EARLIDERR BIGGERS

ght, 1945, by the Bebbs-Merrill

The three men were grouped very tose at hand, and he heard Mr. Bland aking in low tones:

"I'm talking to you boys as a friend. The show is over. There ain't no use langing around for the concert—there won't be none. Go home and get some clean collars and a square meal."

"If you think I'm going to be shook off by any fairy story like that," said the mayor of Reuton, "you're a child with all a child's touching faith."

"All light," replied Mr. Bland. "I

thought I'd pass you the tip, that's all. It alu't nothing to me what you do. But it's all over, and you've lost out. sorry you have, but I take Hay-

"Dash Hayden!" snarled the mayor. "It was his idea to make a three act play out of this thing. He's responsi-ble for this slily trip to Baldpate. This lience we've been acting for-he let

"I know," said Bland, "But you sin't deny that Baldpate inn looked like the ideal spot at first-secluded, of the beaten path, you know, and all

"Yes," sneered the mayor, "as se cluded as a Sunday school the Sunday before Christmas."

"Well, who could have guessed it?" went on Mr. Bland. "As I say, I don't care what you do. I just passed you the tip. I've got that nice little package of the long green. I've got it where you'll never find it."

"How did you get hold of it?" in-quired Mr. Lou Max. "I had my eye on this little pro-

fessor person," explained Mr. Bland. "This morning when Magee went up the mountain I trailed the highbrow to Magee's room. When I busted in, unannounced by the butler, he was making his getaway. I don't like to talk about what followed. He's an old man, and I sure didn't mean to break his glasses nor scratch his dome of thought. There's ideas in that dome go back to the time of Anthony J. ucer. But-he's always talking about that literature chair of his-why couldn't he stay at home and sit in it? Anyhow, I got the bundle all right, all right. I wonder what the little fossil wants with it."

"The Doc's glasses was broke," said Max, evidently to the mayor of Ren-

"Dm-m," came Cargan's voice. Bland, how much do you make working for this nice, kind gentleman, Mr.

ings." replied Bland.

ain't no Charles Dana Gibson with try to get away from here with that line, plain as I can make it. Two happened." and a year from Hayden. Twenty thousand in two seconds if you hand Hayden. that package to me.'

"No." objected Bland. "I've been honest-after a fashion. I can't quite not! Show me where it is." stand for that. I'm working for Hay-

"In: t be a fool," sneered Max. never think so to read the Star. But here with my money." look at it sensible. The money be Mr. Magee opened the card room longs in me. If you was to hand it door farther and saw the figure of the over yourd be just doing plain justice. stranger, Hayden, confronting the What wgut has Hayden on his side? I did a hat was agreed. Do I get my ite best described him. The new-

"No" said Bland, but his tone was less firm. "I can't go back on Hay- ed in his hand. den. No-it wouldn't'-

wenty thousand," repeated Cargan. "Ten years' salary the way you are going shead at present. What's Hayden ever done for you? He'll throw you down some day, the way

"I-I-dou't know"- wavered Bland. "You get the package," suggested the mayor; "take \$20,000 out and slip the rest to me. No questions asked." "Well"- began Bland. He was lost Suddenly the quiet of Baldpate mountain was assailed by a loud pounding at the inn door and a voice crying, "Bland-let me in!"

"There's Hayden now!" cried Mr. "It ain't too late." came the mayor's

"You can do it yet. It ain't tone. "You can't bribe me, Cargan." utc. He raised his voice. "Go round to the

east door, Mr. Hayden." Then be added to Cargan: "That's my answer. I'm

"Let the bound in. I guess I've got something to tell you—sbout a package something to say to Mr. Hayden." of money I found in the kitchen." There came to Magee's ears the

"How do you do. Cargan?" said a the mayor hotly. "There's a little hermit of score to be settled between me and with news. Hayden. I sin't quite wise to orchid in the buttonbole ways. I morning," he said in a low tone, "or

where you live?" "There are conditions"- began Hay-

"The b- there are!" roared Cargan. "A man's word's his word, and he keeps it to me or I know the reason why. You can't come down to the city hall with any new deal like this. I was to have two hundred thousand Why didn't I get it?"

