EVELYN NESBIT THAW THE WOMAN IN THE CASE

EVELYN NESBIT THAW is the woman in the case. Here is a little bunch of femininity tipping the scales at something less than 110 pounds—a fuss of feathers, a hank of hair, a frivolity of fringe, a pair of big eyes, such as artists like, and a smile that means everything or nothing. For this woman the life of one man was sacrificed. For this woman the life of another man is in jeopardy. Is the game worth the electric volts?

By Frederick Boyd Stevenson

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At the first glance at the Thaw murder trial in New York one is impressed with the thought of Harry K. Thaw, sitting in the second row of plain wooden chairs, is his mother. Her white hair is accentuated by the red flush on her face. The lines on her brow are painfully deep. On her right sits her daughter, Mrs. George Lauder Carnegie, sometimes her other daughter, the Countess of Yarmouth. In the next seat is Evelyn Nesbit Thaw, and next to her is May MacKenzie, the show girl. These two exchange numerous confidences. They smile lightly at each other. Their interests are common interests. They are in perfect sympathy with each other. But the mother looks neither to the left nor to the right. She hears only the low, sonorous tones of Jerome, the relentless prosecutor, seeking to send her son to the chair, and the pleading voices of her son's counsel, seeking to save him from the chair. Her life has been the life of the good wife and the good mother. Her enforced association with the potpourri of a criminal court room has cut her pride to the quick.

But how about Evelyn Nesbit Thaw, the wife?

If, by some psychological phenomenon, one's soul might follow the ritual of the believing Mahatma and become merged with the entity of another soul, one might see that other life from an unsuspected viewpoint. It is easy enough to say: "A weak, vain, foolish woman." It is easy enough to say: "She sees it as a player sees it." It is easy enough to say all that and more, but until one passes through the horrors of that night on the Madison Square Roof Garden, until one looks on the solemn faces of the jurors in the box, until one gazes on the morbid crowds in the court room, and until one

receives the sunken smile of the prisoner, who should be the nearest of all on earth to one, one cannot judge.

Rather than to condemn too hastily, let us, then, follow out this idea of the Mahatma and look into the inner life of this woman. Do not judge her by the woman you see in the court room—one day cast down and gloomy, the next day, perhaps, smiling; one day the broken woman, the next day the same chic little chatterbox that delighted the hearts of ambitious artists by her sangfroid and grace. The artists' model, the chorus girl, the actress, the wife of the millionaire spendthrift, was not evolved during one revolution of the short hand of the clock. The teaching of the mother ,the environment of the child, the associations of the young girl, the flattery, the tinsel, the glow of the white lights, the false angles on life—these were the attributes that formed the whole.

The turning point in her career began twelve years ago, when she stopped a photographer passing along a street in Allegheny City (Pa.), and asked him to take her picture. The man looked down into the most beautiful little face that he had ever seen. It was round and full of life, full of glow and full of shadows, and surrounding it and falling down her back, was a mass of pretty curls. That was the beginning of her fame as a professional beauty, for soon after that Mrs. Darrogh, of Philadelphia, made a painting of her head, and later Mr. Phillips made some photographic studies of her, and her mother, finding she could get well paid for the daughter's posing ,encouraged her in that line of endeavor. Her father, Scott Nesbit, a lawyer in Pittsburg, with a penchant for gambling, had died some years before and her mother went to Allegheny City and kept a lodging house. Later, when she learned that Evelyn was in demand as an artist's model, she moved to New York with her son and daughter. And during these days while posing as a model, Evelyn was trying to obtain

position on the stage. She finally secured an engagement in Floradora.

"It was not an important engagement," said she, "but I was not in the chorus. With the posing and the Floradora engagement, I made enough money to support our little family."

At that time Evelyn Nesbit and her mother were living in two rooms in an apartment house opposite the Casino Theatre. Her earnings were small and all her stage and street gowns were made by her mother, who exercised the "greatest ingenuity in turning and altering the materials she had to do with. Both mother and daughter were fond of going out to dinner, but the mother was careful that no "detrimentals," as she termed them, should be the escorts of her daughter. To the mother a "detrimental" meant a man without money. Along about this period Stanford White was the "guardian angel" of the Casino girls, and Evelyn Nesbit came in for her share of his attentions. He took her to the best restaurants, made presents of her, which will be exhibited at the forthcoming exhibition. Miss Nesbit comes from one of the most prominent families in Pennsylvania. Her father was the late Winfield Scott Nesbit, one of the leading lawyers of Pittsburg. Her mother was Evelyn Florence McKenzie, a noted beauty of Richmond. Miss Nesbit hopes some day to be a great actress."

