

## HIS MOMENTS MADNESS

"What's that? Who's there?" It broke in a fierce, half-scared rattle from Ben Agnew's dry lips. He was upon his feet with an unsteady bound. For what seemed hours he had sat there in that defiant stupor, hands and teeth clenched. Just in time he flung the table-cover over that smiling, arch portrait of a woman's face—Eva's face—into which he had been staring with such hypnotic fixity.

One stumble forward, a deep-drawn breath, and he stood ready. It was the quick step on the stair for which he had been unconsciously waiting so long. It was his chum, Dave Cottrell, who stood framed in the doorway there, a hand held out, his big chest heaving as after a race, his boyish face pallid with the suppressed thrill that comes but once in a man's life.

"It's me, Ben!" he said. "I've run near every step. I meant—I meant that you, my old chum, should be first to wish me—wish us both—" It sank away. Slowly his hand went down. "Ben," he whispered, "what's the matter?"

He stood, the pallor deepening, the smile dying out of his wide blue eyes. "Go on!" Agnew's throat suddenly forced out the rattle. "You have seen her—made her speak her woman's mind at last. Go on!"

And Dave's voice came weak and subdued through that thick pause. "I forgot. I'm sorry, old chap; I started you springing in unawares. Yes, she has given me the promise at last—at last! I can't explain. I simply said that I could not live on without her—or without a reason for her silence. It was not—it was not as if I could not hope to give her a home that would make her happy. She is to choose it for herself—her own furniture—everything! I have only to wait a few weeks longer. Weeks! Ben, old chap, you understand?"

He half turned, a hand to his eyes, as if fearing to awake. What it had cost the other man to stifle that roar of fierce, ironic laughter he was never to know.

All over! In the dusk Agnew felt out for his chair. Deep down in his mind he had been vaguely prepared; yet it came now as a grotesque shock. She had turned from him to marry Dave Cottrell—for Dave's bit of money!

He held his breath, staring into space. Just a few hissing sentences were all that was needed to bring down for ever this big, simple fellow's sublime faith in her. "Go back and ask her how often the scale has swayed! Her letters to me prove that I could have won that same promise. But I was only a happy-go-lucky penny-a-liner, spending more than I earned. And then you, my chum, came on the scene—with the money you have saved. And gold won. Not love! Realize it for all time; she has given you the Judas kiss!"

Again and again his lips parted, as the crimson impulse surged up, and each time, as he looked at Cottrell's still, wishful figure at the door, there surged up, too, the thought silently in his hand in the dark hour of journalistic struggle. All that was best in him fought madly against the brutal thing—implored to keep at least a merciful silence—for Dave's sake, not hers.

He stumbled suddenly toward the door, pushed heavily past, groped a way up the stairs, and crashed open the door of his bedroom. Eva had sold herself—for gold! She could go; she should pay the price of her mercenary mistake to the uttermost. Even now he could step between them and make an eleven-hour romance of it—a triumph for himself, a tragedy for Dave. But, no; enough in itself to picture Eva, mated or life to slow, simple, plodding Cottrell, who had the mind of a child in his big, rugged body.

An hour had passed. Quite dark now. He would not move. Not safe to trust himself face to face again with that other happy man—to-night—perhaps never again in life. Long before dawn the problem of the unbearable position must solve itself for good or for evil.

It did. As the grey and gold light stole in Ben Agnew stole out. He had his boxes. He had left some coins for the landlady and a vague, chilling little note of farewell for Cottrell. That was all. By mid-day he found himself in new, strange apartments, miles away. All London lay between. He need never have to look into Dave's blue, wide eyes again; and as for the woman—he told himself that his love had already merged into contempt. Fate would do the rest. The halter of wedlock with the wrong man should remain about her white neck for all time. Slow months ticked by—months of stubborn, suppressed perversity, that had aged him by as many years. They had been man and wife some time now, he knew. What was happening in all this silence? Perhaps—just possibly, they were quite happy. Happy!

