

solution. Now the thing to do is to look through this file of 'The Star' and see if we can discover any advertisement that seems suspicious. First, what date shall we look up?"

Valeska returned to the paper on which the numbers were written. "Well," she said, "if it was I, I should want to have a message as often as possible. If I send him my texts every night, he ought to reply in the morning paper. This paper seems to show four messages. The last one must be yesterday's. That would bring his first advertisement just four days ago,—Monday, May 25."

He turned to the file, and they looked over the pages together, her chin on his shoulder, Astro's long forefinger hovering at one advertisement after another, his suave voice keeping up a running commentary:

"We'll omit the displayed ads. He couldn't afford that, and they would be too conspicuous. All the little ones are classified under heads. Let's see: 'Automobiles,'—h'm, all well known second hand shops. 'Lawyers,'—nothing there. 'Real Estate, Villa Lots,'—don't see anything, do you? 'Furnished Rooms.' 'Unfurnished Flats,'—let's go carefully here. What we want is three figures. We'll recognize them by the wording, if they're put in on purpose. I don't see anything there. H'm, 'For Sale,'—go slow now! 'Fixtures,' 'Bargains,' 'Typewriters,' 'Sacrifice,'—well! what do you think of that? Eureka!"

His finger stopped at a three-line notice, which read:

FOR SALE

19 vols. of Sir Roger de Coverly, 63 illustrations on wood; \$6 and \$8 each.
G. P. James & Co., Flatiron Bldg

"Now isn't that crazy enough to be suspicious? 'Nineteen' again too, her favorite number. Who ever heard of Sir Roger de Coverly, except in the papers of 'The Spectator,' anyway? There you are: 19: 63—6 and 8. Look it up!"

Valeska flew to the Bible and turned to the Psalms, and read from the sixty-third chapter:

When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.

My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.

"The blessed infants! Isn't it perfectly lovely? Ruth must have had hard work to answer that; but the one she sent was nearly as good, wasn't it? Oh, let's find the next one, and get the whole correspondence quick! It's too exciting!"

Astro opened the issue of the twenty-sixth, and scanned the advertisements carefully. It was sometime before they found it, and several false clues were followed up. Valeska, thinking she had discovered the secret, would hurriedly take the Bible, only to be referred to some text in Ezra as,—

The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six.

The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three,—and would go off into peals of laughter. Some of these false scents led deep into the "Begats," some led into the whale's belly.

But at last the right one was discovered in the "Second Hand" column, which read, innocently enough:

FOR SALE: 64 good, 1st class 2nd hand tables.
Address CHESTER, Star Office.

And, turning, therefore, to the third book of John, chapter one, verse two, she read aloud:

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

"Now let's arrange the whole correspondence as far as we have it," Valeska suggested, after the four messages were all deciphered. "It certainly is a charming set of love letters!"

"It may be well written by the ablest literary men of King James' epoch," said Astro. "You read off the texts, and I'll write them down. It's a relief from solving murder mysteries and dynamite outrages and stolen jewels."

Valeska, having the references checked off, read as follows, insisting that Ruth's lover should be called Chester, from the name in the second advertisement.

RUTH

I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. (Ps. 18:1.)

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. (Ps. 16:11.)

CHESTER

And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which

we had from the beginning, that we love one another. (2 John 5.)

I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah. (Ps. 143:6.)

RUTH

I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. (Ps. 101:2.)

My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. (Ps. 89:34.)

CHESTER

How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Ps. 119:103.)

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. (Ps. 73:25.)

RUTH

Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning! for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee. Ps. (143:8.)

And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily. (Ps. 69:17.)

Valeska reread the whole series, and her eyes burned deep. Astro watched her pretty, serious face without a word, waiting for her comments. The tears glistened in her eyes as she said finally:

"Oh, can't we help them somehow? Surely you can, if you only will!"

Astro recited whimsically to himself:

"They warned him of her,
And they warned her of him;
And the courtship proceeded
To go with a vim!"

"It's altogether too romantic for us to interfere with. Let them have their clandestine correspondence; it makes the affair interesting. Wait till we read his reply in to-morrow's 'Star,' Valeska. Perhaps they can manage it themselves."

This was all she could get out of the Master of Mysteries that day; but she knew from his silent contemplation that he had not stopped thinking the matter over. She herself puzzled her wits as to how Ruth had communicated with her lover, until she had to give it up. She knew that if she waited Astro would solve the mystery, if indeed he had not already found it out.

She came into the studio next morning excitedly. "Oh! isn't it awful?" were her first words. She held the morning "Star" out to him, with an anxious look.

Astro smiled and pointed to another copy which lay on his great table where his astrological charts were spread out. "It's only a lover's quarrel, I think. He's a little jealous of that Sherman Fuller, I imagine."

"Well, that's enough. I should think Chester would be wild!"

