

'Ask anything you like,' I said desperately. 'I'll do it.'

'Will you?' whispered Mrs. Trehune, coming hurriedly toward me. 'If you will do what I ask, I can never do enough for you in return. Mine is a case that requires immediate and skilful action. You will have to use all your finesse, for I have not time to explain matters fully. You must be patient, then inpatient and finally exasperated. Do you understand?'

'Certainly,' I answered promptly. 'Crazy as a March hare was my inward reflection.'

'And you will do this for a stranger?' Inquired Mrs. Trehune.

'Command me,' I replied.

'Then listen,' she said, drawing her chair near mine with an apprehensive glance at the door. 'I am not Mrs. Trehune. I shall be this afternoon if all goes well, but at present I am Clara Talbot. I have run away from my home in Chicago to marry Mr. Trehune. He is of Kansas City and was to have met me here. I have received a telegram from him to say that his train is several hours late. Never mind why it was necessary for me to run away. It is a family matter. My people have never seen Mr. Trehune. I met him at the house of a friend in Europe last year. They wanted me to marry another man. I fled yesterday after telling George to meet me here. My father has followed me. He is in the hotel now; (another glance at the door) his card preceded yours. I sent word that I was dressing, and he is waiting down stairs. When I read the name on your card—a newspaper man—I conceived this plan. Will you be my husband for half an hour?'

I started up like a scared jack-rabbit. 'Good gracious, madam,' I exclaimed, 'I don't know enough about you to do the thing successfully.'

'Oh, try,' pleaded the brown-eyed fugitive; 'please try.'

'I'll do it,' I said desperately, and the next instant there was a crash. The door flew back and in burst an old gentleman with a very red face, from which a couple of small eyes flashed angrily as he dashed his hat and cane down on the centre table. Using the latter as a sort of rostrum, he glared straight at the girl and began to rave, ignoring me entirely.

'Well, madam,' in a tone of concentrated fury, 'what the devil do you mean by this disgraceful escapade?'

My temporary wife glanced hopefully toward where I sat, within easy reach of the old gentleman's cane. Summoning all my fortitude I arose and looked the irate parent straight in the eye.

'I shall have to request, sir,' I said, 'that in addressing this lady you will remember that respect is due her as my wife and your daughter. You must show her that respect, sir. Do you understand?' raising my voice a little on the last few words.

'Oh,' shrieked the venerable pater, literally dancing with rage. 'So you are the blackguard who has inveigled my daughter into this d—d idiocy. By gad, sir, I've a good mind to thrash you!' and the cane was raised threateningly.

'I hope you will change your mind and improve your language.' I went on as calmly as possible. 'Your present conduct will result in a scandal.'

'Scandal, be d—d, sir! What could be more scandalous than the present state of affairs?' he cried.

Things went on in this way for ten minutes, until the old man howled himself hoarse, and I could hear the bell boys tittering in the hall outside. Then he gradually calmed down, and as a last resource tried the sympathetic dodge on the terrified young woman. The latter had hardly spoken a word throughout the scene. She was too badly frightened, I think.

There were tears in the old gentleman's voice as he turned toward my supposed wife. Had she not always been well treated? Was not her mother the best of mothers? Had he not been the most indulgent of fathers? Was not her home one of luxury? etc. Yes, she admitted every charge in the indictment as it was checked off.

'But, father,' she sobbed, 'I loved him so very much, and—oh! I could not marry the other.'

'Where was this wretched marriage performed?' he inquired savagely.

'Milwaukee,' answered the girl in a great hurry.

'I'll have it dissolved, by gad, I will!' swore the enraged pater, getting rosy again.

'Let me remind you, sir,' I said deliberately, 'that your daughter is of age (I was not sure about it); that we are legally married, and that any amount of talk will not alter the fact. I must also suggest that as our train leaves for the south at 4 o'clock we have very little time to devote to this sort of thing.'

'Eh? What! Adding insult to injury!' he roared. 'Well, I leave you here for the present, but you will hear from me, sir,' shaking the cane in my face. 'I am not the man to submit tamely to a scolding abduction of this character. You're a scoundrel, sir, a d—d scoundrel,' reiterated my angelic father-in-law, and with this choice parting shot he retired, slamming the door after him.

'How did I manage it?' I enquired, turning to where the future Mrs. Trehune was sitting. She had fainted. Just like a woman! She had the nerve to go through a scene like this undisturbed to all appearance, and then, when the danger was over, she must spoil it all by an exhibition of weakness. I rushed to the water, poured a glass of it out and approached the young woman. She was recovering, though, before I reached her, and in an instant sat up.

'How can I ever repay you?' she asked. 'You did it superbly, and George will soon be here now (glancing at her watch). My dear sir,' she went on, 'I cannot tell you how grateful I am. I shall make Mr. Trehune call at your office this evening and thank you personally.'

My engagement as Miss Talbot's husband was evidently at an end, so, protesting that I would willingly have done twice as much for her, I withdrew. Trehune came in late in the afternoon, and they were married by

the rector of Christ church. The Kansas City young man called on me in the evening and insisted on my going to supper with him and the bride. We had a jolly little spread of pate de foie gras and champagne at the Ryan cafe, and I have never set eyes on either of the Trehunes or the venerable Mr. Talbot, of Chicago, from that moment to this.—Arthur Pegler, in Chicago Herald.



A Bright Lad,

Ten years of age, but who declines to give his name to the public makes this authorized, confidential statement to us:

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