was sure,
Had there been any to see. . . . A year to endure!
She sighed, and felt as sad as wind in a willow,
And slept—and snored a little . . . Life isn't so bad.

Who Killed Rutherford?

BY WALTER D. EDMONDS

Author of "The End of the Tow-Path"

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DE ALTON VALENTINE



HAT I would like to know," remarked Denslow, when discussion of the early frost had palled—"what I would like to know is who killed old Rutherford—if anybody."

The fat woman, who was Solomon Tinkle's cook on the *Maud Merrick*, raised her folded chin over her glass and nodded her head until the ribbons of her bonnet quivered and the leaden yellow cherries rattled like dice.

"Ah," she said, "that's it—who did?"

The three others lifted their lips from the rims of their glasses and stared at the two. All five of them drew slightly closer to the stove, as if to get their backs as far as possible from the black window-panes on which the frost was already marking gray lines. For the sake of economy, and because of the smallness of the company, only one lamp had been left upon the bar, and it sent its light horizontally over the wood, just touching the long rows of glasses with orange half-moons, and falling squarely on the face of the fat woman who sat with her back to the wall. Bolt upright on her chair, she seemed to be enjoying her conspicuousness, for she smoothed her plaid woollen skirt over her knees and opened the red-centred paisley shawl about her shoulders to let the light fall on the gold locket she wore at her breast. Her immense weight diminished the breadth of her shoulders and her height, and had it not been for the bow-legged diminutiveness of Solomon Tinkle beside her, one might have thought her squat. She arched her bosom and patted her dyed red hair.

"Who did it?" she repeated.

Solomon Tinkle wound his legs intricately through the rungs of his chair. He

leaned forward impressively, his right hand on the door of the stove, which he held open.

"If Rutherford was murdered,"—he turned from the Judd brothers and spat neatly into the coals,—"somebody must have done it."

And he closed the door of the stove with a clank.

"Eanh," said the younger Judd; "that's right."

His brother let his sombre eyes wander over the faces of the others and return to the spots of light in the bottles behind the bar. He pulled at the stem of his pipe with pursed lips.

"Eanh," he said slowly; "that's right."

The fat woman held out her glass, her little finger curled pudgily.

"Will I make it another of gin, Mrs. Gurget?" asked Denslow.

"Eanh. On the luke side of hot with a squirt of lemon to cultivate the air with."

Denslow returned with the glass, and the fat woman spread her nostrils over the tingling odor of lemon.

"Well," said Denslow, as he resumed his seat and crossed his legs, "here we be, real sociable, and the last time afore winter, probably. I didn't even expect your boats comin' down so late . . ."—he sipped his gin leisurely—"it comes hard to think of old Rutherford lyin' by and cold, and him with such a taste in whiskeys. He was a good man, too, by his lights; easy on a loan, and friendly when in liquor, but not when drunk. He'd made a load of money with his line of bars 'tween Utica and Syracuse. Made more out of his post-houses. I wonder who got it."

"We was in Boonville the night it happened," said Mrs. Gurget. "But the will wasn't read yet when Solomon let on as how he'd got to get through with them potatoes before the frost got too heavy."