That thought ate slowly into him. Not even yet had he admitted to himself that his chance with Eva was lost for ever. She would be chafing, like a caged bird. If he could catch a glimpse of her face once—just once—he would know! It was early—supremely, dangerously early. He shadowed Dave home from his City place of business one evening. He drew a deep, quivering breath as the door of the detached villa closed behind Dave. A deadly fascination—the nameless sudden thought that some sort of revenge for all was still open to him—held him near the spot. Presently the door opened again. Dave came out and strode away down the lamp-lit, quiet street.

The blood suddenly surged in a wave to Agnew's brain. As he crept nearer, a curtain beyond the French window had stirred. A woman stood there, looking out. She saw nothing. It was Eva. Eva—her beautiful dark eyes gazing thoughtfully past him. Only the sheet of glass between!

Before he knew it—before he could count the possible cost—he had taken a leaping little run up the path and pushed at the glass doors. They went slowly back. There was no need of his breathless warning to check her cry. To her, maybe, at that moment, he was as a figure risen from the dead. The slow whisper that at last struggled from her lips was hushed with awe and pity.

"Ben! You! You have come at last to see your friend—my husband!"

"No!" There was a note of triumph, of challenge, palpitating beneath his huskiness. He was craning forward to look deep into her eyes. That dilated fear in them could only mean that she was paying the price of her mistake in full.

"No!" Did you tell yourself I was effaced?—that I could stifle all my own hopes as easily as that? Eva! Just one moment—the last! Look me in the face. Dare to tell me that you are happy even with all that his money can give you! That is all I ask to-night!"

"Yes, yes. I know now. You think to remind me that I played a part when I gave him my promise. You told yourself that you only had to wait and one breath of disillusion would break his heart and turn him cold. You are too late! You would not think of it. You knew him so well. Oh, Ben—no!"

"What of me?" he demanded, thickly. "What have I suffered? Think a moment."

"Too late!" she repeated, on that low, rapt note. "I only live to make reparation to him—to give him back in full the affection he has given me! I was weak, blind, then; but not now! What you thought was a mistake—the mistake that might end in my hating him, and thus giving you your revenge,—has roughed me a happiness I strive to deserve. I honor him—my Dave! Yes, even if I were not worthy of his love and care, I should be something less than a woman if I listened to you. You, who were his trusted friend, hoped in your heart that you could crush him. Vile! Ben, if you respect me—respect your own manhood—go!"

"My manhood!" He echoed it sneeringly, not stirring. He scarcely knew what he said. "Once in those 'weak' days, you wrote letters to me that you would not care for him to see now! You are deceiving yourself to save him. You are letting him live on in a fool's paradise. Eva, no! Listen! As Heaven hears me, I did not come to say one such word as this; but I'll never believe that in my heart."

"Go!" she said again, her slight figure drawn up. "Let that word convince you. I love him, treasure him, more than life itself. And I know it. That is my answer. Go!"

The glass doors swung together. On the outer side, his hands and teeth clenched, was left a man in whom all that is weakest in human nature fought for some vent.

Dave Cottrell! Dave had robbed him of her, blackened his life, even if all unknowingly. But what if Dave were made to realize that he had only won a hollow, legal right to call her his? If he waited there long enough—if he dared trust himself to look full into the other man's eyes, speak of those old letters of hers, and tell him that he was selfishly chaining her to a life of silent martyrdom—yes, such a barb as that must find its mark!

Suddenly, convulsively, he started. Some hand was gripping his shoulder. Slowly he brought his haggard, hunted face round. Dave Cottrell stood there—big, boyish, simple-minded as of old—vast wonder and delight struggling together in his blue eyes.

"Ben! My old chum—Ben!" he said, in his deep voice, that refused to break. "You've come at last—at last? I knew you would. I knew it!"

The pause—that pause while the vehicles and figures moved by as in the muffled atmosphere of a dream. The words that would shatter his abiding trust were thronging in Agnew's throat; but they would not sound—not yet. And presently even Cottrell seemed to divine something deeper beneath it all. The loving, determined grip tightened.

