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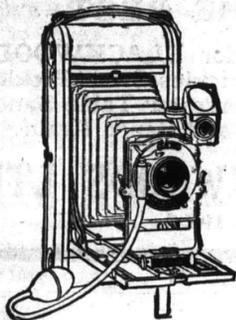


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Mr. Shearman got to his feet and slowly tied his papers together.

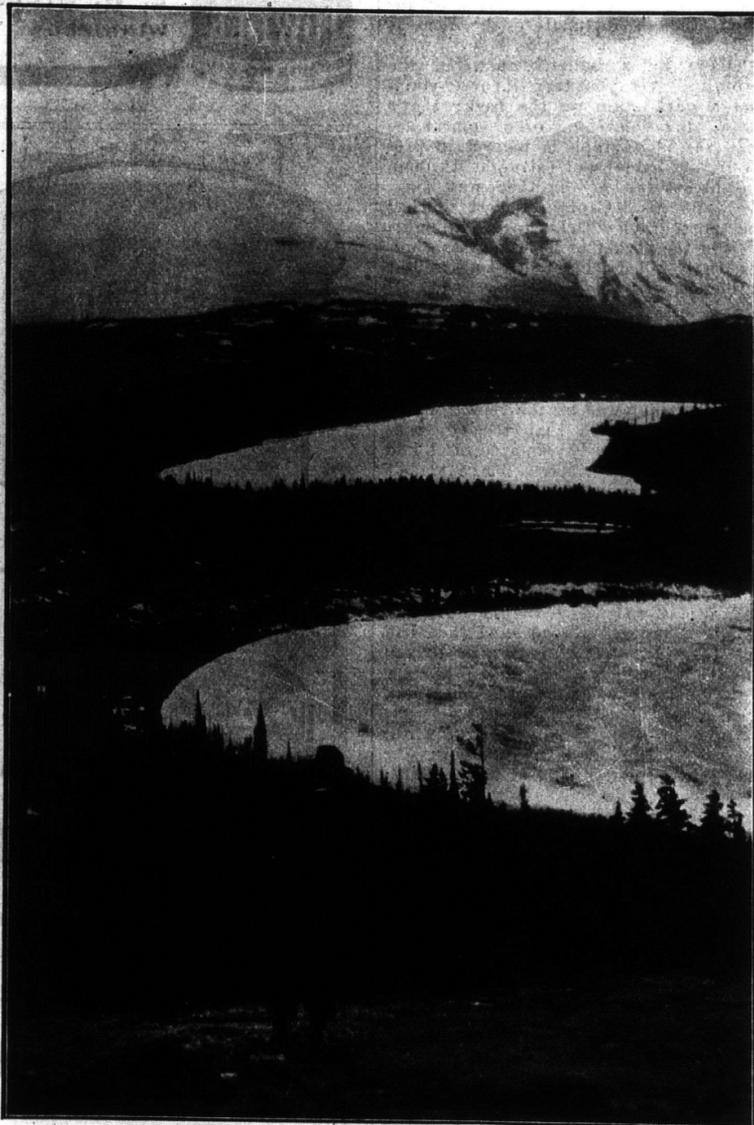
"Captain Follett," he said with deep deliberation, "I have done all that is in my power. Short of kidnapping the child I have done everything. Money, to any extent within reason, and even beyond it, has been offered; I have pointed out the advantages that must fall upon the child when she comes under the guardianship of a rich man like yourself; and I assure you, Captain Follett—the lawyer was becoming quite heated, and actually banged the table as he went on—"I assure you that I might as well have been talking to the empty air. My offers were laughed to scorn. I was told that nothing on earth would induce them to give up the child."

"I shall put the law in motion," exclaimed the Captain.

"Will it be convenient for you to go with me to Mexchester to-morrow?" asked the Captain.

"To-morrow I will be at your service," answered the other. "And I sincerely hope that you'll meet with better success than I have done. Frankly, I have my doubts."

Captain Follett, for his part, was not at all disturbed by doubts. He was absolutely certain in his own mind that, as a gentleman, he could persuade these misguided young females that they must give up the child, in order that that child might be placed under the care of competent people, and might give up the wandering life it was apparently leading at present. After the lawyer had gone, the Captain picked up the shattered photograph from the table, and stood for a long time looking at the face of the dead girl.



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"Then you musn't ask me to help you—that's all," answered Shearman. "You have no authority for taking this baby away from these girls; anyone will tell you that. Persuasion is the only force you can use, and persuasion has failed."

Captain Neville Follett paced the room in angry silence.

"But I promised the dying boy," he said at last helplessly, as though that made any difference.

"I am afraid that would scarcely carry any weight with these girls," answered the lawyer with a twitch of his mouth. "They have some rather hard things to say concerning Mr. Leonard Follett; there is a sort of impression among them that he behaved very badly."

"Well, on that score I agree with them," assented the Captain. "However, I am not going to let the matter rest; I must try what personal persuasion will do. I suppose you know where this troupe is at the present moment?"

"They are performing this week at Mexchester," answered Shearman, "and the child is, of course, with them."

"If the child is anything like the mother she must be very beautiful," he thought. "No wonder poor young Leonard lost his heart. Heigho!—a strange world, that flings two people together like that, and leaves one dead and buried in some obscure little Midland churchyard, and the other thrust into a hole in the ground in a savage country. Well, I must look after the baby; so much is certain at least."

The Captain knew nothing of provincial music-halls, and he was assured by Shearman that the only way to reach the troupe and to see the child was to visit the hall at which they were performing. Shearman, being quite willing that the matter should be left to him, engaged a box for the evening of their arrival at Mexchester, and told the Captain that he would arrange so that they might go "behind" and see the ladies after their performance.

Behold the Captain, therefore, to the astonishment of the audience in that particular music-hall at Mexchester, resplendent in evening costume, and attended by Mr. John Shearman in morning dress. See the Captain also a little bored with the various "turns," con-

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