"Because," replied Hayden smooth-ly, "the-er-little favor you were to grant me in return is to be made use-

"Can I help that?" the major de-manded. "Was there anything about



"I did my work, I want my pay." that in the agreement? I did my work. want my pay. I'll have it, Mr. Hay-

Hayden's voice was cool and even as he spoke to Bland. "Got the money, Joe?"

"Yes," Bland answered. "Where?" "Well, we'd better wait, hadn't we?" Bland's voice was shaky.

We'll take it and get out," an-

Cargan. "If you think I've come up here on a pleasure trip I got a chart and a pointer all ready for your next lesson. And let me put you wise. This nobby little idea of yours about Baldpate inn is the worst ever. The place is as full of people as if the reg-

ular summer rates was being charged." "The devil it is!" cried Hayden. His voice betrayed a startled annoyance. "It hasn't worried me none." went on the mayor. "They can't touch me. I own the prosecutor, and you know good on the avenue if you're seen here with me, is it, Mr. Hayden?"

"The more reason," replied Hayden for getting the money and leaving at once. I'm not afraid of you, Cargan. I'm armed.

"Ou, about \$2,000 a year, with pick | "I ain't," sneered the mayor. "But no exquisite from your set with his went on Mr. Cargan. "I little air gun ever scared me. You words. My talk's a little rough and bundle and you'll find yourself all tansketchy, I guess. But here's the out- gled up in the worst scrap that ever

Where's the money. Joe?" asked

"You won't wait"- Bland begge "Wait to get my own money-I guess

"Remember," put in Cargan, "that money's mine. And don't have any pipe dreams about the law-the law "Ot course." said the mayor, "I ap ain't called into things of this sort, as precially your scruples, having had a g rule. I guess you'd be the last to few in my day myself, though you'd call it. You'll never get away from

mayor. Mr. Cargan's title of exquisomer was tall, fair, fastidious in dress and manner. A revolver gleam-

woe," ne said urmiy, "take me to

that money at once." "It's out here," replied Bland. He and Hayden disappeared through the dining room door into the darkness. Cargan and Max followed close be-

Hot with excitement, Mr. Magee slipped from his place of concealment. A battle fit for the gods was in the air. He must be in the midst of it. Perhaps again in a three cornered fight it would be the third party that

would emerge victorious. In the darkness of the dining room he bumped into a limp, clinging figure. It proved to be the hermit of Baldpate

"I got to talk to you, Mr. Magee," he whispered in a frightened tremolo. "I

"Do what?" cried Bland in a firm got to have a word with you this min-"Not now!" cried Magee, pushing

him aside. "Later." The hermit wildly seized his arm. going to let him in."

"No, now." he said. "There's strange goings on here. Mr. Magee. I got

Mr. Magee stood very still. sound of opening doors and of return- him in the darkness he heard the hermit's excited breathing. Undecided, Mr. Magee looked toward

the kitchen door, from behind which came the sound of men's voices. The "There's a little hermit of Baldpate fairly trembled

don't understand your system. When thing has followed another so fast that word I keep it. Has that I'm a little dazed." "You have nuthing on me there, Pe

"Well," went on the bermit, "as say, through all this downpour of peo-ple, including women. I've hung on to one idea. I'm working for you. That's why I feel I ought to give what information I got to you."

Mr. Magee agreed impatiently. "Where you find women." Peters continued, "there you find things beyond understanding. History""Get to the point."

"Well. yes. This afternoon I was aunting around in the big refrigerator with a randle, thinking maybe some little token of food had been left over rom last summer's rush-somethin in a can that time cannot wither no custom stale, as the poet says—and away up on the top shelf, in the dark-est corner, I found a little package. "There was money in that package—lots of it; enough to found a university or buy a woman's gowns for a year. I was essembling it careful-like adow came in the doorway.

looked up"—
"Who?" asked Magee breathlessly.
"That little, blinky eyed, Professor
Bolton was standing there, most owlish and interested. He came into the refrigerator. That package you have in your hand, Peters, he says, belongs me. I put it in cold storage would keep. I'll take it now.' Well. Mr. Magee, I'm a peaceful man. I could have battered that professor into learned sort of jelly if I'd wanted to, but I'm a great admirer of Mr. Carnegie on account of the library, and I go in for peace. I knew it wasn't exactly the thing, but"-"You gave him the package?"

