

THE STROLLERS

By FREDERIC S. ISHAM,

Author of "Under the Rose"

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"It is late," he answered. "Almost too late to go on. You are weary and worn. Why not rest here tonight?"

"Rest here?" she repeated with a start of surprise.

"You may not wish to drive farther. Tomorrow we can return."

"Tomorrow," she cried. "But—what do you mean?"

"That I must insist upon your staying here," he said firmly, pointing a red spot flushed his cheek.

"No, no. We must leave at once," she answered.

He smiled reassuringly. "Why will you not have confidence in me?" he asked. "You have not the strength to travel all night over a rough road after such a trying day. For your own sake, I beg you to give up the idea. Here you are perfectly safe and may rest undisturbed."

"Please call the horses at once!"

An impatient expression crossed his brow. He had relied on easily prevailing upon her through her gratitude, containing in his disinterested role for yet some time, remaining the journey on the morrow, carrying her farther away under pretext of mistaking the road, than he had intended. He had faded into a vague perspective, dominated by unscrupulous self-confidence and egotism.

But her words threatened a rupture at the outset that would seriously alter the status of the adventure.

"It is a mistake to go on tonight," he said, with a dissenting gesture. "However, if you are determined"—

And Mauville stepped to the window. "Why, the carriage is not there!" he exclaimed, looking out.

"Not there?" she repeated incredulously. "You told them to change the horses, why?"

"I don't understand," returned the land baron, with an effort to make his voice sound calm and collected. "The carriage is not here—but where, when? Through the growing perplexity of her thoughts she heard the voice of her companion.

"Why don't you hitch up the grays?"

"There are no horses in the barn," came the answer.

"Strange! The caretaker did not tell me they had been taken away," commented the other, hastily stepping from the window as the driver vanished once more into the barn. "I am sorry, but there seems no alternative but to wait, at least until I can send for others."

She continued to gaze toward the door through which the man had disappeared. She could place him now, although his livery had been discarded for shabby clothes. She recalled him distinctly in spite of this changed appearance.

"Why not make the best of it?" said Mauville softly, but with glance sparkling in spite of himself. "After all, you are not giving yourself needless apprehensions? You are at home here. Anything you wish shall be yours. Consider yourself mistress, me one of your servants!"

Almost imperceptibly, but with a certain resolution, she had resolved to stay in the city. Her mind was not clear, but she felt that she had a right to know the truth. She had not the strength to travel all night over a rough road after such a trying day. For her own sake, she begged him to give up the idea. Here she was perfectly safe and may rest undisturbed.

"When—her eyes ablaze—"will this farce end?"

Her words took him unawares. Not that he dreaded the betrayal of his actual purpose. On the contrary, his reckless temper, chafing under her unexpected obduracy, now welcomed the opportunity of discarding the disinterested and chivalrous part he had assumed.

"When it ends in a honeymoon, ma belle Constance?" he said swiftly.

His sudden words, removing all doubts as to his purpose, awoke such repugnance in her that for a moment aversion was paramount to every other feeling. Again she looked without, but only the solitude of the fields and forests met her glance.

The remoteness of the situation gave the very boldness of his plan feasibility. Was he not his own magistrate in his own province? Why, then, had he thought, waste the golden moments of his life? He had but one need now—a study of physical beauty against a crimson background.

"To think of such levelness lost in the wilderness!" he said softly. "The gates of art should all open to you. Why should you play to rustic bumps when the world of fashion would gladly receive you? I am a poor prophet if you would not be a success in town. It is not always easy to get a hearing, to procure an audience, but means could be found. Soon your name would be on every one's lips. Your art is fresh. The faded world likes freshness. The cynical town runs to artless art as an antidote to its own poison. Most of the players are wrinkled and worn. A young face will seem like a new grown white rose."

She did not answer. Unresponsive as a statue, she did not move. The sun shot beneath an obstructing branch, and long, searching shafts found access to the room. Mauville moved forward impetuously until he stood on the verge of the sunlight on the satinwood floor.

"Why I do not devote myself to this cause, Constance?" he continued. "You are naturally resentful toward me now. But can I not show you that I have your welfare at heart? If you were his manner."

"Go in there," he said curtly, as ambitious as you are attractive, what might you not do? Art is long; our days are short; youth flies like a summer day."

His glance sought hers questioning, still no reply. Only a wave of blood surged over her neck and brow, while her eyes fell. Then the glow receded, leaving her white as a snow language.

"Come," he urged. "May I not feel for you those opportunities?"

He put out his eager hand as if to touch her. Then suddenly the figure in the window came to life and shrunk back, with widely opened eyes fixed upon his face. His gaze could not withstand hers, man of the world though he was, and his free manner was replaced by something resembling momentary embarrassment. Conscious of this new and appalling feeling, his emotion rose in arms, as if protesting against the novel sensation, and his

next words were correspondingly violent.

