

THE STAR, ST. JOHN N. B., SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1907.

Mrs. Winthrop's Cross Roads

A Story of a Great Temptation

BY P. BEAUFOY

The dinner was ended. Neither of the diners had noticed the food or drink. Each had eaten with mechanical lips. They had spoken little during the meal, but now, Ericson leaned across the table, and spoke in swift, earnest tones.

"Surely," he said, "you cannot want to remain. Your husband neglects you. He is wrapped up in his scientific work. At this very moment he is a hundred miles away, lecturing to a crowd of gladiators in the 'Origin of Species,' whilst his wife is left here in London to direct herself as best she can."

"Hush," she cried. "I will not hear a word against Richard. He has been very good to me."

"Oh, of course, I know that. Personally, I admire and like him, immensely; but it pains me to see you married to a man who has no time to give you the attention you deserve. Besides, he cannot love you as I do."

"Then—then you do love me," she murmured, leaning towards him, and looking at him with a piteous expression.

"You know I do. I'd forfeit my life in this world, and all chances of the next, for your sake."

"It sounds very sweet to hear you talk like that—and yet I often wonder how long such love as this would last. It is like a huge dam, Philip, which burns out very quickly."

He shook his head.

"Try me and see," he pleaded. "I swear that I will love and worship you as long as I live."

Then, leaning towards her again, he took her hand and held it in a wild, passionate grip.

"Maise," he muttered hoarsely, "come away with me tonight. This is our chance. Your husband will return tomorrow, and then it may be too late. Come away with me, my darling, and turn your back on this weary, empty life. We are both young, and the world lies before us. Our lives shall be a golden summer day. We shall drink the cup of joy to the very dregs, and find no bitterness even there."

He spoke with amazing sincerity, and it was obvious that he meant what he said to her. This was not the first time that he had spoken the words of temptation, but never had they sounded so alluringly in the ears of Maise Winthrop as they sounded tonight. For of a truth she was indeed lonely, and the coming of Ericson's guilty love had brought color and glow into her life.

"It—it would be so wicked," she faltered. "And, after all, Richard is so good to me."

"Dearest, he has his work to do. He is a man who will be working to his death. He is a man for whom work holds the high place in the scheme of things, and who ranks far behind. Have no care concerning him."

Ericson perceived that his words were making a keen impression on Maise, and he went on:

"Maise, listen. At half-past ten tonight I will bring my motor round to this house. Join me then, and we will travel to Folkestone, and in the morning catch the boat for Boulogre. The servants will not suspect anything, for you have often gone for these evening drives in the car, and why not tonight? Long before this time tomorrow night we shall be in France, and all will be well. Come. Put your dear hand in mine, my darling, and say 'Yes.'"

She did not reply. Her breath heaved like the waves of the wind-tossed sea. Her heart came and went with sharp spurts. Her heart thumped with sharp blood.

"Say 'yes,'" he pleaded.

"I—I cannot decide at once. No, no. You—you must give me time, Philip. I rise from the table, and stand looking at her with wild eyes.

"I will return at half-past ten with the motor," he said in a low voice. "You will get my answer then."

"Yes, yes, you shall have it then," he came towards her and took her hand.

"Maise," he said gently, "God knows that I love you better than anything on earth, and I swear to you that if you come away with me you shall never regret your action. Never. I will watch over you and protect you and love you."

"Yes, yes, I know," she murmured. "Now go, dear, go, and leave me alone for a little. I—I want to think."

"Yes, I'll go," he replied, as he raised her hand to his lips, "but I shall come back, Maise, I shall come back. Then with a smile and an 'au revoir' he went from the room, telling himself that he had won the day.

"She'll come to me, I know," he reflected. "She can't refuse; she can't refuse."

Left alone, Maise sat down in the great chair by the fire and switched off the electric lights. She could always think better in the dark, and the light of the car fire gave sufficient illumination.

Her brain was on fire. The words of Philip rang in her ears, sounding like music. How sweet—how rich life would be when the gloomy home was left behind and the new day began. It would be "flow, roses, all the way" for herself and for him—and together they would pluck from existence the glorious flower which is the best prize that life has to offer.

But there was another side to the future—a dark side. It glomed upon her vision now in the grey colors. The deserted home—the wretched husband—the scarlet sin. All these things swam before her eyes.