"That's hardly the way I would put it, Mr. Magee. I made no outcry or resistance when he took it 'I'm inch a cook,' I says, 'in this house. I ain't the trusted old family retainer that retains its fortunes like a safety deposit vault.' So I let go the bundle. It was weak of me, I know, but I sort of got the habit of giving up money. being married so many years."

"Peters." said Mr. Magee, "I'm sorry your grip was so insecure, but I'm mighty glad you came to me with this

"He told me I wasn't to mention it to anybody," replied the hermit, "but as I say, I sort of look on it that we were here first, and if our guests get to chasing untold wealth up and down the place, we ought to let each other in on it."

"Correct," answered Magee. "You are a valuable man. Peters. I want you to know that I appreciate the way you have acted in this affair." Four shadowy figures tramped in through the dining room Cor.

AGER stood up, and in the light of the fire he saw that the face of the latest comer was scheming and weak and that under a small blond mustache a very cruel mouth sought to hide. The stranger gazed at Magee with an annoyance plainly marked. "A friend of mine-Mr.-er-Downs,

Mr. Magee, muttered Bland. "Oh, come now." smiled Mage "Let's tell our real names. I heard you greeting your friend a minute ago. How are you, Mr. Hayden?" He held out his hand. Hayden look-

ed him angrily in the eyes. "Who the devil are you?" he asked. you didn't catch the name. It's Magee -William Hallowell Magee. I hold a record hereabouts, Mr. Havden, I spent nearly an hour at Baldpate inn-alone. You see, I was the first of our amiable little party to arrive. Let me make you welcome. Are you staying to din-

ner? You must." "I'm not," growled Hayden. "Don't believe him, Mr. Magee," sneered the mayor, "he doesn't always say what he means. He's going to stay, all right."

"Yes, you'd better, Mr. Hayden," advised Bland. "Huh-delighted, I'm sure," snapped

Hayden. "Peters," said Magee, "an extra plate at dinner, please. I must leave you for a moment, gentlemen." He saw that



"Murder-that is hardly in your line.

their eyes followed him eagerly-full icion, menacing. Hayden slipped quickly between Magee and the stairs. The latter faced him smilingly, reflecting as he did so that he could love this man but little.

"Who are you?" said Hayden again. "What is your business here?" Magee laughed outright and turned

"How unfortunate." he said. "this rentleman does not know the manner and customs of Baidpate in winter. Those are questions, Mr. Hayden, that we are never impolite enough to ask of one another up here." He ran upstairs and passed through

No. 7 out upon the inicony. Trudging through the snow, he soon sighted the room of Professor Bolton. And as he did so a little shiver that was not due to atmospheric conditions ran down his apine, for one of the professor's windows stood wide open, bidding a welcome to the mountain storm. Peters had spoken the truth. Once more that tight little, right little package was within Mr. Magee's kenny work

He stepped through the open win-dew and closed it after him. By the table sat Professor Bolton, wrapped in coats and blankets, reading by the

"Good evening, professor," said Magee easily. "Don't you find it rather cool with the window open?"

"Mr. Magee," replied the much wrapped gentleman, "I am that rather dis turbing progressive a fresh air devo-tes. I feel that God's good air was meant to be breathed, not barricaded from our bodies,"
"Perhaps," suggested Magee, "I should have left the window open?"

The old man regarded him narrowly. he replied, "But, if you please"—
"Certainly," answered Magee. He

threw open the window. The professor held up his book "I was passing the time before dinner with my pleasant old companion. Montaigne. Mr. Magee, have you ever

read his essay on liars?" "Never," said Magee, "But I do not present time, professor. I have come a murder in the chemical laboratory at one of our universities. I said that the professor of chemistry was missing. This morning's paper, which I secured from Mr. Peters, informs me

that he has been apprehended." "You need not have troubled to tell me," said the old man. He smiled his bleak smile.

