

snowy walks, he must be gaining fast upon him. He saw him again, when he had reached the corner where the man had turned, traveling westward with that quick uncertain step toward Clark Street; at that corner the man turned south. But when Alan reached the corner, he was nowhere in sight. To the south, Clark Street reached away, garish with electric signs and with a half dozen saloons to every block. That the man was drunk made it probable he had turned into one of these places. Alan went into every one of them for fully a half mile and looked about, but he found no one even resembling the man he had been following. He retraced his steps for several blocks, still looking; then he gave it up and returned eastward toward the Drive.

THE street leading to this was less well lighted; dark entry ways and alleys opened on it; but the night was clear. The stars, with the shining sword of Orion almost overhead, gleamed with midwinter brightness, and to the west the crescent of the moon was hanging and throwing faint shadows over the snow. Alan could see at the end of the street, beyond the yellow glow of the distant boulevard lights, the smooth, chill surface of the lake. A white light rode above it; now, below the white light, he saw a red speck—the masthead and port lanterns of a steamer northward bound. Farther out a second white glow appeared from behind the obscuration of the buildings and below it a green speck—a starboard light. The information he had gained that day enabled him to recognize in these lights two steamers passing one another at the harbor mouth.

"Red to red," Alan murmured to himself. "Green to green—Red to red, perfect safety, go ahead!" he repeated.

It brought him, with marvelous vividness, back to Constance Sherrill. Events since he had talked with her that morning had put them far apart

once more; but, in another way, they were being drawn closer together. For he knew now that she was caught as well as he in the mesh of consequences of acts not their own. Benjamin Corvet, in the anguish of the last hours before fear of those consequences had driven him away, had given her a warning against Spearman so wild that it defeated itself; for Alan merely to repeat that warning, with no more than he yet knew, would be equally futile. But into the contest between Spearman and himself—that contest, he was beginning to feel, which must threaten destruction either to Spearman or to him—she had entered. Her happiness, her future, were at stake; her fate, he was certain now, depended upon discovery of those events tied tight in the mystery of Alan's own identity which Spearman knew, and the threat of which at moments appalled him. Alan winced as there came before him in the darkness of the street the vision of Constance in Spearman's arms and of the kiss that he had seen that afternoon.

He staggered, slipped, fell suddenly forward upon his knees under a stunning, crushing blow upon his head from behind. Thought, consciousness almost lost, he struggled, twisting himself about to grasp at his assailant. He caught the man's clothing, trying to drag himself up; fighting blindly, dazedly, unable to see or think, he shouted aloud and then again, aloud. He seemed in the distance to hear answering cries; but the weight and strength of the other was bearing him down again to his knees; he tried to slip aside from it, to rise. Then another blow, crushing and sickening, descended on his head; even hearing left him and, unconscious, he fell forward on to the snow and lay still.

CHAPTER X.

A Walk Beside the Lake.

"THE name seems like Sherrill," the interne agreed. "He said it before when we had him on the

table up-stairs; and he has said it now twice distinctly—Sherrill."

"His name, do you think?"

"I shouldn't say so; he seems trying to speak to someone named Sherrill."

The nurse waited a few minutes. "Yes; that's how it seems to me, sir. He said something that sounded like 'Connie' a while ago, and once he said 'Jim.' There are only four Sherrills in the telephone book, two of them in Evanston and one way out in Minnoota."

"The other?"

"They're only about six blocks from where he was picked up; but they're on the Drive—the Lawrence Sherrills."

The interne whistled softly and looked more interestedly at his patient's features. He glanced at his watch, which showed the hour of the morning to be half-past four. "You'd better make a note of it," he said. "He's not a Chicagoan; his clothes were made somewhere in Kansas. He'll be conscious some time during the day; there's only a slight fracture, and—Perhaps you'd better call the Sherrill house, anyway. If he's not known there, no harm done; and if he's one of their friends and he should . . ."

The nurse nodded and moved off.

Thus it was that at a quarter to five Constance Sherrill was awakened by the knocking of one of the servants at her father's door. Her father went down-stairs to the telephone instrument where he might reply without disturbing Mrs. Sherrill. Constance, kimona over her shoulders, stood at the top of the stairs and waited. It became plain to her at once that whatever had happened had been to Alan Conrad.