"Put off your stage business," he exclaimed. "You are here at my expense. It was no whim, by carrying you off after you left I meant to be far on where I tried to forget you. But tonight of revelry—why should I not confess it—could not efface your memory." His voice unconsciously sank to unrecruited candor. "Your presence filled these halls. I could no longer say: 'Why should I trouble myself about one who has no thought for me?'"

Breathing hard, he paused, making beyond her, as though reviewing the memories of that period.

"Learning you were in the neighborhood," he continued, "I went there with no further purpose than to see you. On the journey perhaps I indulged in foolish fancies. How would you receive me? Would you be pleased, annoyed? So I treated my fancy with air castles, like the most unsophisticated lover. But you had no word of welcome; scarcely listened to me and hurried away. I could not win you as I desired. The next best way was this."

He concluded, with an impassioned gesture, his gaze eagerly seeking the first sign of lenity or favor on her part, but his confession seemed futile. Her eyes, suggestive of tender possibilities, expressed now but coldness and obduracy. In a revulsion of feeling he forgot the distance separating the busking from the fashionable world, the "rag" scatterings from the conversations of Vanity Fair. He forgot all save that she was to him now the one unparagoned entirety, overriding other memories.

"Will not a life of devotion atone for this day, Constance?" he cried. "Do you know how far reaching are these lands? All the afternoon you drove through them, and they stand wide in the other direction. These—my name—are yours!"

A shade of color swept over her brow.

"Answer me," he urged.

"Drive back and I will answer you."

"Drive back and you will laugh at me," he said moodily. "You would make a woman's bargain with me?"

"Is yours a man's with me?" she said contemptuously.

"What more can I do?"

"Undo what you have done. Take me back!"

"I would cut a nice figure doing that! No, you shall stay here!"

He spoke angrily. Her disdain at his proposal not only injured his pride, but awoke his animosity. On the other hand, his words demonstrated she had not improved her own position. If he meant to keep her there he could do so, and opposition made him only more obstinate, more determined to press his advantage. Had she been more politic—

"Forgive me," he said tenderly.

"You will drive back?"

"Yes, I will win you in your own way, fairly and honestly! I will take you back, though the whole country laughs at me. Win or lose, back we go, for—I love you!" And impetuously he threw his arm around her waist.

Simulation could not stand the test. It was no longer acting, but reality; she had set herself to a role she could not perform. Hating him for that free touch, she forcibly extricated herself with an exclamation and an expression of countenance there was no mistaking. From Mauville's face the glad light died. He regarded her once more cruelly, vindictively.

"I dropped the mask too soon," he said coldly. "I was not prepared for rehearsal, although you were perfect. You are even a better actress than I thought you, than which—mockingly—with no better result."

"I can pay you no better compliment."

She looked at him with such scorn he laughed, though his eyes flashed.

"Brave!" he exclaimed.

While confronting each other a footfall sounded without the door burst open, and the driver of the coach, with features drawn by fear, unceremoniously entered the room. The patron turned on him enraged, but the latter, without noticing his master's displeasure, exclaimed hurriedly:

"The antiretors are coming!"

The actress uttered a slight cry and stepped toward the window, when she was drawn back by an irresistible force.

"Pardon me," said a hard voice, from which all passing compunction had vanished. "Be kind enough to come with me."

"I will follow you, but"—Her face expressed the rest.

"This way then!"

He released her, and together they mounted the stairway. For a long time a gentle footfall had not passed those various landings; not since the ladies in hoops, with powdered hair, had ascended or descended with attendant cavaliers bewigged, beruffled, bedizened. The land baron's eyes fixed upon a companion to a distant room upstairs, the door of which he threw open.

"Go in there," he said curtly.

She hesitated on the threshold. So remote was it from the main part of the great manor the apartment had all the requirements of a prison.

"You needn't fear," he continued, reading her thoughts. "I'm not going to be separated from you—yet. But we can see what is going on here."

Again she hastily opened him and entered the room. It was a commodious apartment, with an excellent view was offered of the surrounding country on three sides.

From the narrow, dark crimson ribbon left behind by the flanking sun, a faint reflection entered the great open windows of the chamber and revealed Mauville gazing without, pistol in hand. Constance leaning against the curtains and the driver of the coach standing in the center of the room, quaking inwardly and shaking outwardly. This last named had found an old blunderbuss somewhere, useful one undoubtedly, but of questionable service now.

Mauville Oly-looka had not returned. Having faithfully closed and locked all the iron shutters, he had crept out of a cellar window and voluntarily resigned as caretaker of the manor, with its burden of dangers and vexations. With characteristic prudence he had timed the period of his departure with the beginning of the end in the fortunes of the old person principally. The storm cloud, gathering during the life of Mauville's predecessor, was now ready to burst, the impending catastrophe hastened by the heir's want of discretion and his failure to adjust difficulties amicably.