"Well," said Astro, yawning, "I'm glad he made one jump out of the Psalms, anyway. I was getting tired of that number 19. Job is a good place for a jealous man to look. You'd better add his remarks to our list."

Valeska, therefore, wrote down the following texts, which she had drawn from the advertisement of that morning's paper:

CHESTER

I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word. (Ps. 119:147.)

Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. (Ps. 77:4.)

Lover and friend has thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness. (Ps. 88:18.)

When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. (Ps. 73:16.)

Why doth thy heart carry thee away? and what do thine eyes wink at . . . ? (Job 15:12.)

Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. (Ps. 22:20.)

"Surely you'll help them out now, won't you?" Valeska pleaded. "We can't let it all be spoiled this way! Think how hard it is for her to explain!"

"Trust her," said Astro, shaking his head. "Only I'd like to know how she does it, that's all I want. I propose we take a walk out to 53d-st. this evening. You know she goes up stairs into her room every night after dinner, say from eight till nine o'clock. I think if we walk up and down in front of that block we may find something doing."

"Oh, I hope we'll find Chester, anyway!" Valeska exclaimed.

They proceeded as he had suggested, that evening, to walk up Fifth-ave. after dinner, reaching 53d-st. at a few minutes past eight. Astro pointed out Ruth's Window, which was already lighted. Then together they walked slowly up and down on

the opposite side of the street, keeping the house well in view.

They had not been there for more than ten minutes, when the sash was suddenly thrown up in Ruth Lorsson's room. They could see her form silhouetted against the light. A white something was thrown out, and fell on the sidewalk. Immediately a man emerged from the shadow of the adjacent doorway, ran down the steps, picked up the white package, and walked rapidly up the street.

"It's Chester!" Valeska exclaimed.

"Yes, we must find out where he lives and who he is," was Astro's reply. "You had better go home, and I'll follow him."

The man had walked off so rapidly that she saw it would be useless to attempt to keep up with him, much less overtake him, and she tried to stifle her disappointment as the Master of Mysteries, leaving her, walked quickly up the street. As Chester walked, she saw him tear something from the package he carried. Then another white piece dropped. She followed far enough to discover what the fragments were,—the sides of an empty candy box which Ruth Lorsson had thrown into the street. Her message had indubitably been written on the bottom, since he had thrown all the rest away.

"I see now why Miss Ruth is so fond of candy," Valeska said to herself. "A note thrown from the window would be too dangerous and too hard to find. It's ridiculously simple! I think I'm growing fond of that girl."

Next day Astro appeared at the studio with the information that the young man's name was indeed Chester, that he was an artist or illustrator for magazines; and that he lived on the south side of Washington Square.

"He's getting into a terrible state," said Valeska. "Did you read his advertisement this morning? It was under 'Lawyers' this time."

"I haven't had time to look over 'The Star.' What is it?"

Valeska read from her list the last addition.

"For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance. (Ps. 21:6.)

"Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah. (Ps. 21:2.)

"Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it. (Ps. 35:21.)

"I am troubled: I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. (Ps. 38:6.)

"Poor devil!" Astro grew serious. "I did see a paragraph in 'Town Gossip' this morning about a 53d-st belle who it was reported was about to make a brilliant match. It was thinly disguised, and evidently referred to Ruth Lorsson."

"He evidently believes she is engaged," said Valeska; "but I don't. No girl would give up such a romantic lover."

"Now," said Astro, "the question is, How are we going to get hold of her side of the correspondence? I'm getting as interested in this affair as if I was paid for it. The fact that there is a misunderstanding does alter the matter too, and I don't see but that we'll have to straighten it out if we can. I've thought of a way to get hold of to-night's message by a trick. It may work, and it may not. Of course it's rather low of us to interfere with their private postoffice; but we may be able to make up to them later. Anyway, it will make it exciting for them. I'm going to bait a box myself," he went on, "and place it on the sidewalk at a quarter of eight. Chester will arrive and think that for some reason she has already thrown it out, and he'll take it and make off. Then, when she throws her own box out, we'll grab it."

The temptation was too great for Valeska's curiosity, and she gave a hesitating consent on the agreement that it should be tried only once. "But you'll have to put a message on the box or he'll know there's something wrong," she said.

"Turn to Psalms 102. I think that will not compromise her too much," Astro said.

"My heart is smitten and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. (Ps. 102:4.)

"Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. (Ps. 102:10.)

The ruse succeeded. Shortly after eight o'clock, Chester came walking down the street, spied the box which Astro had placed conspicuously on the sidewalk, examined it quickly, and walked hurriedly away. Fifteen minutes later, Ruth's box dropped from the window. Astro secured it and took it to a nearby lamp post, look at the figures, and then consulted a small Bible which he drew from his pocket.

"This is too bad," he said to Valeska, who had

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