"No, not here!" he said. "You were here, to see me. You wanted to explain—but you cannot. My home is yours. Come straight in with me; let the blank be forgotten!"

Agnew stood stiff. His throat rattled, but that was all. And in that moment the pained blue eyes seemed to take in his haggardness, his slabbiness, his recklessness, and Dave's hand drew back quickly, and seemed to be fumbling in his breast-pockets. His averted face worked oddly. Then, of a sudden, Ben Agnew found something thrust between his clenched fingers.

"You will—for old times' sake," came the whisper. "You need help; you are too proud to ask it—of me. Not a word. If I've found such happiness in my own new life, let me think that I could do a little something. Good night!"

It broke off in a sort of a sharp sob that would not be suppressed. He turned and strode quickly away. As the door of the house closed behind him Agnew's staring eyes looked down. He was clutching a little roll of Bank-notes, the gift of the man whom he had waited there to crush.

It was the psychic moment in which the turn of the scales meant all. And the scale went down—down! Something seemed to have snapped in his brain. With a moan of hate and despair he crushed the notes into a pellet, to hurl them back at the house—and then paused. How long he remained in that quiet spot in the same rigid, craning position, that one nameless thought burning in him, he would never know. All had grown still; the street was deserted; the lights in the windows had gone out one by one. Those bank-notes—he was clutching them still. Destroy them?

What was their loss to the man who had found happiness? But—but to use them as a brand to destroy the house that Cottrell had bought and prepared for his bride—oh, the exquisite, fiendish irony of that sudden mental illumination! To see the glare going higher, higher! To read to-morrow that Cottrell and his Eva had stood mutely watching the blackened shell of their nest!

He had no sense of fear—could not realize anything deeper—as he looked around and then went creeping up the path again. He seemed to be like an animal absorbed only by the thought of its prey. It was purely automatically cunning which took him toward those glass doors—which suggested to him that perhaps he had been about to lock them, and had forgotten in her dread. If not, there were a score of other ways. Passion is brief madness; and nothing can baffle the cunning of the madman.

He pushed, and they yielded a little. That was enough. He stooped, put a lighted match to the small sheaf of bank-notes, and held them against the lowest fold of the thick curtain. His fingers were scorched, but he scarcely knew that. A hole had been burned; the edges of it glowed. Bending lower, he puffed in panting breath upon the flame, and a greenish-yellow flare suddenly curled up. Ablaze! He drew back, hardly breathing, the sweat pouring down his face. One inner voice cried, "Stamp it out!" Another yelled, "Let it burn!" And now it was out of human hands. A breeze had passed him and fanned the flame. With a hissing little roar it caught some lace hangings near, devoured them before his eyes, and was licking at the walls and woodwork. With a low cry of horror, part exultation—Ben Agnew stumbled up and was gone.

"Dave! Dave!"

It was a woman's swooning cry, as they bore her out of the danger zone and let the fresh air of heaven play upon her dead-white face. It came from Eva's lips, and was heard and whispered back through the spellbound crowd that seemed to have massed there by magic.

"My husband! Save my Dave!"

The crowd had sprung up from dreams, to realize the red glare that threw an unholy light over all. They seemed to be dreaming still. Her husband—Dave! All had happened as in a flash of time. They had seen him stagger to that topmost window, look out upon the firemen and the gathering mass of figures below, and then vanish. No! The half-suppressed roar went up. He was back, bearing in his arms the woman—his wife. A struggling fireman, half-blinded by the smoke and spray, had caught her as she dropped from his grasp—another lower down had caught her in turn. And the man? He would jump—he must! The rooms below were belching flames that curled hungrily about him as he hesitated.

"Jump!" went up the roar from a hundred parched throats. There was ghastly silence as he protruded his head and shoulders again—and then as incredulous moan as he slipped back—overcome, beyond help, in death's very grip.

"Can't do it!" The husky shouts and made dash upon dash for the topmost window. The fire-escape, blistered and blazing in a whirl of flame, stood useless. No volume of water could beat down in time the lava of destruction that poured out from the whole lower portion of the house—flames that seemed to expand like a fan on every living approach. "Can't be done!" Suffocation had claimed him, even if the flames failed.