"Yes. . . . Yes. . . . You are giving him every possible care? . . . At once."

She ran part way down the stairs and met her father as he came up. He told her of the situation briefly.

"He was attacked on the street late last night; he was unconscious when they found him and took him to the hospital, and has been unconscious ever since. They say it was an ordinary street attack for robbery. I shall go at once, of course; but you can do nothing. He would not know you if you came; and of course he is in competent hands. No; no one can say yet how seriously he is injured."

She waited in the hall while her father dressed, after calling the garage on the house telephone for him and ordering the motor. When he had gone, she returned anxiously to her own rooms; he had promised to call her after reaching the hospital and as soon as he had learned the particulars of Alan's condition. It was ridiculous, of course, to attach any responsibility to her father or herself for what had happened to Alan—a street attack such as might have happened to any one—yet she felt that they were in part responsible. Alan Conrad had come to Chicago, not by their direction, but by Benjamin Corvet's; but Uncle Benny being gone, they had received him into their own house; but they had not thought to warn him of the dangers of the city and, afterward, they had let him go to live alone in the house in Astor Street with no better adviser than Wassaquam. Now, and perhaps because they had not warned him, he had met injury and, it

might be, more than mere injury; he might be dying.

She walked anxiously up and down her room, clutching her kimona about her; it would be some time yet before she could hear from her father. She went to the telephone on the stand beside her bed and called Henry Spearman at his apartments. His servant answered; and, after an interval, Henry's voice came to her. She told him all that she knew of what had occurred.

"Do you want me to go over to the hospital?" he asked at once.

"No; father has gone. There is nothing any one can do. I'll call you again as soon as I hear from father."

He seemed to appreciate from her tone the anxiety she felt; for he set himself to soothe and encourage her. She listened, answered, and then hung up the receiver, anxious not to interfere with the expected call from her father. She moved about the room again, oppressed by the long wait, until the 'phone rang, and she sprang to it; it was her father calling from the hospital. Alan had had a few moments' consciousness, but Sherrill had not been allowed to see him; now, by the report of the nurse, Alan was sleeping, and both nurse and internes assured Sherrill that, this being the case, there was no reason for anxiety concerning him; but Sherrill would wait at the hospital a little longer to make sure. Constance's breath caught as she answered him, and her eyes filled with tears of relief. She called Henry again, and he evidently had been waiting, for he answered at once; he listened without comment to her repetition of her father's report.

"All right," he said, when she had finished. "I'm coming over, Connie."

"Now?"

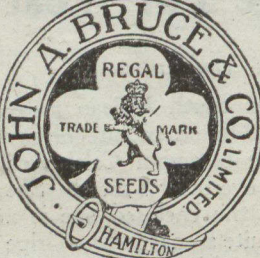
"Yes; right away."

"You must give me time to dress!"

His assumption of right to come to her at this early hour recalled to her forcibly the closer relation which Henry now assumed as existing between them; indeed, as more than existing, as progressing. And had not she admitted that relation by telephoning to him during her anxiety? She had not thought how that must appear to him; she had not thought about it at all; she had just done it.

SHE had been one of those who think of betrothal in terms of question and answer, of a moment when decision is formulated and spoken; she had supposed that, by withholding reply to Henry's question put even before Uncle Benny went away, she was thereby maintaining the same relation between Henry and herself. But now she was discovering that this was not so; she was realizing that Henry had not required formal answer to him because he considered that such answer had become superfluous; her yes, if she accepted him now, would not establish a new bond, it would merely acknowledge what was already understood. She had accepted that—had she not—when, in the rush of her feeling, she had thrust her hand into his the day before; she had accepted it, even more undeniably, when he had seized her and kissed her.

Not that she had sought or even consciously permitted, that; it had, indeed, surprised her. While they were alone together, and he was telling her things about himself, somewhat as he



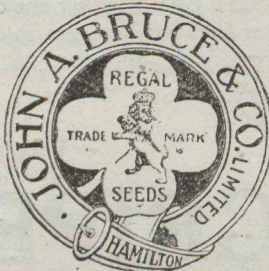
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