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the same before Commissioner Charlton, and then it will be time enough to consider whether or not we can omit an explanation of the affair at your own office."

"Very well," was all that Cooper had said in reply.

He had no intention of participating in any such program, and he believed Mary would on her own account, be as much opposed to it as he. What he had in mind was that by a further talk on the morrow he might induce Mr. Barnwell to be less insistent about having the affair explained everywhere.

Mr. Barnwell was not at home. In his place there was a note for Cooper saying that he had been called out of town. Cooper took this as a lucky omen, and cheered up. He did not return to the city, but set out for Miss Barnwell's school, timing himself to arrive shortly after the closing hour at three o'clock. Fortunately she was alone when he entered, correcting a pile of papers on the desk before her. She started a little upon seeing who it was, but kept her eyes on her work, as if she had not observed his entrance. Finally she looked up and inquired stiffly:

"What can I do for you?"

"You can listen to me," said Cooper, "while I tell you how sorry I—"

"Unfortunately," said Miss Barnwell, choosing her words carefully, "that lies entirely beyond my jurisdiction. You had better see my father about it."

"What I have to say concerns you alone. It was a foolish impulse to impersonate the commissioner, and although everything I have done since was undertaken in the honest hope of saving you annoyance, I seem to have been the victim of fate."

Cooper was very humble now.

In the evening he was astonished to find a key in his pocket, which he recognized as Mary Barnwell's. He must get it back before the hour for opening in the morning. He would deliver it in person.

Mr. Barnwell himself opened the door. "I—I was at the school this afternoon," stammered Cooper, "and inadvertently carried off the key."

"Oh, the door-key! I don't believe she has missed it."

Cooper was turning away.

"Oh, er, I suppose you're rather surprised to see me. The fact is, I got back sooner than I had reckoned." The fact was that Mary had set her foot down on her father's plan, and he had not been out of town at all. The note was a subterfuge. "By the way, it occurs to me to say—well, we Southerners are a little hot-blooded, but we don't mean to be ungenerous. We won't say anything more about that little matter. Will you stop and smoke a cigar?"

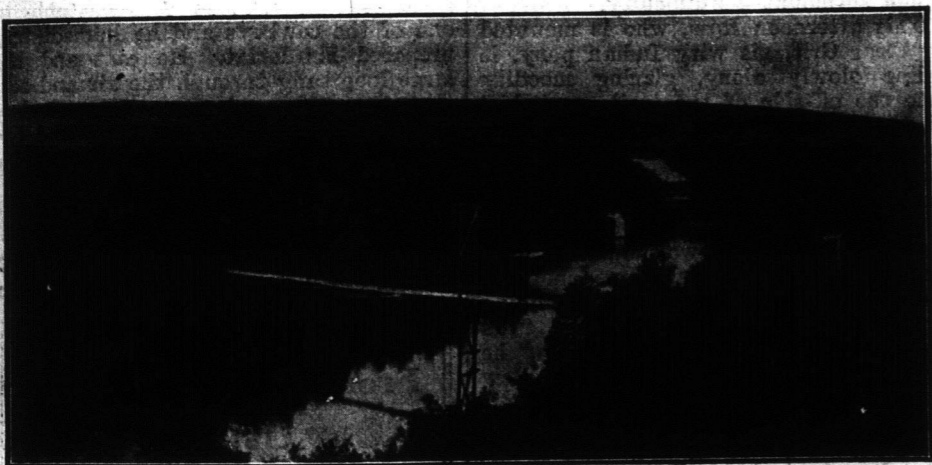
Cooper stopped, and when he rose to go it chanced—such happenings are always purely matters of chance, you know—that he met Mary in the hall.

"I have just been enjoying a pleasant chat with your father," he said. "I wonder if you would mind if some time I should fulfil my promise to you?"

"What do you mean," inquired Mary wonderingly.

"Why, you remember once, a long time ago, when we first knew each other, you asked me to come and see you again, and I gave you my promise to do so. A commissioner, you know, ought always to keep his word. May I keep mine?"

A year later, in the same old ever-youthful month of May, a group of men,



A swing bridge over a Manitoba River

"Then your best way would be to make a written statement, and submit it through the mails," returned Miss Barnwell. That is the usual course, and any digression—

"If it is the usual course, that is the more reason why I shouldn't take it," said Cooper, smiling mirthlessly as he recognized the parody. "I don't owe you a usual apology. I owe you a very unusual one."

"Well, your presence here is surely unusual enough!"

Miss Barnwell was doing her best to be immovable, but found it rather uphill work. She began to gather her effects together preparatory to going home. Cooper stood by silently.

"So there is nothing I can say—nothing I can do? I don't object to all the other consequences, because I deserve them a hundred times over, but I had hoped to have your forgiveness."

"I didn't say you didn't have that," said Mary in an altered tone.

Cooper picked up the key on her desk, and, following her out, locked the door behind them while she continued speaking:

"I sincerely wish that I had never been so silly as to ask what I did." Just the semblance of a sigh escaped her lips. "I only wish, for both of us, that you had been the commissioner."

The sigh was not lost on Cooper.

"I don't," he said positively.

They were standing in the street now.

"Why not?" she inquired, with a shade of surprise at his emphasis.

"Because he is married," was what Cooper wanted to say. What he did say was: "There goes my car!" and hurried away.

coatless, cuffless, collarless, and tieless, sat in the press room of the District Building, while the young wind of early summer blew in through the big window in front, setting the hands to idling, and the fancy to wandering.

"So he was married this morning at St. Andrew's, was he?" asked one of the figures, sitting back by the window.

"He was," answered Snyder, "and has now begun in earnest the long struggle to live happily ever after."

"It goes all to show how topsyturvy fate acts in this world," said the first speaker reflectively. "Here he cuts up an adventure which ought to have brought his discharge, and instead of that he gets a better position in New York within a month, and a tremendous fine girl into the bargain."

"Well," said the correspondent of the Baltimore Sun, rising and putting on his hat, "in modern journalism one has to be either a freak or a failure. What do you fellows say to stepping down to the Sign of the Twelve Apostles and drinking a stein all around to his prosperity?"

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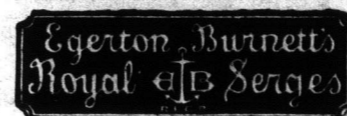
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