And then—suddenly—a wedge seemed to be driven through the dense, fascinated crowd. Men and women were hurled back by one panting, staring, sobbing man, who fought a mad, resistless way through the close ranks. He seemed to have the strength of a Titan. He was through, the clothes half torn from his body. Constables sprang, but he fought them back. In the same instant, it seemed, he was on his knees by the side of the woman who lay there so pale and still. Eva! His lips had darted a touch upon her forehead.

"Eva!" He cried it in a crackling voice. "Look up! You know me! Will you know who saved Dave?"

Ere anyone could realize, he was at the foot of the nearest ladder. Shouts warned him back, hands were thrust up to drag him down; but he fought like a madman and got his boot up—up! They saw his head thrown back, as the red fury sprang at him. They saw—but they closed their eyes to that, and prayed to forget. He was just a moving, nebulous something now in the wreathing whirl. Never—never—yes! He had groped for the inner sill, and gripped it. A moment—a never-forgotten moment—and then, as with a superhuman struggle, he had dragged himself through. Oh, Heaven, the lifetime of suspense crowded into that next moment!

One—two—three—and then the delicious hurricane of sound was let loose. "Here! His name—his name! Victoria Cross for a hero!"

He was facing them—but, as they afterwards knew, not seeing them. He bore something in his arms; something around which a rug had been flung. He leaned out, groping again for the charred ladder. It was a feeble effort; even such strength was all but spent. He was staggering back under his living incubus.

"Let him drop! Leap for your life!"

He heard. He balanced his burden upon the hot framework for one instant, and then toppled it forward with all his last strength. It was caught just on the edge of a tarpaulin sheet held out by men who risked their own lives in the last rush of all. Yet one more instant he stood, a discolored hand to his eyes. "Leap!" the roar swelled again. And he clambered feebly up, threw out his arms, and dropped like a stone. The shouts and sob, maybe, reached his dulled brain and told him what he had done that night, but the rest—the rest was blotted out.

He was not to realize until long afterwards—until months had seemed to pass.

He lay upon a white bed, in some spotless ward. But he only knew that when they told him. The bandage was gone from his eyes, but the darkness remained. That would never lift. He was blind.

"You can hear it!" a woman's hushed whisper—Eva's whisper—asked him again and again. "You can hear it, if you know it is his hand you are holding—if you know that he has forgiven with all his heart the wrong you have confessed to us in your delirium? He's here, he's listening; he wants to know—your old chum, Dave."

"Yes," Ben whispered faintly back. "Tell him—yes. Dave knows—and Heaven knows—that the price has been paid."—London Tit-Bits.

## 3,000,000 BURIED COINS.

### Prospectors Say They Know Where It is Buried.

The startling story of the hidden treasure of King Lobengula, which is now agitating South Africa, is in the main probably quite correct. According to the Transvaal Leader, it consists of £3,000,000 in British coined gold, besides bar gold and dust, quantities of diamonds, and ten wagon-loads of ivory.

That the dusky chief of the Matabelle was possessed of great wealth at the time of his death is fairly certain. It was seen by many white people of repute, one of whom estimated the total value of the hoard as being certainly not less than five millions sterling.

Very little of this was found at his capital, Bulawayo, when it was occupied by the Chartered Company's forces in November, 1893; but a certain amount of coined gold was discovered and looted by the Bechuanaland police, who were first in.

Thus, two men, named Wilson and Daniels, were proved later on to have appropriated one thousand sovereigns between them, and were sentenced to fourteen years' penal servitude. Another man, who escaped, carried off £1,200 in his saddle-bags.

But for the most part, the treasure was removed by Lobengula's orders before the British occupation, and it is known that it accompanied the King in his wanderings up the Zambesi valley. What became of it after his death, however, has always been a mystery.

This mystery, it is confidently affirmed, is now about to be cleared up, a party of prospectors from Johannesburg being actually on their way to the spot where they say they know it to be buried. The cost of their expedition is high, some £5,000 in all, for the district where they are operating is a savage and desolate one. But if success crowns their efforts, and they are confident that it will, they will recoup themselves a thousand times over.—Pearson's Weekly.