A branch of a tree gnarled against the window as Mauville scanned the surrounding garden. Then his eye fell upon an indistinct figure stealing slowly across the sward in the partial darkness. This object was immediately followed by another and yet another. To the observer's surprise they wore the head gear of Indians.

Suddenly the patron heard the note-sounding of the whippoorwill, the nocturnal songster that mourns unseen. It was succeeded by the sharp tones of a saw-whet and the distinct mew of a catbird. A wild pigeon began to coo softly in another direction and was answered by a thrush. The listener vaguely realized that all this unexpected melody came from the Indians, who had by this time surrounded the house and took this method of communicating with one another.

An interval of portentous silence was followed by a loud knocking at the front door, which din reverberated through the hall, echoing and re-echoing in the corridors. At the same time this leaned from the window, and as he did so there arose a louding from the sward as though bedlam had broken loose. Maintaining his post, he he called out:

"What do you want, men?"

At these words the demonstration became more turbulent, and amid the threatening hubbub voices arose, shouting to well the purpose of the gathering. Aroused to a fever of excitement by the shooting of the tenants, they were no longer skulking, stealthy figures, but a riotous assemblage of antiretors expressing their determination in an ominous chorus.

"They are coming; they are coming!" she said, and Mauville topped short.

But while anger and resentment were at strife within him some one tried the door of the chamber and, finding it locked, set up a shout. Immediately the prowlers in the wings, the searchers in the kitchen and the stragglers below congregated in the main hall. Footsteps were heard ascending rapidly, pausing in doubt at the head of the stairway, not knowing whether to turn to the light or to the left.

"Here they are!" called out the man of the door.

To be Continued.

BETTER THAN DIGGING A CANAL.

Cincinnati, Jan. 17, 1904.—In the pulp of the Vine Street Congregational Church today the pastor, Herbert S. Bigelow, spoke on the question "What is in it for me?"

Since it is proposed to spend so many millions for a canal in Panama, it is well to ask ourselves "Precisely what will it do for me?" It is a labor saving device. Will the canal benefit the masses? Have labor saving machines been of benefit to them?

Machinery and Labor.

We should not stop inventing machinery because inventions have not materially increased the wages of labor. We should go on with our canal, notwithstanding the fact that wages for common labor will come to be what a man can live on and no more. We should not stop a step to material progress because, forsooth, the benefits of progress have not been equitably distributed. But it is time we had learned the lesson of greater importance, even then digging canals, is the work of amending our laws, to the end that the benefits of public improvements shall reach down to the bottom of society and not be monopolized by a few at the top.

Where Does the Wealth Go?

With canals, and railroads, and improved machinery, we have not stopped inventing machinery because inventions have not materially increased the wages of labor. We should go on with our canal, notwithstanding the fact that wages for common labor will come to be what a man can live on and no more. We should not stop a step to material progress because, forsooth, the benefits of progress have not been equitably distributed. But it is time we had learned the lesson of greater importance, even then digging canals, is the work of amending our laws, to the end that the benefits of public improvements shall reach down to the bottom of society and not be monopolized by a few at the top.

where he had determined to make his best defense. After closing and locking the door he lighted one of many candles on the mantel.

The flickering glare fell upon the young actress standing, hand upon her heart, listening with bated breath, and Mauville, with ominous expression, brooding over that chance which sent the landholders to the manor on that night of nights.

The violent crash of a heavy body at the front of the house and a tumult of voices on the porch, succeeded by a din in the hall, announced that the first barrier had been overcome and the antiretors were in possession of the lower floor of the manor. Mauville had started toward the door when the anticipation in the young girl's eyes held him to the spot. Unconscious, she was the more desired. Her reserve was fuel to his flame, and at that moment, while his life hung in the balance, he forgot the rebuff he had received and how she had nearly played upon him.

"Water fast from his lips, unprepared, eloquent, voicing those desires increased enormously. Yet there has been no startling improvement in the condition of the masses. Where, then, does this wealth go? There are only three places for it to go. It must be distributed either as wages, or interest, or rent.

There has been no increase in the rate of wages corresponding to the increase in the productivity of labor. Have we not five bridges spanning the Ohio? Mighty triumphs of civilization! Yet it was only yesterday that a father surrendered two of his four children to a charitable institution because the wage he received as a clerk in a railroad office was not sufficient to support them all. This father could not have fared worse in this country a century ago, yet these were the days of ferry boats and stage coaches and hand tools.

Neither has the capitalist absorbed a larger share of this increased production. As a matter of fact, the rate of interest has gone down and, as capitalist, as capitalist, gets less than ever before.

