

Mistaken Identity

By W. R. Gilbert

THE room was uncommonly snug with its good fire, drawn curtains, and haze of tobacco smoke. Outside the wind howled, and I was perfectly happy in the thought that I need not turn out. I had lived in tents for a long time—in Africa—and home was very pleasant just now. It isn't every fellow who finds himself without any notice suddenly blossom out into a man of property, but such had come to me—a magnificent property in lieu of an engineering job.

Had never had the time nor the money to think of matrimony; now, everyone hurled it at my head. I must marry, I was told, if only to provide a mistress for the Manor House, someone to wear the family diamonds.

But where was I to find a suitable mate? Not among the fashionable ladies, who were now honoring with their attentions—not much! Not among the few women I had hitherto met, unless—unless—

Strange what pictures sometimes form in the fire, pictures of a past I had thought utterly forgotten. And yet only that very day I had come upon the photograph. Turning over some papers I had left when I departed for Africa, it had slipped from a pocket, and lay before me, the sweet smiling face and radiant eyes, meeting mine, with a look of welcome.

How crazy I had been about her—three years ago. When out of civilization she filled my dreams though I had never seen her; nor knowing anything about her. "What awful drivel," one says.

Dreams, not drivel. Good old Jimmy Lang had been camping with me when the picture turned up. He tossed it over to me.

"Nice looking girl?" he said.

"Very!" I could not say less or more for the minute, the face took such a grip of me. I recalled my abrupt question.

"Who is she?"

"Don't know; may be a chum of my sister. I must ask Jean about her."

But he never asked Jean, for a week later he was dead of fever. And I kept the photograph. I had built all kinds of dream castles about her in my leisure hours—when I had nothing to do but to dream. Nothing to look forward to. And now, fate had turned the wheel of fortune, and I had come home to riches and power. And the photograph had turned up again; and I was beginning to realize what an idiotic thing I had done—had fallen in love with a photograph.

I was sick of reading—the storm had abated—I couldn't waste the evening by going to sleep. No! I must go out. And then as I got up, one of the cards on the mantel shelf caught my eye.

Mrs. Walter Hudson

"At Home"

Wednesdays, 9 o'clock—Bridge & Music

To-day was Wednesday.

The Hudsons were my near neighbors. I had met her once, and liked her. He, too, seemed a good fellow. I recalled his pleasant informal invitation:

"Drop in sometimes, old chap, and smoke a pipe. You play bridge? Good! Always glad to see you, don't stand on ceremony."

By Jove, I'll take him at his word; I'll drop in to-night.

It was not more than a mile to the Hudson's place. Only a very faint glimmer of light showed through the trees as I approached—so little light rather surprised me. All the long rows of windows, both upstairs and down, were dark. I pulled the bell—it pealed faintly in a distant part of the house, and then there was silence. Such a strange eerie silence—no sound of laughter from the house, no strains of music.

I waited, half wondering whether I had made some hideous mistake; but this was the Hudson's place, and the card distinctly said Wednesday at nine o'clock!

Footsteps in the hall!

A bolt drawn back, a key turned. They looked up early. The door swung open. I saw a lighted hall, I walked in—no need to ask if Mrs. Hudson was at

home. I turned to divest myself of hat

and coat, to lay aside my stick when—

"What do you want?" said a soft voice with a slight tremor in it.

I looked again. And then I stared—stared shamelessly.

Instead of the stolid form of a butler I expected to see, there stood, her hand still on the door, a girl. A slight slip of a creature, with big dark eyes and curling hair.

She was dressed in some thick white stuff—the light fell full on a beautiful face. Such soft, red lips, such luminous eyes, fixed on me with a kind of terror. But it was not that which sent the blood thundering to my head—it was the fact that a miracle had happened.

The original of the photograph stood before me, in the flesh.

She was found!

"I have come—" I stopped short. I was about to say "to see you," but hastily substituted "to see Mrs. Hudson. She is at home, of course?"

The girl looked at me so strangely—once more I was struck with the silence of the house. I saw dim staircases, a wide vestibule, lights turned low, it was all very puzzling.

"Will you come this way, please?" said the unknown. I followed her, as she pushed open a door, and motioned me to enter; then was about to turn and speak when—

warned he might. He actually asked for Mrs. Hudson. Of course, I was more or less prepared.

"Yes—and then—"

"Well, I showed him into the cloak room, and shut the door on him. He is locked in!"

Then followed a gurgle of delicious laughter—her voice.

"But, I say—how splendid of you! I shall never forgive you for having practically left you alone in the house. What time did Simpson leave?"

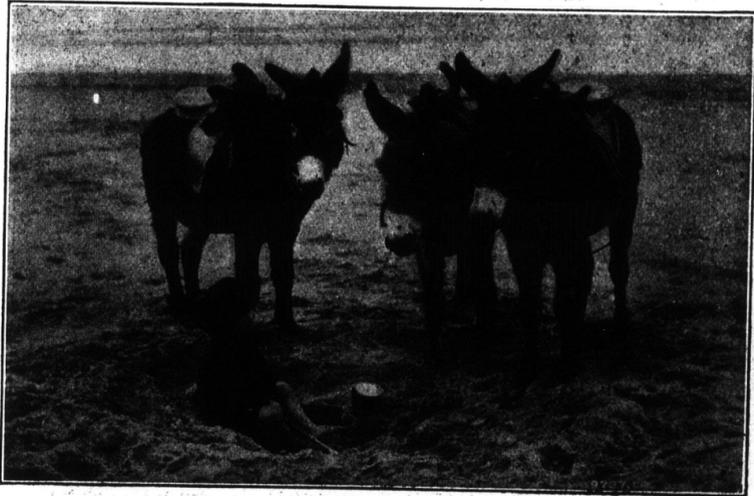
"Just about dark. The wire came when he was at tea. Of course, I let him go; his mother is dying. I did right?"