"I did you an injustice," went on "Let us say no more of it," pleaded

Mr. Magee walked about the room Warily the professor turned so that the other was at no instant at his back. He looked so helpless, so little, so ineffectual, that Mr. Magee abaned his first plan of leaping upon him there in the silence.

"I suppose," he said, "your love of fresh air accounts for the strolls on the balcony at all hours of the night?" The old man merely blinked at him. 'I mustn't stop," Magee continued.

that's all. It was unjust of me. Mu der-that is hardly in your line. By the way, were you by any chance in my room this morning, Professor Bol-

"Pardon me," remarked the professor at last, "if I do not answer. In this very essay op-on liars. Montaigns much is a fulse speech less sociable than silence? I am a sociable man." "Of course," smiled Magee. He in the window of her room, while a stood looking down at the frail old harsh voice called, "That you, dearie?" scholar before him and considered. Of from inside. "And I may add," she what avail a scuffle there in that chill smiled. "that in my profession a fol-

He went out through the open window, and in another moment stood after a few minutes in his room, deinst outside Miss Norton's room She put a startled head out at his knock. "Oh, it's you," she said. "I can't invite you in. You might learn terrible secrets of the dressing table-mamma is bedecking herself for dinner. Has anything happened?"

"Throw something over your head, Juliet." smiled Magee; "the balcony is waiting for you."

She was at his side in a moment, and they walked briskly along the shadowy white floor. "I know who has the money," said

Magee softly. "Simply through a turn of luck I know. I realize that my protestations of what I am going to do have bored you. But it looks very much to me as if that package would I came the second time he called me be in your hands very soon."

She did not reply. "And when I have got it and have given it to you-if I do," he continued, 'what then?"

"Then," she answered, "I must go away-very quickly. And no one must you out." know or they will try to stop me."

"And after that?" "The deluge," she laughed without

mirth. Baldpate mountain waved their black arms constantly as though sparring red for a minute, and then Quimby with the storm. At the foot of the moved away, and went out through the oursed roadway they could see the dining room door.

gee was doing. The girl had turned professor of comparative literature felt his way to food. "You've known me just two days," she said.

isn't it? Some time soon I'm going to say, 'I'm Billy Magee's girl.' So before we go any further I must confess ev-

"Absolutely. Some time agosoul, it was only yesterday! - 1 asked if you had rend a certain novel called 'The Lost Limousine,' and you said you had and that it wasn't sin cere. Well, I wrote it"-

"Oh." cried the girl. "1es," said Magee, "and I've done others like it. Oh, yes, my muse has been a nouveau riche lady in a Worth gown; my ambition, a big red motorcar. I've been a 'scramble a cent, mister,' troubadour beckoning from mister,' troubadour beckoning from the bookstalls. I turned tired of that sit down," he remarked. "It's all fixkind-the real kind."

"that you came up here to-to"-"Yes," smiled Magee, "I came up here to forget forever the world's gid-The girl leaned limply against the

side of Baldoate inn. "Oh, the trony of it?" she cried.

"I know," he said, "it's ridiculous. think all this is meant just fortemptation. I'll do the real stuff, se that when you say—as you certainly must some day—'I'm Billy Magee's girl,' you can say it proudly."

"I'm sure," she said softly, "that if ever do say it-oh, uo, i didn't say i would!"-for he had seized her hands quickly-"if I ever do say it-it will certainly be proudly. But now-you don't even know my name-my right one. You don't know what I do not I sort of feel, you know, that this is in the air at Baldpate even in the winmame you for brushing up on it at the —to whatever girls they find here—on were desperate: they would stop at to apologize. Yesterday morning I rethe trees. And the girls listen, for-drama drew to its close they saw him ferred in a rather unpleasant way to it's in the air, that's all. Then au and him alone between them and their tumn comes, and everybody laughs and golden desires. forgets. May not our autumn comewhen I go away?"

