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BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

BY MRS. C. N. WILLIAMSON,
Author of "Lady Mary of the Dark House," "The Woman in Gray," "Queen Sweetheart," "Fortune's Sport," "The Barn Stormers," etc.
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But I did not take the hands. "I do this for him, not you," I said. "You have deserved little from me; but for the sake of my loyal friend—your loyal lover—I forgive you. And now I have done all I can do. It is useless to care more, for I cannot do it. If you came to plead with me, I am sorry that you must go away disappointed. But I am tired and ill. It would be better for us to part now."

"I came for more than to plead," the girl persisted. "That was only the beginning. I won't keep you long. But I go. You yourself would wish it. For one—that photograph in the frame of brilliant—is it a friend of yours?"

"Yes," I answered—for I saw no reason to hide the truth from her. "A dear friend. One for whom, if necessary, I would sacrifice all others." "Pardon me for asking," said Miss Revelstoke. "It was because he lost something last night."

"And you know something of it?" I caught her up quickly, taking a step towards her. "Something—yes."

"Then you know, perhaps, that it is of great value. Can you give me information which would help him to find it?" "I might give you the information. But for a reward. A finder is always entitled to a reward. That which I ask you for is a promise to save Noel Brent."

"I tell you I cannot," I cried. "You surely do not demand a bribe." "A reward. I know where the thing is, which was lost, and tomorrow it can be in your hands, if you will do what I implore. Wait until I have finished. Noel Brent was here at the time when the doctors say the murder was without doubt committed."

"Not even to get back the jewels, whose loss was the beginning of all our misfortune. Noel Brent would not wish me to sacrifice myself. His silence shows that—and it shall not have been in vain. He must be saved without me."

CHAPTER XIII.

Told by Juliette De Nevers.
"If there were still another inducement to offer to you, my dear friend, you will not give it," continued Miss Revelstoke, "there was a paper—or rather a parchment of some importance to you, perhaps—"

"I darted at the girl and caught at her wrist hardly knowing what I did. 'For Heaven's sake,' I gasped, 'what do you know of the parchment?'"

"What, you would bargain still, at such a moment? If you but guessed! Anything—ask anything you like for the parchment! It is yours to give, and you shall have it."

"I ask you to tell the authorities that Noel Brent was here last night from 20 minutes past 12 until—until—"

"Until half-past one," I said, thoughtlessly; then I saw by the lightening of her face that, young as she was, she had all along been near-sighted, and she had been leading me on.

"You will tell the police that?" "I must, if you will sell me the parchment at no less price. Yet, if I do what you ask it will spoil my life. The man I love will know, and he can never know the real truth."

"Let me take the diamonds and say to him that Noel Brent and I found them. That we were at your house last night. That would be true, for I was at the game, and he had been there. You say your lover may misjudge you, but I see more clearly now. And though I hadn't quite given him a promise before, yet I would marry him as soon as he was free. It is for you to help free him. Have I made it easier for you to do that?"

"A trifle," I said, with a sigh. "I must risk it. Anything for the parchment, for that may save me yet. Though how you can possibly have got it into your possession I cannot imagine. Surely the police must have searched their prisoner before he—"

"No, not before he had time to save it. He hid it in the stove in the room where the man was murdered. When I went to him today—for I did go—he implored me quickly in Italian to find and bring it to you. And, oh! Mademoiselle de Nevers, what I have done for you, for a price. That was my thought. Yet you have promised now. And—Noel would not forgive me for—I cannot let you have what I have gone through so much to get for nothing. It was awful—that room—the horror of it—the stains of blood, all the frightful disorder of the death struggle—everything as it had been except that the dead man lay there no longer. I had to buy my way in; it cost me a hundred pounds, which I had to borrow until tomorrow. But that was nothing. The terrible part was going into the room. I was not there five minutes, but it seemed an hour and there was the fear of being caught, of having the parchment seized after I had unearthed it from among the ashes. And the condescending waiting outside the door, pale as death, his eyes fixed on me, his white face stark. Oh! I have a right to set my own price upon the parchment."

"I think that you have. You are a brave girl and a loyal one, too," said the girl. "The price I will pay. But for heaven's sake don't keep back the parchment until I have paid."

"I do trust you," she answered. "And here is the parchment." She whipped from her pocket the treaty—for I was sure of its identity at a glance—and put it into my hand. To feel it in my hand, to know that it was mine, suffered; to know, too, what its blessed safety might mean for me, was almost too much of joy. I trembled at the touch of the folded parchment. "Do you know what this is," Miss Revelstoke?" I asked.

"No," she said. "It was your property or Noel's. Of course, I did not open it. I tried to brush and shake the ashes away without that."