Your luck is good if the other fellow's is worse.

## ABOUT THE HOUSE

### SEASONABLE RECIPES.

**Green Peppers as Salad Holders.**—A nice way to put salads in a lunch box is to use green sweet peppers. Remove the seeds after cutting off the small end of each pepper and stuff them with the salad.

**Cooking New Potatoes.**—Place them in boiling water with two or three sprigs of mint. When they are cooked and drained pour over them some melted butter. The mint adds a more delicate flavor. New potatoes should have the skins removed by rubbing them with a brush. When rubbed they will be white and smooth.

**Strawberry Pie.**—Make rich pie crust and line you pie pan; bake crust; then fill crust with fresh strawberries, sugar to taste, cover with the well-beaten whites of two eggs, add a tablespoonful of sugar and a few drops of vanilla; return to oven and bake to a light brown. This makes a delicious dessert. Raspberries or ripe peaches may be used instead of strawberries.

**How to Cook Peas.**—Take the outside leaves of lettuce and lay them in the bottom of a sauce pan; then put the peas on top of the lettuce leaves and gradually bring them up to a boil. The juice from the lettuce leaves is sufficient to cook them without the aid of water and gives them a delicious flavor. Cook them over a slow fire. Before serving them put a piece of butter on top of the peas—almost the size of a nutmeg.

**Lucana Potatoes.**—Wash and bake six large potatoes, cut a slice from the top of each potato, scoop out the inside and mash. To three cupfuls of mashed potato add six cupfuls of finely chopped ham, two tablespoonsful of finely chopped parsley, whites of two eggs, well beaten, four tablespoonsful of cream or rich milk, salt and pepper to taste. Line potato shells with this mixture, place in each cavity a poached egg, and cover well the mixture and bake until browned. Poach the egg delicately. Boiled stuffed potatoes are popular.

**Preserved Whole Gooseberries.**—Make a strong syrup, two pounds of sugar to a pint of water. Pierce gooseberries in several places and put them in the syrup, then take them from the range and let the gooseberries remain in the syrup all night. Repeat twice, reheat, stopping just short of boiling point, again letting berries stand overnight in syrup. While still cold place them in bottles and pour the syrup over them; place bottles in water. Should the berries seem to be cracking before the water boils, remove the bottles at once and seal; otherwise let stand until water is at boiling point.

**When slicing pineapple.**—Pull the stem out and with a sharp knife slice in round circles or rings about one-half inch thick, then place each circle flat, trim off the rind so as to include the eyes, and your circle is ready to slice toward the core in the centre. By this method two large pineapples may be sliced in a few minutes. The prudent housewife who considers waste a sin and would make the best of everything, should save the pineapple parings, wash, and put them over the fire with just enough water to prevent burning. When they have boiled soft, squeeze and strain them through cheesecloth. Measure the liquid, return to the fire, add a pound of sugar for a pint of liquid, cook a few minutes, skim, and you have a delicious jelly.

### IN THE LAUNDRY.

To remove grass stains from cotton goods wash in alcohol.

When ironing roller towels try slipping them over the board as you would a skirt. They are half the trouble and the edges meet when folded.

In laundering Madras curtains the newness will be preserved with less trouble than in using "stretchers" if while wet they are placed one at a time full width on the rod at the window, another rod being run through the hem of the lower edge of the curtain, removing when perfectly dry. Experience has proven this an easy and satisfactory process.

To successfully iron the present long sleeves on shirt waists, you must slip your left hand into the sleeve to the point, spreading the fingers to flatten out sleeve; begin by ironing the point, then turn hand over (the sleeve with it), and iron other side, gradually working upward by ironing first on one side then on other, keeping your fingers spread, and pulling your hand back as you proceed. You will have a nicely ironed sleeve, tucks and insets notwithstanding.