> in winter and summer love, my dear, been able to be with any success owin spring and fall, and when you go ing to the popularity of the sport on away I'm going, too, about ten feel Baldpate mountain, there was never behind."

> way at Baldpate—the last weeks of on the avenue—to Mr. Hayden and his summer. It's part of the game." They kind that like to work in dim surround-

peared for a moment a flickering yel- Candles'd be quite an innovation at low light.

mer affair, dear. I love you, and when but the idea wasn't glory and decorayou go away I shall follow."

They walked along for a time in al mance of the affair, don't you think? "You forget," said the girl, "you only

know who has the money." running through my head: "I will get it." he answered confidently. "Something tells me I will Until 1 do 1 am content to say no

"Goodby," said the girl. She stood lowing is considered quite-She disappeared, and Mr. Magee, scended again to the office. In the center of the room Elijah Quimby and

Hayden stood face to face. "What is it. Quimby?" asked Magee. "I just ran up to see how things were going." Quimby replied, "and I things about her father that would find him here."

"Our latest guest," smiled Magee "I was just reminding Mr. Hayden. Quimby said, his teeth set, an angry light in his eyes, "that the last tim we met he ordered me from his office I told you. Mr. Magee, that the Suburban railway once promised to make especially since its widely advertised use of my invention. Then Mr. Kendrick went away, and this man took charge. When I came around to the offices again he laughed at me. When

a loafer and ordered me out." "Well?" asked Hayden. "And now," Quimby went on, "I find you trespassing in a hotel left in my care—the tables are turned. I ought to show you the door. I ought to put

"Try it," sneered Hayden. "No," answered Quimby, "I ain't go ing to do it. Maybe it's because I've grown timid, brooding over my failure. And maybe it's because I know who's

got the seventh key." Hayden made no reply. No one stir-

lamps of Upper Asquewan Falls; un ' The seventh key! Mr. Magee thrillder those lamps prosaic citizens were ed at the mention of it. So Elijab hurrying home with the supper gro-ceries through the night. And not one of those citizens was within miles of nex. Did any one else? Magee looked guessing that up on the balcony of at the broad acreage of the mayor's Baldpate inn a young man had seized face, at the aucient lemon of Max's. a young woman's hand and was say at Bland's, frightened and thoughting wildly, "Beautiful girl-1 love ful at Hayden's, concerned but smil-you." Did any one else know? Ah, Yet that was exactly what Billy Ma. Yes, of course. Down the stairs the

"Is dinner ready?" he asked, peering

The candles flickered weakly as they "If I can care this much in two days," he said, "think—but that's old, reared at the windows. Somewhere roared at the windows. Somewhere above a door crashed shut. Close to say to you. 'Whose girl are you?' and its final scene drew the drama at Baldyou're going to look up at me with a pate inn. Mr. Magee knew it; he little heaven for two in your eyes and could not have told why. The others could not have told why. The others seemed to know it too. In silence they waited while the hermit scurried along erything-I must tell you who this his dim way preparing the meal. In Billy Magee is—this man you're goins silence they sat while Miss Norton to admit you belong to, my dear."

"You read the future glibly." she re was a little flurry of interest when "You read the future glibly." she re was a little flurry of interest when blied. "Are your prophecies true. I Miss Thornbill and Hayden met at the

foof of the stairs "Myra!" Hayden cried. "In heaven's ne, what does this mean?"

"Unfortunately," said the girl, "! know-all it means." And Hayden fell back into the shad-

> CHAPTER XVIII. Table Talk.

INALLY the attitude of the het mit suggested that the dinner was ready. sort, and I decided to try the other ed, what there is to fix. This place "Don't tell me," whispered the girl, sary department."

"Peters." reproved Magee "That's hardly courteous to our gnests."

"Living alone on the mountain," re piled the hermit from the dining room door, "you get to have such a high re-

gard for the truth you can't put courtesy first. You want to, but you have not the beart."