She said the words with such pretty dignity, such quaint primness, that I

could have broken into a shriek of hysterical laughter. She had tried to clean it—this thing worth nothing, yet worth millions—this Franco-Russian Treaty! I was going out to keep my word. Now that I had the parchment in my hand, ashes and all, I could do anything.

But the danger was not half over yet. I had the healing medicine in my grasp, yet I dared not think how many a slip might be between the cup and the lip, and I dared to risk.

I sent her away—for it would not be well that we should be seen together—and when I had dressed for the street I went out. I had eaten nothing. But Agnes, who is a tyrant, made me drink a cup of soup while I waited for the carriage.

That brave English girl trusted me, and I would not fail her; but before my promise was kept there was something else to be done. I depended far more than my life—Maxime's honor, which I (deluding myself with the thought it was for his sake) had dared to risk.

As I drove, having told my coachman to take me to the Foreign Office, plans, thoughts, hopes and fears beat in my brain, like the fluttering of imprisoned birds.

How was I to make all right—if all could yet be right? Could I save him—and myself for him?

I had in my hand the ace of trumps for that desperate game in which I had staked Maxime's honor and my happiness. Miss Revelstoke held another high trump for me (strange that they should both come back through her!) but all the other trumps, and many a good card besides, were still the enemy's. Everything depended now on the way the next hand was played, and it was I who must lay down the first card.

I had ordered my coachman to drive fast, for if I missed Maxime it would be too late to replace the treaty in the safe today, while he could tell what tomorrow might bring forth; and I might, too, easily miss him at this hour. It was but a chance that he might still be at the Foreign Office.

The fear of finding him gone was so absorbing that I scarcely could collect my thoughts; but I must think, and clearly.

I had got the treaty in the first place by a ruse, and I could make it make today to wheedle Maxime again into opening the safe from which I had purloined it? Even a lover would scarcely be so good-naturedly reckless of his trust.

Suddenly, however, an inspiration came to me—a plan by which I might induce him to unlock the safe door for me.

WHAT ONE GOAT ATE

He Devoured Bankbook, Checks and a Bunch of Bills.

New York, April 17.—Jeremiah Cronin, a Henderson street, Jersey City, saconkeeper, placed his bankbook, containing \$27 in bills and three checks for amounts aggregating \$22.50, on a chair in his saloon yesterday and went out to talk to members of No. 6 Engine Company, near here.

The saloonkeeper's go, Patrick Sarsfield, wandered into the barroom, sniffed at the bankbook and chewed it up—money, checks and all.

When Cronin discovered his loss he seriously considered the advisability of killing the goat. He concluded, however, that the money and checks would be lost, and he decided to go to the police.

"What I want, Judge, is an old man, spinster, of this city, wants a husband, and is looking for a particular about what manner of man he shall be. She has sent full specifications to Judge Cook, of the second district police station, Trenton, in a letter, which says:—"

"To Judge Cook: 'Dear Sir—Inclosed is photograph of myself, taken with my new Easter dress. If you think that the original is worthy of a husband, please send me her farm peruse my letter carefully and then if you can assist me please do so.'

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APPALLING LOSS OF LIFE IN RAILROAD WRECKS IN CANADA

Figures for the Past Six Months Are Decidedly Startling.

Automatic Coupler Reduces the Fatalities Among Trainmen.

Wages Are Down Now—Changes on the Pere Marquette—Interesting General News.

The frequency of railroad wrecks in Canada was a matter which was touched upon in the House of Commons the other afternoon. It was brought up by the member for West Toronto, who quoted figures, which, to say the least, were rather startling. They were to the effect that during the past six months no less than 142 accidents had occurred in the Dominion, involving a loss of 179 lives, and they were in striking contrast to the returns from Great Britain, where during the past year not a single passenger was killed on the roads.

The frequency of accidents was advanced in support of the appointment of an official to investigate disasters and properly apportion the blame.

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ferries. It is also the expressed purpose to spend many more millions to make the physical condition of the property perfect all the way from Chicago to New York.

Of the \$12,500,000 new stock to be issued by the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railway, at least \$7,000,000 will be needed for new cars and other equipment, including 75 locomotives. About 4,000 freight cars have either been ordered already or will be ordered soon, and the road, with its present equipment, is quite unable to handle the business offered. Another considerable part of the sum must go for new tugs, car floats and other floating equipment at New York, the present equipment there being largely worn out. In connection with the new rolling stock there is a new plan of the Coast and North for the more rapid handling of freight.