**Family Washing.**—To a boiler of water add one cup washing fluid and one bar of good soap. While heating sort the clothes, making four piles—best white in one, second best white in the second, common white in the third, and colored in the fourth. Put the best clothes into the washer, adding one and one-half pails of hot water from the boiler and then enough cold

water to cover. Turn the washer wheel from fifty to a hundred times. Wring out the clothes and put into the boiler. If needed add more water to boiler. Let clothes boil well. While the first boil wash the second. Take the first from the boiler and put in second, adding one-half cup fluid. Treat all the white in the same way. Then wash the colored without boiling. Put clean cold water in washer. Wash all the clothes through. Then rinse in the washer by giving a few turns to the wheel. Starch without blueing and hang out. Should be done in less than two hours. Washing Fluid.—One box of lye, one and one-half gallons water, one ounce liquid ammonia, one tablespoonful of salts of tartar.

### HOME HINTS.

If a child evinces any weakness in its ankles, rub the affected part daily with warm salt water. Sea water is the best, but a good substitute is a teaspoonful of kitchen salt dissolved in a pint of water.

Old umbrellas may be made use of in the kitchen. Strip the frame, and hang it up by the handle. You will then find the ribs useful for hanging collars and handkerchiefs to dry.

If in cooking the whites of eggs are required at once, and it is intended to use the yolks later on in the day, they should not be left exposed to the air, or they will harden and become useless. The best plan is to beat up the yolks with a very little water, and then place them in a covered bowl in a cool place.

A convenient method of removing the close-fitting cover from a new can of baking-powder, shoe-polish, etc., is to place the can on its side on the floor with a piece of paper under it, and stepping on the cover, roll it backward and forward under the foot. This will cause the tightest cover to drop off with very little trouble.

A man's discarded felt hat can be turned to many uses. The thin leather lining may be cut into narrow strips, and sewn around trousers-leg bottoms inside. They will not then fray out. The felt itself can be made quite flat by heat. It makes excellent insoles for boots, is warm, and wears better than ordinary cork soles.

For burns and scalds nothing is more soothing than the white of an egg, which may be poured over the wound. It is softer as a varnish for a burn than a collodion, and being always at hand can be applied immediately. It is also more cooling than the sweet oil and cotton which was formerly supposed to be the surest application to allay the smarting pain.

Here is a little hint on how to "get up" a lace necktie or scarf without the help of a hot iron. Wash the lace by squeezing in a lather of hot water and soap until it is quite clean; rinse it, r out at the edges, and then fold the lace in half and roll it up evenly, pulling out the edges as you go. Leave it folded up for about a quarter of an hour, then unroll it, but leave it still folded in half. Pull it carefully lengthwise and across to keep it in shape, and hang it (still folded in half) over a towel horse. When dry the lace should look as well as if it had been ironed.

## THIS KING IN BAD HEALTH.

### Cambodia's Ruler Making Things Uncomfortable.

The Paris Journal learns from Cambodia that all is not well with King Sisowath, whose health is being undermined by rheumatism and other ills. He is a difficult patient with whom to deal, and the French Resident is somewhat uneasy with regard to him.

The King has become neurasthenic; he complains that the dancers of his palace no longer dance as they used to; that the elephants of the palace die one after the other—a bad omen—and that the workers in the royal art palace do not work with good will. The monarch flies into temper at the slightest provocation, or without any at all.

King Sisowath is also troubled on religious matters. He sent for a French missionary, and it is said, asked what he would have to do to become a Catholic. The populace is ignorant of these facts, but the King's entourage is aware of it, and views the situation with uneasiness. The Bonzes are opposed to the conversion of Sisowath, and declare that if need be they will shut him up in one of their convents.

The question of a successor to Sisowath is already being discussed. Sisowath himself desires to be succeeded by his young son Sonphanovong; the Bonzes and the Ministers, however, favor the eldest son of the King, Monivong, an ensign in the French army, at present at Pnom Penh, who is known to be well disposed towards France.

### HIGHER EDUCATION.

Little Willie—"Say, pa; what is the higher education?"

Pa—"The higher education, my son, is one that teaches young man that he must work in order to earn an honest living."