Ground Rent the Sponge.

But not so with rent. While interest and wages have stood still, rents have gone up. On the great average, wages and interest remain on a dead level, but rents shoot skyward. When our forefathers wanted to live and work on Manhattan Island the Indians required of them but a few strings of beads. But this generation, before it pays interest on capital or wages to labor, must pay the Astors a tribute of hundreds of millions. It is into that hands of the land monopolist that the first fruits of our advancing civilization go. Ground rent is the sponge that sucks up the wealth of the nation.

The Net Result.

Suppose the Panama canal should so clear the course of trade that New Orleans in a decade should equal the size of Philadelphia. The net result would be that the men who own the site of the Crescent City would be able to collect millions where now they collect thousands in ground rents, while the masses in the Quaker City, without the single tax that canal will be of trifling benefit to the masses. The money sunk in that canal will increase neither interest nor wages. It will swell ground rents. It is the people's money, but they will never get it back until they take these ground rents in lieu of taxes.

OUT OF THE ARENA.

In answering the series of questions put to him by the Indianapolis Central Labor Union, Mr. David M. Parry, president of the National Association of Manufacturers, was not an outlier success. Here is one of the questions and Mr. Parry's reply:

Question: "As you believe in unrestricted competition in the employment of labor, do you believe in conducting industrial enterprises in harmony with natural competitive conditions? Do you believe in free trade or protection? If you are a protectionist, how do you harmonize the application of a natural law in favoring laborers and the ignoring of this law in conducting a manufacturing enterprise?"

Mr. Parry's reply: "As an interference with natural law, the tariff is to be tolerated, because its aim is the advancement of the interests of the whole people; but the interference of organized labor with natural law is not to be tolerated, because its aim is the advancement of the interests of only a part of the people, the exploitation of the rest of the people."

Doesn't Mr. Parry know that it is the stock charge against protection that it is in the interest of a small class? One would have supposed that Mr. Parry would have realized the absurdity of such a reply and had the frankness either to abandon his protection or admit the right of labor organization. But to pretend that "as an interference with natural law in favoring laborers and the ignoring of this law in conducting a manufacturing enterprise" is something more than a rational discussion.—Canton's Magazine.

The newest phase in these efforts was the late passage by the City Council of two new franchises and an ordinance to place fares at three cents upon the existing railway lines within certain limits. The car lines of Cleveland are arranged somewhat in the form of a half wheel, the hub being at the Public Square, where all lines converge. A franchise had been granted a company which proposes to operate a road at three cent fare, with other favorable stipulations as to transfers and ultimate municipal ownership, on Denison avenue, a West Side street, running as a cross-town line. This was tapped at the centre point by a branch representing one of the spokes of the wheel, and leading to the Public Square. Another spoke, represented by Woodland avenue, now under operation by the old street car lines, which franchise expires next September, was granted in this new franchise to be three-cent line. This gives a through line, reaching from the West Side across the river, through a popular district of the East Side. Of course all this means that the old companies must capitulate or fight in the courts to prevent the loss of some of their lines, whichever way this may terminate, the fact remains that the corporations realize that they have to deal with the most energetic and resourceful man that ever undertook to represent the people's

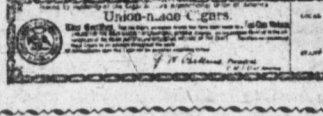
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interest. There is no doubt in the mind of Mr. Johnson's friends that, in the end, he will be successful.

Already one injunction has been granted on the Denison avenue line of the new road, which has tied matters up there for the time being. The date of the expiration of this injunction also sooner begins to approach than another injunction has been granted, which will delay the building of this road and its operation to a further date.

There is a general belief, however, that the three-cent fight in Cleveland is reaching a climax, and no one, I believe, will be surprised to see within the next few months a settlement of the whole controversy, and that upon the single cash fare of three cents, which has been Mr. Johnson's position from the beginning and from which he has at all times refused to be swayed.

Low Fare Fight in Cleveland Reviewed by Special Correspondent.

Cleveland, Ohio, Jan. 17.—Some twenty years ago when the prior fare of the Cleveland street cars was 10 cents, the pleasure of making Mayor Johnson's acquaintance, he was impressed with the fact that there was a man of more than ordinary attainments, and given health, the history of this country would never be written without a prominent place having been given to Tom Johnson. Continued years of acquaintance and a money sunk in that canal will increase neither interest nor wages. It will swell ground rents. It is the people's money, but they will never get it back until they take these ground rents in lieu of taxes.

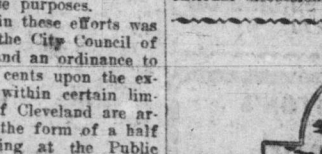
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