"Yes, of course; but we never thought of your being alone here. The maids, I suppose, had gone to bed. Not that they would be any use, anyway."

"Yes, I told them to go. I expected no one; but I am glad you and Isabel are back, though I was going to telephone the police. He couldn't do anything locked up in the cloak room. I knew he was safe enough in there."

"I should think so. Well, now I'll tackle him. Oh yes, I've rung up the police—they'll be here in a minute. Isabel, there's nothing to quake about. Look at Helen she's as cool as a cucumber after securing the bold, bad burglar. There's the bell—the police. That you, constable? Good; come along in. We've caught your man—at least Miss Faber has! She locked him in the cloak room. Here you are!"

A key turned, the door was flung open.



On the Sands—A Favorite Form of Amusement with British Youngsters.

The door was slammed to in my face. I heard a bolt shoot home. I was a prisoner in a small room hung round with coats. There was no window—only one dim light from a lamp.

What madness was this? I knocked loudly on the door. I called out:

"I say, what does this mean? You've made some mistake; open the door please."

No answer. Only a soft footstep, dying away to silence. What on earth was the meaning of my imprisonment? What did she take me for? What was wrong in the house?

Had I in mistake come to a private lunatic asylum. I scouted the idea. I knew this was Hudson's house. I was in the right house sure enough. But where were the Hudson's—their servants? What was the meaning of the extraordinary treatment by the girl I had so long desired to find?

There was mystery within mystery in that thought—for what was she doing here?

I knocked again. I called louder than before.

No answer. Only that petrifying silence.

There was no means of escape.

Time passed on, ten o'clock struck, then eleven—I heard a clock in the distance. It grew abominably cold. Then at last I heard welcome voices. I dashed at the door, someone was speaking on the other side of it.

"You've got him?" Hudson's voice with a note of excitement in it.

"Yes. A bell rang. I opened the door. He walked in before I could say or do anything. He behaved just as we were

take as well," I said when we were sitting in the library, refreshments before us, "because I was asked to come on Wednesday night for bridge and music—and here I am."

"My dear chap, I am jolly sorry. But you see it's the first and third Wednesdays. This is the second."

"By jove, you don't say so. The card was stuck in the mirror and the words 'first and third' must have been hidden. But"—my eyes fell on Helen Faber—"I can't say I'm sorry—in fact I'm glad I came."

Was it fancy, or did she really say in quite a low voice "So am I?"

I spent the pleasantest evening of my life. The wrong night? Not a bit of it—it was the right night!

I had taken the road to the Hudson's a good many times since that night, my friendship for them had wonderfully increased, while as for Helen—well she was Helen, the woman. I had told her of the photograph, which turned out to have been sent to my dead chums sister. I had it, I told Helen—and I meant to keep it. One day I found her alone in the library, the Hudson's might be in any time. I was quite content, but I thought I saw traces of tears on Helen's cheeks.

"I am going to Australia next month," she said abruptly.

"What for?" I asked aghast.

"To live with a brother and his wife who are out there. I can't live for ever with friends. I want a niche of my own. I've often thought of going, and now I am going to do it."

"You're not, Helen, I can't spare you. I want you far more than does your brother. He has a wife. I have no one, stay with me. Won't you stay?"

"I wonder if you're just sorry for me?" she whispered.

"I'm sorry for myself. I am beastly selfish, I'm thinking only of my own happiness. But still I do believe I can make you happy too. Will you try me? It has only been you ever since I saw your pictured face."

"How can you be so absurd?"

"Is it absurd to fall in love with a portrait? If so, I did it. But now I want the original. Will you come Helen?"

She was in my arms, her head on my shoulder, the door opened with a jerk. I walked the Hudsons.

"Hallo there, hallo, what's all this?" Helen tried to extricate herself, but I held on.

"It's only this, Hudson. I really was a burglar in disguise that night. I came to steal Helen, and like Barkis, she's willin'!"

BUILDING BONES

Of Great Importance That Children Have Proper Food

A child will grow up weak or strong and sturdy, depending largely on the kind of food given.

That's why feeding the youngsters is of such great importance. The children do not select the food—the responsibility rests with the parent or guardian, or with you if you select the food for a boy or girl.

A western lady writes: "When my little niece was taken sick and medical aid was called, one physician pronounced it softening of the bones and gave but little hope for her recovery. For weeks she had been failing before her parents thought it was anything but trouble from teething."

"She had been fed on mushes and soft foods of different kinds, and had become a weak little skeleton of humanity that could not much more than stand alone."

"The doctors changed her food several times until finally she was put on Grape-Nuts which she relished from the first and ate at almost every meal and her recovery has been wonderful. She has gained in strength and weight and is now a rosy-cheeked and healthy little girl, still clinging to her Grape-Nuts."

"It is plain the food has saved her life by giving her body the needed material to keep it well and the bone material to build with."

"There's a Reason." Name given by Canadian Postum Co., Windsor, Ont.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.