O God, what was she to do—which road was she to tread?

Thinking these thoughts, she fell into reverie, but of a sudden she was aroused by an amazing sight. For seated in the chair opposite was a woman, who bore an exact resemblance to herself. How this woman came to be there, she could not determine—she could only gaze at her with wondering eyes.

"Who are you, and why have you come here?" she asked.

The woman smiled gently.

"Who I am I will not reveal to you

"Very well, my lady." The maid went out, and Maise sought her room. She was tired and overcome, but in her eyes there was triumph—in her heart there was joy. For she had been tried, and she had found true—she had been tempted, and she had resisted.

Half an hour later Philip Ericson, standing on the threshold of the house, read Maise's note. It ran thus:

"Dear Philip—I promised to give you my answer tonight, and here it is. I have decided that I cannot go away with you, and it will be better that we do not meet again."

"Something has happened this night which has brought about this decision—something which I cannot understand, but which has shown me the truth. Guided by this new light, I ask you to see me no more, and to forgive me for the pain I have caused you. Good-night and good-bye."

He went from the house with a stifled groan, and a terrible anguish in his heart, but amid all his resentment there lingered the old words and involuntary words of reverence from his lips.

"By Jove," he murmured, "she is a noble woman, and I—I have behaved like a cur."

In the years that came after—happy years, lighted by the bright eyes of little children and crowned with her husband's love—Maise told Richard all that had happened on that memorable night, and as she told him tears came to her throat.

"Was it all a dream, darling?" she asked softly. "Just a dream and nothing more?"

He shook his head.

"Give me," he replied, "but a reality. For I believe, Maise, that the woman who spoke to you that night—the woman who bore so wonderful a likeness to yourself—I believe that she was your better self, and that she was sent to you by God!"

Surely!

(The End.)

Bogner's Lesson

BY W. E. RYAN

(Copyright, 1907, by M. M. Cunningham.)

Up ahead a twinkling lantern, swung from the running gear of the "governor's" light buggy, marked out the road. The days would wear into weeks, the weeks into months, and the months into years, but that voice would never cease until the road touched its end, and you found forgetfulness in death.

"Stop!" murmured Maise chokingly.

"No. Hear me to the end. Tonight is the great night of your life. To your husband being there comes the supreme temptation—your temptation has come this night. Yield to it, and evermore despair will grip your soul, and remorse will cut into your heart. Youth will pass quickly, and with the passing of youth there will come the little joy may be given you. Then there will come the dull middle years—years unlighted by respect and honor, but made dreary by memory and regret. Then, age—and the last scene of all. And then, when life is narrowing itself down to a little speck of earth, and you lie waiting for the last call, your thoughts will wander to this night, and you will cry out in measureless despair. That is the picture of your future if you yield to your great temptation and go forth to meet Philip Ericson tonight."

"And—and if I resist, what then?" asked Maise in a trembling tone.

Her counterpart smiled.

"If you resist, you will live with you. You will find that you will grow to love your husband more and more, whilst he will be devoted to you in return. In the fulness of time little faces will come into your life, which will gladden your heart and this silent house will echo to the tread of tiny feet. And when you look upon those angel faces—his children and yours—you will send back your thanks to the night, and thank God that you resisted after all."

A long, long pause. The face of this woman—so amazingly like her own—glowed with divine appeal. An angel pleading for a lost soul might have looked even as she looked then.

"You have decided?" she asked at length.

Maise looked up quickly.

"Yes," she said in a whisper. "Yes, I have decided."

"Then my work is finished. Good-bye."

A mist rose before Maise's eyes. It lingered for a few seconds. When it lifted the woman had gone.

Maise rubbed her eyes, and looked round the room. Then she rose and switched on the light. The door was closed. She was certain that it had not been opened or shut whilst she had been seated in the chair. How, then, had the mysterious visitor—her living image—come and how had she gone. Was it all a dream? Hardly, for she had seemed so painfully awake—and yet—and yet she was so sure. The clock upon the mantelpiece struck ten. She started at the sound.

"He will return in half-an-hour," she muttered. "I'll write, yes, I'll write."

She sat down at the little table in the corner, and took up her pen. When the brief letter was finished she rang the bell.

"Parkis."

"Yes, my lady."

