

anical specimen in a high bank covered with luxuriant vegetation.

"Dad is writing a book on the 'Flora' of Cornwall," said Maud, "and we are always digging him up in the most unexpected places."

"A prisoner of war," cried Peggy gaily, as the car slowed down, "we shall carry you off with us, together with the spoils you have collected from the high-ways and by-ways."

"I will sit in front," volunteered Maud, jumping out and climbing up beside John Grey, while the vicar took the vacated seat inside the car.

It was a merry party which arrived at Appletree House and peals of laughter echoed from the rose garden where the girls had gone, each to claim a rose. Tea was served, as it frequently was, under the cedar tree at the side of the house, and Roy was allowed to make one of the party.

Miss Pragg and the vicar were soon engaged in a wordy warfare and continued the argument after the meal was over, while the girls wandered on to the croquet lawn; they were old-fashioned at Appletree House and tennis courts had never been introduced.

As the shadows lengthened, the two elders declared a truce, each withdrawing from the argument with honour and without having budged one iota from the opinions expressed two hours before. A few minutes were spent in watching the four girls finish their game and then they took their leave declaring it would be past bedtime when they reached the vicarage.

Left alone, Margaret continued to knock the ball idly about.

"I am going in," said Miss Pragg, "the dew is falling and I've got a twinge of rheumatism. Are you coming, Peggy?"

"In a few minutes, auntie—it is so lovely outside, it seems a shame to leave it for the lamplight."

"Well, I must write to London, telling them when to expect us. I told Grey to come for the letters soon after seven and post them in the village, and it is nearly that now, so I can't wait."

SHE left the garden and passed into the house, going to her private writing room.

Margaret Assitas moved restlessly about, her mallet still in her hands, she was not playing, but now and then she knocked a ball through a hoop.

A figure strolled quietly across the lawn, it was Manson, the secretary.

"Shall I gather up the balls, Miss Assitas?" he asked, "or do you wish to go on playing?"

"Oh no—it is really too dark to play."

He stooped and collected the balls one by one, putting them into the bag kept for them, then he gathered up the mallets, moving about with leisurely precision. As he approached the girl he stretched out his hand for the mallet she held, but instead of taking it from her, he seized both her hands in a sudden grip.

She gasped with astonishment. "You forget yourself—Mr. Manson," cried Margaret indignantly, "let me pass at once."

John Grey, on his way to the house to receive Miss Pragg's letters, heard her clear voice raised in angry protest. He came to a dead stop as if turned to stone.

"Miss Assitas—Peggy—I will speak. It is not a crime to love you. I implore you to listen to me."

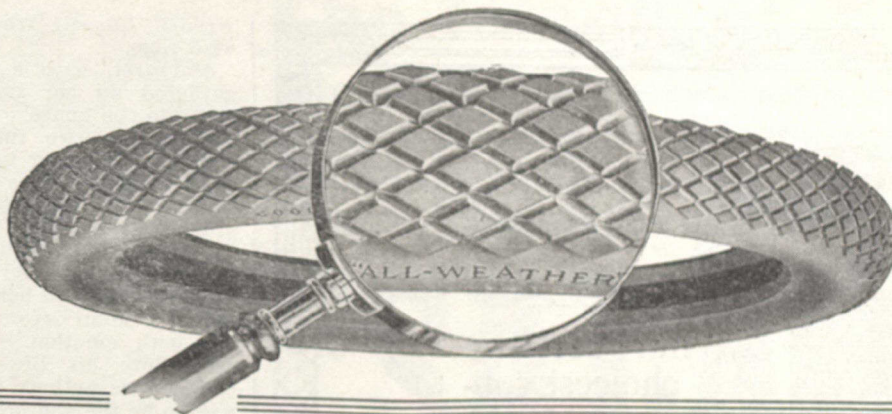
"Let go my hands! How dare you touch me—you—you—unspeakable cad!"

She shouted as if choking with rage. Suddenly John Grey strode forward, crushing through the shrubbery. He saw Margaret Assitas trying to wrench her hands from the firm grip of the secretary, her head thrown back, her face ashy white.

With blazing eyes, the chauffeur gripped Manson by the collar and swung him round.

"How dare you interfere with that lady?" he demanded in a dangerously level voice.

"How dare you interfere with me?" hissed the secretary as he tried to



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