Then when she left the studio for the

ness. And these press notices began soon after the guardianship of Stanford White. Ask any theatrical manager or the friend of a theatrical manager, and, if he be so disposed, he will tell you how it is done. Thus we read back in 1901 in a New York evening paper, beneath a flattering photograph:

"Miss Evelyn Florence Nesbit is perhaps the prettiest girl of 15 that has ever delighted the eyes and inspired the artists of this city, for whom she has posed as a model. She is a dainty little classic. Such artists as Caroll Beckwith, Levy, Carl Blenner, Irving Wildes, Church and Randall Phillips declare her a well nigh perfect type of maidenly beauty. They have made portraits of her, which will be exhibited at the forthcoming exhibition. Miss Nesbit comes from one of the most prominent families in Pennsylvania. Her father was the late Winfield Scott Nesbit, one of the leading lawyers of Pittsburg. Her mother was Evelyn Florence McKenzie, a noted beauty of Richmond. Miss Nesbit hopes some day to be a great actress."

stage, to take part in the Spanish dances in Floradora, a few months later, J. Wells Champney, the painter, was quoted as saying:

"She has the most perfectly modeled foot I have ever seen. She will dance herself into fame in a few weeks."

"It is for you, ma'am; there is no mistake," insisted the man. "Here are the directions on the tag—they are plain enough, ma'am; 'Miss Evelyn Nesbit.'"

"Who sent this piano?" asked the mother, sharply.

"Mr. Harry Thaw, ma'am," was the answer.

"Well, you take it right back to Mr. Harry Thaw with my compliments, and tell him that Miss Nesbit does not care for it," rejoined Mrs. Holman.

After that Miss Nesbit took a minor part in Tommy Rot, which was put on at Mrs. Osborne's playhouse, and Thaw paid attention to her there nightly. The girl was 16 years old then, and she and her mother decided that it would be well for her to obtain a better education than the public schools of the grammar grade had afforded her in Pittsburg and Allegheny. So she was sent to a school for young ladies at Pompton (N. J.) It was

now Mrs. Holman, opened the door.

"Here is a grand piano, ma'am," said the man.

"We have ordered no piano," said Mrs. Holman.

an exclusive institution, the membership being limited to 25. In the meantime Harry Thaw, who began his attentions to Miss Nesbit while she was a show girl, continued them while she was a school girl, much to the annoyance of the principal of the school, who bluntly asked him to discontinue his visits there. But young Thaw was persistent and it began to be noised about that little Miss Nesbit's days at the exclusive institution at Pompton were nearing an end. Then she fell ill and Thaw went tearing out there in an automobile with a doctor from New York and a bushel basket full of cut roses, kissing her and shocking the entire school.

Her school days thus suddenly brought to a close, Evelyn Nesbit went back to New York as an artist's model and became the subject of Charles Dana Gibson's The Eternal Question, which is said to be one of his great triumphs. She made little progress in a theatrical way after her Wild Rose engagement, and, as there was scant promise of advancement in that line, she went with her mother to Europe. There she followed her and there mother and daughter quarreled, as Mrs. Holman said Evelyn was accepting the attentions of "that odious man," and she was done with her daughter forever. Evelyn Nesbit returned to New York alone, and so an intimate friend she is reported to have said: "Harry Thaw has all my jewels. He took them from me because he was afraid I was going to leave him." She secured an engagement with The Girl from Dixie, but remained only a few weeks. Thaw followed her to America, and induced her to return to Europe with him, where they remained till

November, 1904, when they came back to New York.

This in brief, is the story of Evelyn Nesbit Thaw's life, not a life filled with good deeds and impulses; not a life with high motives and ideals. But after all, one asks, if the girl was wholly to blame for that. There was one primordial factor that entered into her life and influenced it. That factor was Harry Thaw. We have all of us read a great deal of the shame of the Thaw family because of Harry Thaw's marriage to Evelyn Nesbit. When Harry Thaw met Evelyn Nesbit, Harry Thaw was no angel.

As far back as 1897 we began to hear of Harry Thaw and Harry Thaw's escapades. In February of that year Christian Farley, a bartender for a resort known as "The Garrick," in West 42nd street, New York, caused the arrest of a man, and had him hauled to the Yorkville court. This man was charged with having assaulted a little colored doorboy, and trying to wreck the cafe, and after having been put out, with breaking the glass doors of the place. He appeared at the police station in an expensive fur coat and evening clothes with his hands and arms badly cut by the broken glass and gave the name of William Thompson,but in his pockets were found engraved cards bearing the legend: "Henry Kimball Thaw, Pittsburg (Pa.)"

Three years later, when he was 30 years old, he is reported to have given a dinner costing $8,000 to twenty-five patrons in Paris. This dinner, it was said was given to a dozen young women whose photographs were displayed in all the countries of Europe and America and whose faces were more apt to be seen when the lights were turned on than in the open glare of the day. At that time he met, in Paris, Prince Komatsu, brother of the Emperor of Japan, who represented the Mikado at the crowning of King Edward. During this meeting, it is reported that Harry Thaw gave to the Mikado's brother the liveliest ten days he ever had in his life.

When Harry Thaw's father cut him