"Mr. Ericson is calling for me tonight to take me for a run on his motor. Please give him this note, and say that I was too tired to come, and have gone to bed."

seat would permit. "I never saw a man like you."

"Go to Tony," he urged. "He's got the gift of gab. He can talk as foolish as you can."

"He talks only about himself," she said with a shrug of the shoulders. Bogner grunted. He knew very well that she would not go. "I wish you had his appreciation of things."

Bogner leaped at low laugh and handed her his pipe to fill. "I guess one poet is enough with a one-ring circus," he said slowly. "Tony's death on poetry."

He struck a match and held it over the bowl, puffing until the white clouds surrounded his head as with a halo.

"All the same," he went on, "Tony's a pretty decent chap, and he's dead gone. I ain't ever goin' to get married. I don't seem to be able to get along without me," he said, with a chuckle.

The girl glanced at his face for a moment, and then, without a word, she leaped to the ground, and when the carriage came past slipped back into that vehicle, disdaining the invitation shouted at her by Tony.

Bogner tried to convince himself that he was glad that she was gone, but somehow the bright dawn grew gray to him and he puffed moodily at his pipe. He did not love Bessie. That sort of thing was foolishness, but he did enjoy her companionship in the early morning, and as the days went by and she came no more he grew morose and dispirited.

Even then he could not diagnose his trouble and dozed himself with a pipe of tobacco until the next morning. He was out of order. Bessie was coldly polite when they met at the table or passed each other going in or out of the house. He was not the same. He was no more little chats while the sun climbed up to his bed of sight.

It was Sunday, and after reaching the new show lot and getting the tent up there was nothing to be done but look after the stock until the morning. Some of the men had gone out to look at the town but most of them were lying in the grass in the shady side of the tent, watching the boats slip past in the canal on the banks of which they were pitched. Bogner felt thirsty and he went to the pump to get a drink of water. He was standing beside the pump when he chanced to look through on the other side.

Bessie was coming back from church and a couple of the town boys were following her in an effort to attract her attention. As she reached the lot she turned sharply toward them and caught her breath. There were a dozen others sitting by the fence watching the circus people, but Bogner came bounding forward. Just as he came up, the masher succeeded in making a hit, but the next moment Bogner stood over him waiting he measured his leap upon the ground for his rise.

The other masher sprang forward to the townman's assistance and fell upon Bogner bearing him to his knees. Bogner lay on his back, but he was not hurt. "Hey Rube," and others of the circus crew came running around the corner of the tent.

Five minutes later a dozen badly thrashed youths were stealing from the lot and mauling loud threats of vengeance and Bogner had fainted in the excitement.

A dash of water brought her around and she lay on the white face bending over her own.

"I'm all right," she whispered. "I was just scared, not hurt."

But Bogner said, "I'm hurt in the heart, Bess. I didn't know it until that young fool tried to kiss you, but then I saw that he loved you. Can you ever forgive me for being such a brute dear? You were all so much a part of my life that I didn't know how to play a horn spoil the voice?" asked his next door neighbor.

"It did mine."

"How do you account for it?"

"I don't know how to account for it. Strains the vocal cords perhaps. All I know is that I blow my voice out through the mouthpiece of my cornet."

"Did you have a good voice?"

"Everybody said so."

"Then it's a great pity you ever learned to play a horn," replied his neighbor, shaking his head sadly. "I—think I should have enjoyed hearing you sing."—Youths' Companion.

"Very well, my lady." The maid went out, and Maise sought her room. She was tired and overcome, but in her eyes there was triumph—in her heart there was joy. For she had been tried, and she had found true—she had been tempted, and she had resisted.

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The Girl With the Strange Face

Complete Short Story

BY HERBERT JAMIESON

Save for Miss Stainer, the drawing-room at 105, Woburn-terrace, W. C., was deserted. She sat in her favorite armchair—the chair that everyone left for her—kneeling, as usual. The door opened, and a young man entered, whistling, unaware that the room was tenanted.

"I beg your pardon," he said, coloring.

"There is no occasion, Mr.—I don't seem to have heard your name."

"Duncombe."

"Ah, yes! I like to know who everybody is when I come to stop here. It makes the place so much more homely when we are all acquainted."

"You come here frequently, I presume?"

"I always now and then come to see my mother, and for the last three years in town, and for the last three years in the country."