Chicago material, and to a large extent Chicago capital, will be used in constructing a railroad through the gold fields on the Seward Peninsula, acknowledged to be the richest mining section of Alaska. With the opening of the first branch of this line, called the Council City and Solomon River Railroad, between Council City, at the mouth of the Solomon River, and Council City, 50 miles in the interior and the chief distributing station for the Upper Yukon, hundreds of thousands of tons of gold ore awaiting transportation will be brought out to the smelters in the United States.

Mr. Warren DeLoach, who while in the gold fields conceived the idea of building the line, is closing contracts for the rails, engines and other apparatus, and is now engaged in building and equipping the road. The surveys and plans already executed show the route skirting along the Solomon River into the interior, penetrating deep into the gold country until it reaches Council City, and tapping hundreds of mining camps. Other branches of the line will run to Grant Harbor, Good Hope, and other points on the coast.

The whole peninsula, Solomon City is said to be a much better port than Nome. Railroad property in Cook County, Ill., valued at \$2,000,000 will be assessed this year by the board of assessors for the benefit of the county, instead of being lumped by the State Board of Equalization into an assessed value of \$100,000, which would reduce to the benefit of the whole state to Chicago. The assessors will assess the property if they could do so. John C. Richberg, their attorney, after careful consideration of the matter, said that he would not do so, and he expects that the decision of the mandamus suit brought by the City of Chicago and Carter H. Harrison, which is now pending in the state supreme court, will definitely fix the right of the assessors to spread the assessment. By assessing the real estate outside of the tractage it is estimated that Chicago will have \$1,000,000 more in the school fund will receive \$1,500,000 a year.

The assessors say that for the last three or four years attempts have been made by the city to have the real estate of the railroads, but objections have always been made and the assessments have been stricken off. Since the decision of the mandamus suit, however, when they attempted to assess the elevated roads, they say they have rather lost heart, and believing the railroads to be exempt from the assessment, they have not attempted to tax their property.

Corporation Counsel Walker holds the same opinion, and he expects that the decision of the mandamus suit brought by the City of Chicago and Carter H. Harrison, which is now pending in the state supreme court, will definitely fix the right of the assessors to spread the assessment. By assessing the real estate outside of the tractage it is estimated that Chicago will have \$1,000,000 more in the school fund will receive \$1,500,000 a year.

The table shows that in 1886 the railroad employees who met death while coupling or uncoupling cars constituted 13.1 per cent of the whole number of fatalities and casualties due to the passage of the automatic coupler act in 1883, which went into effect Aug. 1, 1900.

In 1902, with the automatic coupler act in operation, those killed in coupling operations constituted only 5.9 per cent of the whole number of deaths and the injured was 6.3 per cent of the total number of casualties.

In all the years up to 1901, when the railroads were equipped with the automatic coupler, the same high percentage of deaths due to coupling operations prevailed, and from 1900 on there has been a great decrease, showing just how much this act accomplished in saving life.

The percentages given above are all the more remarkable in view of the fact that in 1886 the mileage of railroads in the United States was only 125,185, as compared with 197,257 in 1902, while the railroad employees numbered about 700,000 in 1886, as compared with more than a million last year.

WANTS A LARGE SHARE

Erie Line Will Struggle for Traffic Originating in New York.

There is no longer much doubt that the Erie Railroad intends entering into a struggle with the Vanderbilt and Pennsylvania interests for a larger share of the traffic originating in New York. It was asserted this week with positiveness that the Erie management is seeking an entrance to New York city through a tunnel from Jersey City. Plans for securing such a tunnel and thereby placing the Erie on a par with the other two systems is said to be well advanced.

It is interesting to note that this project was not thought of until Chicago capital became heavily interested in the Erie. The western contingent did not invest heavily in Erie securities for the purpose of letting the property be handled as it has in the past—so as to take what other systems could not get. The first move in placing the Erie in competitive condition was a decision to spend millions in the terminals at Jersey City and provide new

BOILED WERE SO PAINFUL

could not sleep at night.

APPEARED ON NECK, LEGS AND ARMS.

Burdock Blood Bitters CURED THEM.

It is well-known to all that bad blood is the direct cause of all skin diseases and it is necessary for the blood to be cleansed before the eruptions will disappear. For this purpose there is nothing so equal as Burdock Blood Bitters as the thousands of testimonials we have on hand will testify.

Mr. Willard Thompson, McNeill's Mills, P.E.I., writes us as follows: "I wish to state to you what Burdock Blood Bitters has done for me. Some time ago my blood got out of order and many boils appeared on my neck, legs and arms. They were so painful that I could not sleep at night. After having tried many different remedies without any success, I finally decided, on the advice of a friend, to use Burdock Blood Bitters. Before I had quite used two bottles the boils had quite disappeared, and I wish to emphasize the fact that I think Burdock Blood Bitters the best blood purifier on the market to-day."