The winter guests took their place at the table and the second December dinner at Baldpate inn got under way. But not so genially as on the previous night did it progress. On the faces of those about him Mr. Magee noted worthose about him Mr. Magee noted worth ry and suspicion; now and again mencing cold eyes were turned upon him; evidently first in the thoughts of those at table was a little package rich in treasure, and evidently first in the thoughts of most of them, as the probable holder of that package, was Mr. where I come from nor what I want hagee himself. Several times he with this disgusting bundle of money, looked up to find Max's catlike eyes upon him, sinister and cruel behind the incongruous gold rimmed glasses; ter time. No sooner have the mes several times he saw Hayden's eyes. come than they begin to talk of-love hostile and angry, seek his face. They this very balcony-down there under nothing; Mr. Magee felt that as the

"Before I came up here to be a hermit." remarked Cargan contempora-"Never!" cried Magee. "This is no neously with the removal of the soup, summer hotel affair to me. It's a real "which I may say in passing I ain't any candles on the table where I ate. "Yes," she laughed, "they talk that No. sir. I left them to the people up had come to the side of the hotel on ings-1 was always strong for a bright which was the annex, and the girl light on my food. What I'm afraid of stopped and pointed. "Look!" she is that I'll get the habit up here and whispered breathlessly.

In the window of the annex had ap silver candelabrum with my lager.

Charlie's, wouldn't they. Lon?"
"Too swell for Charlie's," commentlow light.
"I know." said Mr. Magee. "There's somebody in there. But that isn't important in comparison. This is no sum bours. I've seen 'em in use there then.

"I hope you don't dislike the can-"I have found better inspiration than dies. Mr. Cargan," remarked Miss Nor-I'm terribly thrilled by all this. The rattling of the windows, and the flickering light-two lines of a poem keep

"My lord he followed after one who whis-pered in his ear— The weeping of the candles and the wind

"I don't know who the lord was not what he followed-perhaps the seventh key. But the weeping candles and the wind seem so romantic-and so like Baldpate inn tonight."

by the fire, and not chasing after romance on a mountain." "That would be best for her, I'm sure," replied the girl sweetly. "For then she wouldn't be likely to find out

"Dearie!" cried Mrs. Norton. one else spoke, but all looked at the mayor. He was busily engaged with his food. Smiling his amusement, Mr. Magee sought to direct the conversation into less personal channels. "We hear so much about romance,

death." he said. "And to every man I ever met it meant something different. Mr. Cargan, speaking as a broad ed man or the world-what does romance mean to you?" The mayor ran his fingers through

his graying hair and considered se riously. "Romance," he reflected, "Well, ain't much on the talk out of books. But here's what I see when you say that word to me: It's the night before election, and I'm standing in the front window of the little room on Main street where the boys can always find me. Down the street I hear the snarl and rumble of bands, and pretty soon I see the yellow flicker of torches, like the flicker of that candle, and the bobbing of banners. And then-the boys march by-all the boys! Pat Doherty and Bob Larsen and Matt Sandersall the boys! And when they get to my window they wave their hats and cheer. Just a fat old man in that window, but they'll go to the paveme with any guy that knocks him. They are loyal. They are for me. And so they march by, cheering and singingall the boys-just for me to see and hear. Well, the that's romance to

"Power," translated Mr. Magee "Yes. sir!" cried the mayor. "I know I've got them. All the reformers in the world can't spoil my thrill then. They're mine. I guess old Napoleon knew that thrill. I guess be was greatest romancer the world ever knew. When he marched over the ountains with his starving bunch and looked back and saw them in rags and suffering-for him-well, I reck old Nap was as close to romance then as any man ever gets." "I wonder." answered Mr. Magee. It came to him suddenly that in each

thing might lie exposed something of

both character and calling. At the far end of the table Mrs. Norton's lined, tired face met his gaze. To her he

put his question.
"Well," she answered, and her voice seemed softer than its wont, "I ain't thought much of that word for a good many years now. But when I do-say, seem to see myself sitting on our perch back home thirty years ago, 've got on a simple little muslin dress, and I'm siender as Elsie Janis, and the color in my cheeks is-well, it's the sort that Norton likes. And my hair-but I'm thinking of him, of Nortea. He's told me he wants to make me happy for life, and I've about decided I'll let him try. I see him coming up our front walk, coming to call on me. Have I mentioned I've got a figure, a real sweet figure? That's about what romance means to me." "Youth, dear?" asks Miss Nortes