"That's queer. Why, every year my people choose this particular time for going away. That's why I'm here. I can't stand living in a house with only a housekeeper and a cat."

"Ah, so you like company. Do you find the stock until the morning?"

"Rather! Aren't we a polychrome?"

"It's most interesting living here. I thought, looking down the dinner table—doubtless because he was hungry—the later was in full possession."

"Your chop, sir!"

"Ah, thank you!"

Simultaneously a stranger, who had recently sat down in the opposite chair, was also provided with his order. He was at clean-shaven, and at first sight looked a very young man, but on second impression Duncombe added several years to his age. His eyes had a curiously restless quality, and seemed to take note of everything in the restaurant.

He finished his first course and ordered a second. Whilst he was waiting for this he leaned across the table.

"Excuse me, I'm a stranger in London. Could you tell me where Scotland Yard is?"

Duncombe told him.

"Thank you much obliged. The fact is, I am in search of someone, and the question is a very difficult one. You'll be wondering whom I'm after?"

"Yes, but don't feel impelled to tell me because I've given you a little information. You're an American aren't you?"

"No—English, but I've lived out in Canada for the past six years. That may account for I—hope for the twang is still slight."

"Barely perceptible, I assure you. Are you back here for good?"

"I don't know. It all depends if I like the face of the city people."

The scrutiny was satisfactory.

"Yes, if you promise to tell me no more here and never mention it to her."

"Thank you. Do you remember a fearful accident a few years ago to a boat train? There were nearly thirty people killed and a number of injured."

"I recollect it well."

"My cousin, who he is, was one of the badly injured. She entirely lost her memory in the accident—the result of a blow on the head—and it has been returned to her. She doesn't know in the least who she is, nor do I."

"How strange! Surely her luggage?"

"That and indeed even the mail-bags were all burnt in the fire that broke out after the accident. She had literally nothing left to her. She doesn't know in the least who she is, nor do I."

"And the name Leatham?"

"Yes, I am I chose for her. It was my mother's maiden name."

"Well, it's all the stranger—"

"Hush! I think I hear her step. Yes, it is. Mr. Duncombe, will you tell me the time, please?"

The girl with the strange face, standing smiling at the door, replied for him.

"It's three minutes to seven, Miss Stainer, and you know what a despatch punctual boarding-house this is."

II.

On Sunday afternoon a few weeks later Miss Leatham and Cecil Duncombe sat together in the balcony at 105 Woburn-terrace.

"This is the solemnest hour, Miss Leatham," he said with a smile. "Don't you feel the pernicious influence?"

"I don't know. I suppose it's the fresh wind that keeps me awake. It isn't at all like typical London air."

He wished that he could see more than her profile, but the balcony was too narrow to allow of him moving his chair into a more favorable position. After a moment he turned to the table and leaned with his back against the rail.

"I'm afraid I've been making very poor talk for the last hour. A fellow can't chat when he has got something big on his mind."

"You might forget City matters for the Sunday," she said, with a slight pout.

"It's not the City. It's you."

"And then he proposed to her, quietly, simply, earnestly, in a manner appropriate to a London balcony in broad daylight under the full range of opposite windows. "You—love—me!" she gasped.

"With all my heart and soul," risking any curious eyes, he essayed to take her hand.

"Oh, please! I do not know. Let me think."

The strange look, which seemed to have been constant of late, sprang vividly into her face and she passed her hand across her forehead, apparently trying to remove something.

"I seemed to fancy," and she stopped.

"Pardon?"

"Oh, I can't recollect. Give me time to think—to decide. I should like to go to once and tell Miss Stainer what you've said. It is all so wonderful and strange to me. Will you wait for me here."

Duncombe stepped aside to let her pass. Entering through the window, she apparently failed to notice the woodwork at her feet and stumbled. He put out a hand to save her, but was too late. She fell heavily into the room, striking her head against the corner of the piano.

III.

It was one o'clock the next day. Whilst his chop was being cooked to

intensely interested. Anxious not to interrupt the narrative he merely nodded. "I seemed to fancy then that Gladys had done the whole thing deliberately, that she had intended to disappear. And yet I don't know. I thought of the face I had last seen. I see her now. Deep, dark transparent eyes that never appeared quite to surpass the wonder of living, lips very pliable to any emotion, a chin with a pronounced dimple, and then some queer little habits personal and peculiar to her, one of lifting the eyebrows, one of resting her cheek on her hand, one of seeming to drop a step in walking. You don't realize how these things endear a girl—good God, man, what's the matter? Have you seen her? Do you know her?"

