

She did not know as she crossed West Street, now silent and deserted as a country road, that Jimmie had walked recklessly through its roaring traffic, weakly half hoping that something would happen to him. She did not know that he had stood just where she came to stand, looking down over the railing into the slip between two docks, asking questions of the lapping water.

A dock watchman who stood within a few feet of her put his lantern out of his hand, merely as a precaution. She did not look like any of the many kinds that he had seen coming to look too curiously at the water. But, she was in trouble. Happy people do not come peering down into rivers. He cautiously moved a little closer to her.

Then she turned and, without so much as a look back, crossed the street again and turned north.

"Whatever she was lookin' for," the watchman grumbled, "it wasn't here."

Augusta was not thinking or reasoning, or consciously searching for Jimmie. She had loosened her mind, as it were, and was letting herself drift in his wake. She understood him now. She knew now what he had been going through. She was following every thought of his as it had worked through his brain and had turned out into action. She was feeling with him and suffering the hurt that he had felt. But she was not following him now because she pitied him. It was not because she wished to care for him, to mother him, to make good her debt to him.

She was following him now because she loved him. Up to now she had needed him, his protection, his kindness, his dear thoughtfulness and his cheer. Now she needed him because she had found out, in this last half hour, that she loved him with a desperation that would have frightened her if she had been able to think of it. She did not care whether he was sick or well. She did not care whether he wanted to stay or go. She would find him. She would hold him. She would not stop walking until she had found him. And then she would put her arms around him. And not any other woman, nor even death itself would get him from her.

Now she knew that she was on the right way. Her start towards the river had been a false one, just as Jimmie's had been. Jimmie had had no more real thought of harming himself than she had had of finding the end of her search in the river.

He had just set himself adrift aimlessly, and unconsciously she seemed to know that mere physical weariness would bring him to where all the drifting logs of the city's stream sooner or later come to rest, the park benches.

Through the endless night she trudged, scanning the thousand figures that weariness and misery and failure take when they finally slump down to the friendly darkness of a shaded bench.

Policemen looked sharply after her. Good men looked wonderingly after her. Bad men looked discriminatingly after her. Her soul was sick with the misery and the sordidness that she searched among. But her heart was not afraid. She was right, and love was at the end of her search.

In the gray, haggard dawn she saw him at a little distance, sitting jauntily erect, his hand extended resting lightly on his cane, peering interestedly up into the coming light of the new day—as though he had that moment sat down to enjoy the fresh morning and to wonder at the miracle of dawn.

Augusta trembled in every aching nerve, but her heart laughed as she stole toward him. It was so like him, sitting up making a play at interest, when, as she knew, he probably didn't care whether the day dawned or not.

Then with a little desperate run she was kneeling on the bench beside him and had fairly dragged his head into her arms and was kissing him wildly, passionately.

Now Wardwell said not a word. He did not at first seem surprised. It is doubtful if, knowing Augusta and remembering her actions in those days when her mother had been lost, he really had thought that he could lose himself from her in the way he had taken.

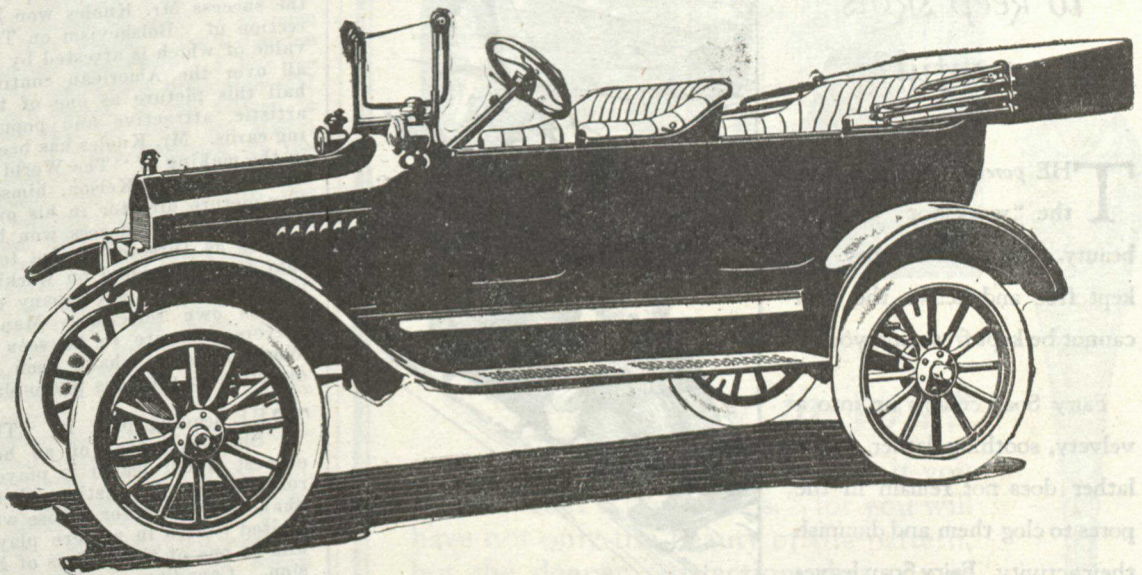
But when he found Augusta's arms tight around him something within him awoke with a start. Augusta had kissed him before this—But—

Jimmie Wardwell knew a little of women's love and the ways of it as most men do. But he suddenly straightened up and deliberately pulled one of Augusta's arms away and caught her little face in his hand and looked boldly, hungrily down into her eyes.

For a little while, unashamed and

(Continued on page 56)

Ford



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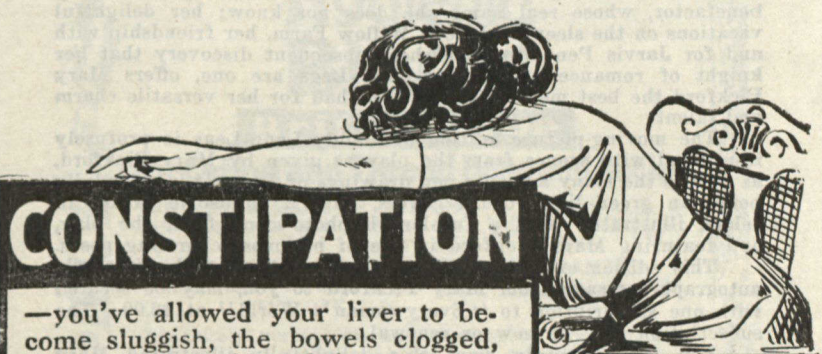
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