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"That's it. dearie," answered the older woman dreamily. "Youth." For a time those about the table sat in silence, picturing, no doubt, the slender figure on the steps of that porch long ago. Not without a humorous sort of pity did they glance occasionally toward the woman whom Norton had begged to make happy. The professor of comparative literature was the first to break the silence. "The dictionary," he remarked academically, "would define romance as a species of fictitious writing originally composed in the romance dialects and afterward in prose. But the dictionary is prosaic-it has no soul. Shall I tell you what romance means to me?

I will. I see a man toiling in a dim laboratory, where there are strange fires and strange odors. Night and day he experiments, the love of his kind in his eyes, a desire to help in his heart. And then-the golden moment-the great moment in that quiet. dreary cell-the moment of the discovery. A serum, a formula-what not. He gives it to the world and a few of the sick are well again and a few of the sorrowful are glad. Romance means neither youth nor power to me. It means-service."

He bent his dim old eyes on his food, and Mr. Magee gazed at him with a new wonder. Odd sentiments these from an old man who robbed fireplaces, held up bermits and engaged in midnight conferences by the annex door. More than ever Magee was baffled, enthrailed, amused. Now Mr. Max leered about the table and contributed his unsavory bit.

"Funny, ain't it," be remarked, "the different things the same word means to a bunch of folks. Say romance to me and I don't see no dim laboratory. I don't see nothing dim. I see the brightest lights in the world and the dancing the latest freak dance in between the tables. And an orchestra playing in the distance-classy dames all about-a taxi clicking at the door. And me sending word to the chauffeur, 'Let ber click till the milk carts rumble I can pay.' Say, that sure is

romance to me. "Mr. Hayden," remarked Magee, "are we to hear from you?"

Hayden hesitated and looked for a moment into the black eyes of Myra

"My idea has often been contradicted," he said, keeping his gaze on the girl; "it may be again. But to me greatest romance in the world is mented Cargan, not unkindly, "she'd the romance of money making-dol be at home reading Laura Jean Libbey | lar piling on dollar in the vaults of the man who started with a shoestring and hope and nerve. I see him fight ing for the first thousand-and then I see his pile growing, slowly at firstfaster-faster-faster-until a motorcar brings him to his office, and men speak his name with awe in the

> "Money," commented Miss Thorn hill contemptuously. "What an idea of romance for a man!"

> "I did not expect," replied Hayden. "that my definition would pass unchallenged. My past experiences"- he looked meaningly at the girl-"had led me to be prepared for that. But it is my definition-I spoke the truth. You must give me credit for that." "I ain't one to blame you," sneered

Cargan, "for wanting it noticed when

you do sidestep a lie. Yes, I certain-"See here, Cargan," blazed Hayder "Yes, you did speak the truth," put in Miss Thornhill hastily. "You mentioned one word in your definition. It was a desecration to drag it in-hope For me romance means only And I'm afraid there are a pitiful num ber in the world to whom it means the

"We ain't heard from the young woman who started all this fuss over little word," Mr. Cargan reminded "That's right, dearie," said Mrs. Nor-

ton. "You got to contribute. "Yes," agreed the girl with the "locks crisped like golden wire." "I will, but it's hard. One's ideas change so rap idly. A moment ago if you had said romance to me I might have babbled of shady corners, of whisperings of the stair, of walks down the mountain in the moonlight or even on the hote balcony." She smiled gayly at Magee "Perhaps tomorrow, too, the word might mean such rapturous things to me. But tonight-life is too real and earnest tonight. Service-Professo Bolton was right-service is often romance. It may mean the disc a serum-it may mean so cruel a thing as the blighting of another's life romance." She gazed steadily at the stolid Cargan. "It may mean putting an end forever to those parades past the window of the little oom on Main street—the room where

the boys can always find the mayor of Renton." Still she gazed steadily into Cargan's eyes. And with an amused smile the mayor gas

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