Duncombe had suddenly sat back in his chair as though he were shot.

"When did she leave Manitoba?" he asked, excitedly.

"Four years ago on the 2nd of February."

"The very time! Yes, I think I know the girl you have lost."

The other clutched his arm.

"Tell me!" he cried, hoarsely. "She is not your wife?"

"She is still unmarried," replied Duncombe in a strange voice.

IV.

That evening, as Duncombe entered 105, Woburn-terrace, he was conscious of great issues at stake.

"I shall be seeing someone tonight," he had said to Melrose, on parting from him at the restaurant, "who knows Miss Stainer's address. I'll post it on to you. Where are you stopping?"

And the two had separated with a friendly handshake.

But Duncombe's mind was made up. In her new identity the girl was undoubtedly his; tonight he would hear for himself. No, he could not give her up, even though the other man had the prior claim. Thank heaven, indeed, for that complete loss of memory.

As he passed upstairs, Duncombe met Miss Stainer coming out of the drawing-room.

"How is she?" he asked.

"Quite herself again!" He breathed easier; the way was clear now. "But, oh, Mr. Duncombe, a most extraordinary thing has occurred. What do you think has come to pass? My companion's memory has completely returned."

"Returned?" he gasped.

"That blow she got yesterday has wrought an apparent miracle. She can remember everything that happened before the railway accident—her true name, Gladys Stainer, her early life, the man that she loved and still loves, a certain Mr. Arthur Melrose. She has been telling the doctor and myself all about it. She is wondering if it has forgotten her, if it is still in Manitoba, where she left him. Oh, I would give worlds to bring these two together. Five minutes later Duncombe dropped limply into a chair at a writing-table in the smoking-room. The fates were making a keen impression on him.

He wrote these words on a piece of paper:

"Miss Stainer is here—105, Woburn-terrace. She loves you still."

Then he addressed the envelope to Arthur Melrose.

HERBERT JAMIESON.

"Very 'trying.'"

The lawyer for the defendant was trying to cross examine a Swede who had been subpoenaed by the other side as a witness in an accident case.

"Now, Anderson, what do you do?" asked the lawyer.

"I do not ask you how is your health, but what do you do?"

"Oh, yes, work."

"We know that, but what kind of work do you do?"

"Puddy hard work; it ees puddy hard work."

"Yes, but do you drive a team or do you work on a railroad, or do you handle a machine or do you work in a factory?"

"Oh, yes; aw work in a factory."

"Very good. What kind of a factory?"

"It ees a big factory."

"Your honor," said the lawyer, addressing the court, "if this keeps on I think we'll have to have an interpreter."

Then he turned to the witness:

"Look here, Anderson, what do you do in that factory—what do you make?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; I understand; you want to know vat I make 'n' factory, eh?"

"Exactly. Now tell what you make."

"I make dollar an' a half a day."

And the interpreter was called in to earn his salt.

NOT DECEIVED.

A pretty anecdote of a dog is given by Sir C. J. E. Bunbury's "Diaries Correspondences." It is told by Sir George Napier. When the British army was in the south of France, after the battle of Toulouse, Sir George and several other officers visited the house of a gentleman who had a very fine dog, a poodle. The dog had been trained to receive food only when offered by the right hand, and the gentlemen amused themselves with testing his steadiness in this respect and found that he constantly refused to take bread from the left hand, but when he came to Sir George, who, having lost his right arm, of course offered the bread with his left hand, the dog looked earnestly at him and accepted the bread. Then the other officers tried to deceive him, by disguising themselves as to appear to have lost the right arm; but the dog's sagacity was not to be baffled, and he steadfastly refused to take bread from the left hand except from the one who was really one handed.

ZEPHYR, CIPHER AND ZERO.

"Zephyrus" and "cipher" and "zero" are words that come to the English from the Arabic "sifr," which meant literally "empty" and so "nothing" and the figure that represents nothing, an medieval Latin this figure was called both "ciphera" and "zephyrum." The latter probably from association with "zephyrus" or something even lighter than air; hence through the Italian "zephyrus" there is the word "zero" as a doublet with "cipher."