CALLED TO ACCOUNT

Western Roads Must Make Explanations About High Grain Rates.

A number of western railroads have been called upon by the Interstate Commerce Commission to explain by May 1 the reason for the high rates charged by them on grain and grain products from points west of the Missouri River to Chicago and Mississippi River points. It has been charged that the rates are excessive, and the Interstate Commerce Commission will investigate to ascertain whether any law is being violated. The orders issued by the commission were directed to the

Chicago and Alton, the Santa Fe, Burlington, Great Western, Northwestern, St. Paul, Illinois Central, Wabash and Rock Island roads. The commission had found that large advances have been made in the grain rates by these roads, and these rates cannot be maintained unless the commission is satisfied that there is just cause for the increases.

The Wabash Railroad is preparing to spend \$100,000 in Detroit in the enlargement of its Twelfth street yards. When the work is finished the capacity of the yards will be increased from 700 to 1,500 cars. It will take 23 new tracks to carry out the plans.

For the third week of March the gross earnings of 12 railroads amounted to \$10,322,646, against \$8,887,288 for the corresponding week last year, an increase of \$1,435,358, or 16.4 per cent. The latest railway project is the construction of a railroad from Milwaukee to East St. Louis.

Mr. James Hartney, Manitoba immigration agent, states that the number of settlers who have gone West this spring is much in excess of that of last year at this time. The following figures show the number of people and carloads of effects that have gone on the weekly excursions to the far west.

Settlers. Cars.
March 3.....540 48
March 10.....704 126
March 17.....748 141
March 24.....718 137
March 31.....731 129
April 7.....435 50

In addition to the above many intending settlers have gone by the regular trains on other days.

WAGES ARE LOWER NOW

Interesting Figures Showing Average Pay To Be Less Than Ten Years Ago.

The interstate commerce commission has furnished figures showing that on the average railway wages at present are lower than they were in 1892 and 1893. The statements are interesting in the face of what the railroads of the country have done since the first of the year in the way of revising pay rolls and raising the pay of employees generally. The statement of the commission is as follows:

"General officers have steadily received higher pay, the average rising from \$7.83 to \$10.57. Officers other than general officers received \$5.56 instead of \$7.83. General clerks' wages have decreased from \$2.55 to \$2.19, and station agents from \$2.19 to \$1.77. Other station men have advanced to \$1.69 from \$1.65.

"Switchmen, flagmen and watchmen have been decreased an average of \$1.75 from \$1.82, section foremen from \$1.75 from \$1.71, and laborers from \$1.70 to \$1.69. Engineers have been advanced from \$3.60 to \$3.78, firemen from \$2.06 to \$2.12, conductors from \$2.10 to \$2.17, other trainmen from \$1.92 to \$2.02, machinists from \$2.31 to \$2.32, trackmen from \$1.22 to \$1.23, and telegraph operators and dispatchers from \$1.38 to \$1.39. The advance of 10 per cent being made by some of the roads is not included."

Representatives of steel rail manufacturing concerns at New York admit that the amount of business already booked is so large as to make it impossible to complete their deliveries during the current year. In other words, a considerable tonnage will have to be carried into next year.

This seems to indicate that the present price of \$23 a ton will prevail during 1904. While no definite action as to prices for next year will be taken until later in the year, manufacturers appear confident that \$23 will be the base quotation.

According to one authority, the unfilled business on the books of the various steel rail concerns at present exceeds 2,700,000 tons, which compares with the estimated capacity of the plants for the remainder of the year of 2,500,000 tons.

If these figures represent actual conditions, something like 200,000 tons will have to be carried over into next year, even if another order should not be received. Using the price of \$23 a ton as a basis for calculation, the output of steel rails this year can be valued at something like \$60,000,000. Never before in history were the steel rail mills booked so far ahead.

A "BUREAU OF NEATNESS"

Erie Railroad Wants Conductors and Trainmen To Be "Spick and Span."

The "bureau of neatness" is the latest department that has been added to the Erie system, and it is expected to play an important part in the future appearance and conduct of conductors and trainmen. The new bureau is the idea of W. L. Derr, superintendent of the Erie at Jersey City.

The plan is to provide each trainman and conductor with a monthly ticket of admission and privileges of the bureau.

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By using this ticket the employee need not suffer from trousers bagging at the knees. Hereafter the business will give way to neat and deep creases, for the ticket will entitle the holder to have his trousers pressed and cleaned twelve times each month, and it will be "up to him" if they get midway when the superintendent comes around.

In order that the trousers may not lead in the procession of neatness, the trainmen and conductors have their tickets punched for six cleanings and pressings of other articles of wearing apparel. To round out their